

GRADE EIGHT

PERSONAL GROWTH, PART II: THE HUMAN COMMUNITY



*Developing relationships with others and God
is essential to becoming our true selves.*

OBJECTIVES

- To help the young adolescent understand the elements which are essential to developing positive relationships.
- To help the young adolescent understand that true community is built on honest, loving and respectful relationships.

I. THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout our lives we develop relationships with many people. To all our relationships – with God, with family, with others – we bring ourselves. Our experiences in these relationships enable us to discover who we are and how we relate to others. The various relationships we have throughout our lives, even the difficult, hurtful or disappointing ones, can be a source of growth because of God’s grace.¹ [1936, 1946, 1996-97]

A. *Created as Relational Beings*

The Book of Genesis reveals that God created us to be in relationship with God and with one another. Our seeking and needing relationships flows from our very nature as created by God. [357, 1829, 1879]

Created in the image of God, who is a Trinity of persons, we are called to mirror in our own relationships the relationship of love among the divine persons. [355, 1702, 1878, 1890, 2205]

In Baptism we are made a new creation in Christ. Our relationships with God and others are transformed and raised to a new level by grace. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, it becomes possible for us to love as Jesus taught us. [1265-66, 1694-95, 1709, 1997, 1999-2000]

B. *Love: The Cornerstone of All Relationships*

Before his passion and death, Jesus said to his disciples, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

One of our most basic human needs is to love and be loved. When we seek to form relationships, we are trying to fulfill this need. [1826-27, 1829]

All genuine love comes from God. “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God in them.” (1 John 4:16). [218-21, 257]

In order to love others and let others love us, we must love ourselves. Learning to love ourselves begins with the realization that God loved us first. Indeed, if God did not love us, we would not even exist. Awareness of God’s particular love for each of us leads us to appreciate that our life is sacred and we are precious in God’s sight. This awareness enables us to seek self-knowledge honestly and courageously. Self-knowledge, in turn, can help us to understand and accept ourselves as we are, even with our limitations and weaknesses. [294, 310-11, 357]

By itself, however, self-love is not enough. We are called to love others. In every stage of our lives, God gives us the grace to reach out beyond ourselves and our own concerns and to love others. However, different kinds of love are appropriate to different kinds of relationships. [1604, 1823, 1825, 1889, 2196]

- *Family Love* is shared by family members, including that of a parent for a child, a child for a parent, spouses for each other, and siblings for each other. [2227-28]
- *Friendship* is the deep, tender affection which exists between friends. Friendship includes shared interests as well as mutual trust and enjoyment of one another’s company. [2347]

¹ Difficult or hurtful experiences do not obligate one to endure bullying, abuse, or other harmful treatment from others.

- *Eros* is passionate human love which can exist between a man and a woman. *Eros* always seeks union and thus includes sexual love. [1604, 2331, 2360]
- *Agape* is a conscious choice to will the good of another. It is not a feeling. This Christian love treats all with kindness no matter what they may have done to us, no matter whether we like them or they like us. This is the love that the Holy Spirit enables us to have for others. [1935, 1939]

During our lifetime we will probably experience these different kinds of love through our various relationships. Some of our relationships may well involve more than one kind of love.

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Read and reflect with the young people on 1 Corinthians 13:1-8. Tell them this passage describes how God calls us to love one another.

- Have the young people rewrite verses 4 through 7 of the passage, and in place of the word “love” in each verse, have them substitute the name of someone they know whom the description fits.
- Invite them to consider what the phrase, “to endure,” means in the scripture passage.
- Invite the young people to reflect again on verses 4 through 7 and, in place of the word “love” in each verse, have them substitute their own name wherever the description fits.

Ask the young people to share what they have learned from this experience. Remind them of the early Christians and the love they had for one another. Conclude with the following prayer:

*Gracious God, may your Son, Jesus Christ, help us to grow in his way of love.
Help us to understand how others should be treated and how we should behave.
Give us the grace to love as Jesus did. Amen.*

II. THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Through our interactions with others, we can come to know ourselves better. We come to new insights as we struggle to express our thoughts and feelings. [1879-80]

As we listen to others, we grow in our knowledge of them as well. Our relationships with others widen our experience and can enrich our lives. [1931, 1936-37, 1944, 1946]

Through our relationships with others we make a contribution to the world in which we live. With others we strive to contribute to the common good and build a more just, loving and peaceful society. [1906-09, 1939-41]

Through our relationships with others, we can also come to know God better. [40, 54]

- The gifts and goodness of each person reflect something of the Creator who called that person into being. [41, 48]
- The Gospels promise us that when we relate in a loving way to those who are poor, weak, suffering or in need, we will see the face of God in them. [2443-44, 2463]

Relationships founded on justice, love and mutual respect also help to build up the Church, the body of Christ. [798, 2045-46]

- We, the Church, are called into relationship with one another by God in Christ. The Church is like a family, striving to love and encourage one another. [541-42, 775]
- Through our relationships in the Church we give witness to the world that God is in our midst: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35) [738, 767, 2044]

Through our relationships we help to build the kingdom of God, supporting one another in faith, hope and love here on earth as we look forward to the fulfillment of God’s promises in heaven. [1821, 2046, 2818]

III. FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN THE HUMAN COMMUNITY

A. The Family in the Plan of God

It is God’s will that human life be brought into the world through the human community of the family. Christ himself was born and grew up in the heart of a human family. Our primary understanding of love and relationships comes to us through our experience of family. [531, 533, 2201-03, 2207]

A man and a woman, united by marriage, together with their children, form a family. [NB: The catechist/teacher should discuss the topic of family with pastoral sensitivity toward the actual circumstances of the young people. (CF 1649-51)] [2202]

The family is the most basic unit of society. It deserves to be respected and protected by laws and governments. [2202, 2210-11]

The family is recognized as a basic unit within the Church as well. Through their love, prayer, care for one another and acts of service and witness, the Catholic Christian family is considered to be “the domestic Church.” [2204-06]

As Catholic Christians, we understand that family relationships are characterized by rights and obligations which stem from the natural law, the Ten Commandments, Jesus’ Law of Love, and the teachings of the Church. [2214-17, 2221-29]

- Parents have a sacred duty to respect their children as children of God and as human persons. They are responsible for their children’s moral and spiritual formation and physical well-being, and for providing a home in which love, forgiveness, respect and service are the rule. [2221-30]
- Children have a sacred duty to respect, honor and obey their parents. They also contribute to the harmony of family life by treating their brothers and sisters with patience and kindness. [2214-19]

Our relationship with God is our most important relationship. But the fourth commandment makes it clear that, after God, we should honor our parents and guardians, whom God has given us. [2197, 2232, 2248]

B. Our Experience of Family

It is God’s design that our parents and guardians instill in us the values that will help us live as faithful Catholics. During adolescence, our relationship with our parents is in the process of change. We want to be recognized as maturing individuals, yet we also need and depend on our parents.

At the same time, our parents may also be struggling with our changes. While they desire to help us mature and become more independent and responsible, they also want to protect and help us.

Our relationships with brothers and sisters also change as we grow. By sharing our thoughts, feelings and interests with one another, we develop a deeper respect for and friendship with each individual in our family.

C. Friendship in the Plan of God

Friendship is a gift from God and can be a great blessing. “A friend loves at all times.” (Proverbs 17:17) [374, 1939]

Jesus used the image of friendship to describe the relationship of trust and sharing that he wishes to have with us. “I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.” (John 15:15) [1972, 2347]

D. Our Experience of Friendship

During adolescence we find that friends play an increasingly important role in our lives. Our choice of friends can influence us greatly; we may well value their opinions more than those of anyone else. We sometimes outgrow the friends of our childhood; our interests change and we find ourselves choosing new friends who share our newfound interests and have similar capabilities and values.

At this time in our lives, we often develop a keen sense of loyalty to our peer group and its interests. Although we are seeking to assert our independence from our family, we may actually be transferring our dependence from our family to the peer group.

We will go to great lengths to remain part of the group. We are tempted to define ourselves by who our friends are. However, we need to discover and value who we are apart from our friends. We are beloved of God in our uniqueness, with distinct gifts and talents to treasure and share. [356-58]

By accepting ourselves we become better able to be friends with others. [2340, 2347]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Lead the group in the following reflection on relationships in their lives:

- Think of the people who were most important to you when you were six years old.
- Think of the people who are most important to you now.
- Think of why they are important to you.
- In a silent prayer, thank God for each of these people and how they have helped you to grow as a closer friend of Jesus.
- How have you responded to their help?

Conclude by proclaiming Philippians 1:9-11.

IV. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND CHURCH

A. Loved by God

God loves each of us individually and personally. It is the love of God that calls each person into being and sustains that person in being. [301, 356]

In the wonder of God's original creation, our first parents, Adam and Eve, had an immediate knowledge of God's creative and sustaining love. God walked in intimacy with them in the garden and called them friends. [374-6]

However, because of The Fall (Genesis 3:1-19), the human race became confused and lost sight of this love, becoming estranged from God and from one another. [379, 389-400, 416]

Yet, God continues to seek out each and every one of us, to restore that relationship of love which alone can fulfill the deepest longing of the human heart. [410, 421]

In the fullness of time, God sent Jesus to reveal the immeasurable love that God has for each of us. [422, 458]

B. Called into Relationship with God

God invites each of us into the most important relationship of all: a relationship with himself. [27, 44-45, 54]

Our relationship with God is a gift. God freely chooses to be in a relationship with each of us, not because of anything we have done, but purely because God loves us. Even when we sin, God seeks us out and offers us forgiveness and reconciliation. [50-52, 55, 218-19, 1997]

God will never abandon us. Jesus has assured us that in spite of trials and persecutions in this life he is always with us, bringing good out of evil.

Our relationship with God is built through faith and trust. By putting our faith and trust in God day by day, through all the ups and downs of life, our relationship with God grows stronger. [153-55, 163-65]

Our relationship with the Triune God is mediated by Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. "It is God the only Son, ever at the Father's side, who has revealed him." (John 1:18). Jesus is our way to the Father. [65, 425-26, 457-58]

Our relationship with God deepens and grows in the Church. As Catholic Christians we believe that through the Church we realize our calling to live in relationship with God. The Church is not optional to our personal faith. She is a mother, without whom we would not have life. [166, 169, 757, 781]

The five precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. [2041]

- You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.²
- You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
- You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.

² One these days, one should rest from works or activities that would prevent one from worship.

- You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
- You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church. [2042-43]

C. Our Experience of God and Church

How we relate to God and the Church changes as we grow.

- As children we usually mirror the faith of our parents. As we leave childhood and move into adolescence, we may experience new awakenings of motivation and fervor in our relationship with Jesus and the Church. [31, 35, 166, 168]
- Our ways of praying may change and develop. We seek ways of communicating with God that reflect who we are today. [28, 2559, 2569]
- As we mature in faith, questions and searching can help us to deepen our relationship with God and with the Church. [30, 32]

Growth in faith always involves searching. Sometimes our searching and our questions may cause us to think we are losing our faith. In reality our questions can be a sign that we are developing a more mature faith. [27, 30, 33]

V. Social Responsibility

As Christians we are called into a relationship of love with the whole human family. This relationship is built on justice and blossoms forth in peace. [1807, 1877, 1906-09, 2304]

- God created all peoples and Christ died and was raised up for the salvation of the whole human race. Out of love for our neighbors, therefore, we are called to reject all forms of racism and ethnic hatred, and to welcome and celebrate the diverse gifts of the human family. [301, 605, 1931, 1935]
- Certain inequalities of gifts and resources exist among people in the human community. They are part of God's plan insofar as they are an invitation to share and to help one another. But sinful inequalities of wealth and power also exist, which keep people in poverty and misery. We must seek to abolish such sinful conditions by helping the poor and working for social justice. [1932, 1936-38, 2448]
- The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers in our world, loving even our enemies. [1825]
 - We are called to work for peace in our world, helping to alleviate the conditions which lead to war, such as economic injustice and unrestrained use of power. We are called to support the efforts of nations to avoid or put an end to war. [2308, 2317]
 - We are called to work for peace in our neighborhood and city, always opposing violence and supporting the peaceful resolution of conflicts. [2302, 2255]
 - We must also avoid and oppose all social situations that lead to violence, such as participation in gangs, cults, and any groups which thrive on divisiveness or hatred. [1931, 2303]
- Reverence for the Creator and recognition of the wonders of the whole created world call us to protect and cherish the earth and to acknowledge our interdependence with all creatures. [339, 344]
- Love for our neighbors around the world and generations yet to come also demands our prudence in using natural resources. As Christians we are called to be good stewards of creation. [2415-18, 2456]

Social responsibility calls for each person to give his or her gifts for the common good in building the kingdom of God. Each person's gifts are needed. [1913-15]

There is a great joy in building the kingdom of God, knowing we are united with many people all over the world in furthering the mission of Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit. [542, 849-52, 863]

VI. CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING³

The seven themes of Catholic social teaching that guide the faithful in building a just world are:

1. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person:** All human life is sacred from the moment of conception to the point of natural death; the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.
2. **Call to Family, Community, and Participation:** The person is not only sacred but also social. The ways in which society is organized (e.g., economically, politically) directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.
3. **Rights and Responsibilities:** Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met.
4. **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable:** A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. We recall the story of the Last Judgment (Mt. 25:31-46) which instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.
5. **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers:** The economy must serve the people. Work is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected.
6. **Solidarity:** We are reminded to keep in mind that all people of the world are one human family. Despite the violence and conflict that takes place throughout the world, we are each called to be peacemakers and work for justice.
7. **Care for God's Creation:** We show our respect for God, the Creator of all things, by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation.

³ www.bit.ly/7-themes-social-teaching-USCCB

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Read The Last Judgment from Matthew 25:31-46 aloud to the group.
- Invite the young people to reflect and share on the following questions:

How can I welcome the outsider or those who are lonely?

How can I feed the hungry?

How can I help my neighbor in need?

How can I be a good steward of creation?

How can I be a peacemaker?

How can I work for social justice?

- Close with the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassionately on this world,

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,

Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassionately on this world.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.



GRADE EIGHT

CHURCH HISTORY



*Jesus' life and mission continue through the Church,
the community of believers called by God and empowered
by the Holy Spirit to be the sign of the kingdom of God.*

OBJECTIVES

- To deepen the young adolescent's knowledge of the history of the Catholic Church.
- To lead the young adolescent to a fuller participation in the life and mission of the Church.

I. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH FROM THE TIME OF JESUS TO AD 100

A. The Mission of the Church

The Church was made manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. [731-32, 737-41, 2623]

Immediately after Pentecost, the apostles traveled throughout Palestine spreading the “Good News” of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection to Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews). [767, 849, 858]

Small groups of Jesus’ followers continued to gather together at their local synagogues. They also began to meet in each other’s homes for prayer and “the breaking of the bread,” (Acts 2:46), the celebration of the Eucharist. [751, 949, 2178, 2624]

The apostles James and John were among the leaders of these groups, as were Paul, Barnabas, Titus, and Timothy. They traveled extensively, gathering followers of Jesus into small communities which were the beginnings of local churches. The early Church consisted of ordinary men and women who were strengthened by God’s Spirit. [777, 797-98, 833, 854, 1229, 1270]

Two great converts of this time were Paul, a Jew, to whom Jesus revealed himself in a dramatic way on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9) and Cornelius, a Gentile, who with his whole family was baptized by Peter (Acts 10:1-48). [639, 659, 761, 1226]

There was a period of dissension and debate between the Jews and the Gentiles who were embracing Christianity. Paul argued that Gentile converts to Christianity were not obliged to follow certain dietary laws and ritual practices (such as circumcision) prescribed by the Law of Moses. Some of the Jewish Christians disagreed. During this period of misunderstanding, Peter had a vision which helped him understand that God made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles who embraced Christianity (Acts 10:9-16). [761, 791, 804]

As a result of this controversy, the first General Council of the Church was called. Influenced by Peter’s speech and the witness of Paul and Barnabas, the Council of Jerusalem in AD 49 decided that:

- The followers of Jesus would not be subject to the ritual practices of the Mosaic Law.
- A Gentile could be baptized without having to observe the ritual practices.

The Council also clarified the belief that God sends the Holy Spirit to Jew and Gentile alike (Acts 15). [781-82, 799-801]

B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church

St. Stephen was the first martyr because he gave his life for his faith in Jesus (Acts 7:54-60). Before his conversion, Saul, who later became St. Paul, is identified as one of those who approved of the killing of Stephen. [2473, 2506]

Christians were persecuted in numerous ways throughout the first centuries. Nero was one of the many Roman emperors who persecuted the followers of Jesus during the first century. He falsely blamed Christians for the burning of the city of Rome in AD 64. [2472-74, 2476]

C. Significant Members of the Church

- **Mary, the Mother of Jesus (John 19:26-27 and Acts 1:14):** The mother of Jesus was a central figure at the heart of the early Christian community. From the very beginning she has been considered the Mother of the Church. [495, 501, 726, 2673]
- **St. Mary Magdalene (John 20:17-18):** After the resurrection, the Risen Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene and commissioned her to tell the “Good News” of his resurrection to the other disciples. [641, 660]
- **St. Peter and the Other Apostles (Acts 2:14-41):** From the time of Pentecost, Peter and the other apostles courageously witnessed to Jesus in word and deed. They proclaimed that Jesus brought salvation to the world through his life, death, and resurrection. [571, 642, 858]
- **St. Paul (Acts 9:1-9):** Initially a persecutor of the early Christian community, Paul was called by the Risen Lord in a vision to be an apostle and an outstanding witness to the “Good News.” His letters, included in the New Testament, are the earliest written testimony to the faith of the early Church. [639, 659, 860]
- **St. Lydia (Acts 16:11-15):** Many women believed the “Good News” and became active members of the early Christian community. Lydia, a devout woman, and a dealer in purple cloth (a valuable commodity in the ancient world), heard about Jesus through the preaching of Paul and was baptized, along with her whole household. She supported the mission of the apostles to proclaim the Gospel and welcomed them into her home. [872, 1226, 1252, 2624]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Read Acts 7:55-60.
- Ask the young people to reflect on Stephen’s spirit of forgiveness for his persecutors.
- Ask the young people to pray in their hearts for the grace to forgive someone who has persecuted or hurt them deeply. Lead them in prayer to ask for forgiveness from those they have hurt.
- Conclude the prayer experience by praying aloud the Our Father and the Confiteor:

*I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,
through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.*

II. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUES FROM AD 100 TO AD 500

A. The Mission of the Church

In the period from AD 100 to AD 500 the Church spread rapidly and her doctrine continued to develop. Through God's grace, evidenced in the faith and life of her members, the Church spread throughout the Roman Empire. The seeds of the Gospel were sown in much of Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. Christianity flourished in these areas. [767-68]

Christians continued to pray together and to celebrate the Eucharist, motivated by their profound love of Jesus. They were also known for their love for and service to others. In fidelity to the Gospel, they reached out to the poor, the homeless and the unwanted. Accounts of the life of the Church in the writings of the early Church Fathers, Doctors of the Church, and historians attest to the great concern of the People of God for one another. They welcomed all races and nations into their midst. [767, 852]

It is important to remember that, while the Church is always guided by the Holy Spirit, it is composed of imperfect human beings who can make mistakes and are capable of sinning. Therefore, conflicts, controversies, corruption, and even wars are found throughout the history of the Church. [386-87, 769-70, 827]

During this era, many heresies arose. Church councils were held especially to correct these false teachings concerning Christian beliefs. [88, 95, 884]

- The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 defined the Christian belief that Jesus is begotten of God, not made by God as other creatures are. Jesus, therefore, is not simply one of God's creatures, but, as God's own Son, shares in the very substance of God, consubstantial with the Father. This is why, when praying the Nicene Creed at Mass, we say Jesus is "consubstantial with the Father." [465]
- The Council of Ephesus in AD 431 declared that Jesus is truly a Divine Person and that his mother is, therefore, the Mother of God. [466, 495]
- The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 declared that the Son of God is one Divine Person with two natures, one human and one divine. Jesus is, therefore, true God and true man. [467]

B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church

Persecutions continued throughout this era, because Christians would not worship false gods or obey unjust laws. Many Christians were martyred or sent into exile during the reign of the Emperor Diocletian. [309, 769, 2113]

The first emperor to become a Christian was Constantine. After his conversion, he issued the Edict of Milan in AD 313. This edict ended the persecution of the Church in the Roman Empire and recognized the right of Christians to worship in accordance with their faith. As a result of this new freedom, Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. [2104, 2108]

C. Significant Members of the Church

(Throughout the study of this unit, the catechist/teacher is encouraged to consult the liturgical calendar for feast days of saints of significance for the parish, school, or culture.)

- **St. Ignatius of Antioch (1st century):** The third bishop of Antioch, Ignatius was martyred around AD 110. While a prisoner on his way to Rome to be martyred, he wrote letters to some early Christian communities expressing his profound love for Jesus and urging them to be Jesus' faithful followers. [2473-74]

- **St. Perpetua and St. Felicity, Martyrs (2nd century):** Perpetua and Felicity were courageous women who suffered martyrdom in AD 202 during a persecution in Carthage, North Africa. In Eucharistic Prayer I of the Mass, the Church recalls their heroism. [2471, 2473]
- **St. Helena (250-330):** The mother of Constantine the Great, Helena was born about the middle of the third century. Of humble beginnings, she married a Roman general who divorced her. When her son, Constantine, became emperor, Helena was named empress. She converted to Christianity and performed many acts of charity. On a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Helena discovered the True Cross.
- **St. Monica (331-387):** Monica, a devout Christian from North Africa, prayed for over thirty years for the conversion of her son, Augustine. She is a model of a prayerful woman and a virtuous mother. [2232, 2683]
- **St. Jerome (347-420):** Jerome is best known for his delight in studying Holy Scripture and for translating the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. His translation was in use until modern times. He died in Bethlehem in AD 420. [133]
- **St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430):** Augustine, although he had a prestigious career and worldly success, led an unsettled and restless life, searching for the truth. After his conversion, he became an outstanding teacher, bishop and defender of the faith. He is one of the most influential theologians in the Western Church. [30, 32, 300, 385]
- **St. Patrick (5th century):** A man of great prayer and penance, Patrick is famous for his missionary activity among the Irish during the fifth century. In the United States, many churches, including the Cathedral of St. Patrick in the Archdiocese of New York, are named in his honor. [1428, 1430, 2683, 2745]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Invite the young people to name places around the world where the Church today continues to suffer suppression by hostile governments, terrorism, and other forms of persecution. When considering these realities, help the young people to see how the events of the present day are an important reason for each one of them to pray for those suffering for their faith in Jesus Christ, recognizing this may include us or members of our own families.

Lead the group in the following prayer from the *Mass for Persecuted Christians*:

*Father, in your mysterious providence,
 your Church must share in the sufferings of Christ your Son.
 Give the spirit of patience and love
 to those who are persecuted for their faith in you
 that they may always be true and faithful witnesses
 to your promise of eternal life.
 We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

III. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUES FROM AD 500 TO AD 1000 (THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES)

A. The Mission of the Church

During the Early Middle Ages, the Church continued to spread the Gospel and, in doing so, it also preserved Western Civilization. Human beings were created to live in an organized society based on law and order and the Church did much to ensure that. [849, 1879-80]

This period is known for the barbarian invasions which were destroying the Roman Empire and disrupting the life of the Church. Some people refer to this time as the “Dark Ages.” Nevertheless, the Church remained a light in the midst of upheaval. [1884, 1897-98, 1910]

It was a period of extensive missionary activity. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great sent many missionaries to bring the light of faith to the barbarian tribes. Missionaries from the British Isles (England, Ireland and Wales) traveled to continental Europe to restore Christianity in those places which had been invaded by barbarians. [849, 927]

From the sixth through the eleventh centuries, monasteries for women (nuns) and men (monks) were essential to the preservation of Christianity and Western civilization. They were centers of learning and offered hospitality for travelers, the poor, and the sick. [914, 916, 1932]

By the end of this period, the Church and State had become so closely allied that the Church lost some of its independence and autonomy. As a result, the witness of Christianity was somewhat compromised. [770, 2245]

B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church

Nuns and monks courageously left their monasteries in order to spread the Gospel. These missionaries lived in situations of great hardship and suffering in order to preach and teach the Gospel among the barbarian tribes. As a result of their efforts, Christianity came to be firmly rooted in Europe. [618, 852, 2472]

In the early centuries of Christianity, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa had given the Church some of its greatest leaders (e.g., Clement of Alexandria; Tertullian). In the decades following the death of Muhammad in AD 632 however, Muslims from Arabia conquered all these areas, and within a few centuries, Christians had become a minority in these lands. [769, 798, 841]

In the early eighth century, Spain was also taken over by the followers of Muhammad, and the Christian populations of France and Constantinople were threatened by Muslim conquest as well. Nevertheless, the Church continued to grow in Europe. [769, 794, 841]

C. Significant Members of the Church

- **St. Brigid (451-525):** The pioneer of Irish monastic life for women, Brigid founded a monastery for nuns in Kildare, Ireland, in the late fifth century. She traveled widely in Ireland to evangelize the people and was known for her charity and generosity to the poor. [916, 2443-44]
- **St. Benedict and St. Scholastica (480-543):** Called the “Father of Western Monasticism,” Benedict founded the famous monastery of Monte Cassino in Italy about AD 530. The rule of life which he wrote is still

followed today by many communities of women and men religious. Scholastica was the twin sister of St. Benedict and founded a monastery of nuns near Monte Cassino. [347, 915-16, 925-26, 2834]

- **St. Augustine of Canterbury (6th century):** Augustine of Canterbury and thirty monks were sent to England by Pope Gregory the Great in AD 596 to evangelize the Anglo-Saxons. He succeeded in persuading the king and many of his subjects to embrace Christianity, and he built England's first cathedral. He is called the "Apostle of England."
- **St. Dymphna (7th century):** Dymphna was born in northern Ireland during the 7th century. Her mother was a Christian while her father was a pagan king. Dymphna's mother died when she was 14 and this greatly distressed her father. Dymphna then dedicated herself to God and took a vow of celibacy. Her father was determined to marry her himself and, after repeatedly refusing his demands for marriage, Dymphna was beheaded around AD 620. Because her father was mentally ill, Dymphna is the patron saint of those suffering from mental illness.
- **St. Boniface (675-754):** Boniface is known as the "Apostle of Germany" because of his great missionary activity in that area. During his thirty-two years as a bishop, many conversions took place, churches were founded and dioceses were established. He was martyred with fifty-three others in AD 754. [831, 849-51, 2473]
- **Charles the Great (742-814):** Also known as Charlemagne, he ruled much of Western Europe from AD 768 to AD 814. Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor of the Romans in AD 800 and, at the time of his death, his empire encompassed much of Western Europe, thus ensuring the survival of Christianity in the West.
- **St. Cyril (826-869) and St. Methodius (815-885):** Cyril and his brother, Methodius, sons of a Greek family, brought the gospel to the Slavic peoples. They developed an alphabet for the Slavic languages which is still used today, and translated the Gospels into Slavonic. Cyril died in AD 869 and Methodius in AD 885. [831, 849-50, 854, 831]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Remind the young people that God always calls individuals to help him meet the needs of his people. Ask them to reflect on the following questions:

- What needs do you see in the world today? In your community? In your family?
- Do you know someone who is helping to meet any of these needs?
- How might God be asking you to respond to some of these needs?

Conclude with this prayer from the Mass for Holy Church:

O God, in the covenant of your Christ you never cease to gather to yourself from all nations a people growing together in unity through the Spirit; grant, we pray, that your Church, faithful to the mission entrusted to her, may continually go forward with the human family and always be the leaven and the soul of human society, to renew it in Christ and transform it into the family of God.

IV. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUES FROM AD 1000 TO AD 1500 (THE HIGH AND LATE MIDDLE AGES)

A. The Mission of the Church

At the beginning of this period, a reform movement arose in the Church. There was a revival of monastic life. Church leaders launched a campaign to assert the independence of the Church from secular society. The most famous leader of this reform movement was Pope St. Gregory VII. [2245-46]

During this period, there were rapid changes in society. Towns and cities grew steadily. To meet the educational needs of townspeople, cathedral schools were established in the eleventh century. A great interest in learning among Christians led to the founding of the first universities (such as those at Bologna, Italy; Paris, France; Oxford, England) in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. [30, 36-38, 50, 166]

Technical advances in architecture and engineering made possible the construction of the great Gothic cathedrals which still stand today. [1180, 1198, 2501]

Many holy men and women responded to these changes in society. Two new religious orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, were founded in the early thirteenth century to spread the Gospel in the growing cities. [927, 944]

The Black Death struck in Europe three times during the fourteenth century and, in some places, as much as one-third of the population died. The clergy were in particular danger due to their heroic efforts ministering to the sick and dying. [1503, 1509]

B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church

The Schism of 1054, often called the Eastern Schism, occurred because of cultural, political, and theological differences between Christians of the Eastern and Western Churches. The differences included, but were not limited to, disagreements concerning the place of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity and the Bishop of Rome's claim to universal jurisdiction. As a result of long years of disagreement, the Christians of the Eastern and Western world were estranged from each other. [247, 817-19, 822, 838]

The intermingling of Church and State affairs also caused bitter struggles, examples of which include the Investiture Controversy and the conflict between Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury and King Henry II of England. [2245]

Starting in 1095, Christians embarked on several military campaigns to retake the Holy Land from the Muslims. These campaigns were called the Crusades. Although many who fought in the Crusades did so out of a sincere desire to achieve a good end (for example, the safety of pilgrims who wished to visit the holy places in Jerusalem), these wars also caused much bloodshed and were unsuccessful in achieving their aim. [853]

Lack of education and widespread ignorance contributed to the growth of superstition and corruption. To combat superstition and heresy, the Church established a permanent Church court called the Inquisition. In a number of places, however, the attempts of the Inquisition to reform heretical ideas and practices led to severe and unjust sentences. [160, 853]

C. Significant Members of the Church

- **St. Dominic (1170-1221):** A renowned priest and preacher, Dominic established an order of men who traveled throughout Europe to preach and teach. This was very different from the cloistered orders in which the men lived in seclusion, away from the outside world. He also founded an order of women to pray for the apostolic work of the Dominican preachers. [425, 799, 1562, 1589]
- **St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226):** Francis was a nobleman, poet, and mystic, who greatly loved God’s creation, and gave up a life of wealth in order to follow Christ. He eventually founded the Franciscan order, which brought men together to spread the Gospel and follow a simple lifestyle. He also founded the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (the Third Order) in 1221. A third order may be described as a middle state between cloistered life and the outside world. For those who were married or had other ties to the world and, therefore, were not in a position to enter a religious order, entering a third order enabled individuals to follow in the saint’s footsteps. [293, 2014, 2443-45, 2745]
- **St. Clare (1194-1253):** Clare was a close friend of Francis of Assisi. Under his direction, she founded an order of cloistered nuns who are known as the Poor Clares. The lives of these holy women are characterized by fasting and prayer for the world. [1434, 2565, 2687]
- **St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274):** Thomas, a Dominican priest, was one of the greatest philosophers and theologians the world has ever known. Through his use of Scripture, Church tradition, and reason, he provided the Church with a systematic understanding of the Catholic faith (*Summa Theologica*) that still helps us today. [34, 43, 50, 94]
- **St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380):** A Dominican lay woman who lived in the fourteenth century, Catherine was a counselor of popes. Centuries later she was named a “Doctor of the Church” because of her profound spiritual writings. [313, 356, 951, 1937]
- **St. Frances of Rome (1384-1440):** A wife and mother, Frances was a courageous woman noted for her great charity to the poor and sick in Rome during the fifteenth century, which was a particularly difficult period in Rome’s history. [953, 1409, 2447-48]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

In every age, God calls men and women to serve him, some in a religious vocation. Invite the young people to reflect upon the call to serve as members of a religious community, dedicating all aspects of their lives to his service.

Lead the students in the following prayer from the Mass for Vocations:

Father, You call all who believe in you to grow perfect in love by following in the footsteps of Christ, your Son.

May those whom you have chosen to serve you as a religious provide by their way of life a convincing sign of your kingdom for the Church and the whole world.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

If possible, consider inviting a religious sister, a religious brother, or a priest who belongs to a religious order to speak with the young people about their vocation and call to religious life.

V. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUES FROM AD 1500 TO AD 1800

A. *The Mission of the Church*

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a time of renewal of the faith in the midst of religious controversies and wars.

- Some of these controversies led large numbers of Christians to protest against, and ultimately separate themselves from, the Catholic Church (Church of Rome). This widespread movement is called the Protestant Reformation. Christians who did not separate from the Church of Rome at that time became known as Roman Catholics.
- During the same period, a broad reform movement arose in the Catholic Church.
- The Council of Trent (1545-63), which addressed the Catholic Church's need for reform, sought to clarify Catholic teaching and strengthen discipline within the Church.
- Following the Council of Trent, Catholic leaders succeeded in reestablishing Catholicism in some parts of Europe that had become Protestant. This development is called the Counter-Reformation. [817-819, 834, 838, 884, 891, 1428]

In the eighteenth century the Enlightenment presented new challenges to the Church, and a gradual process of responding to the ideas of the Enlightenment was begun. The Age of Enlightenment may be defined as the intellectual and philosophical movement that emphasized the scientific method and reductionism as well as doctrines of individual liberty, the seeking of truth through unaided human reason, and the questioning of revealed truth.

Explorers and missionaries, especially from Spain and Portugal, brought Catholic Christianity to South and Central America, the Far East, and what is today the United States of America and Canada.

N.B. Missionaries of that time had an understanding of mission different from ours today, in that they identified Christianity with their culture and, therefore, frequently imposed their culture on the native peoples whom they came to evangelize. While such methods may rightly be criticized, the zeal and genuine accomplishments of these missionaries in bringing the gospel to others are, nonetheless, to be commended. [853-54, 856, 905, 927]

B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church

These centuries were marked by painful disagreements among Christians in Europe, which resulted in the separation of many people from the Church of Rome, and the rise of many different Protestant denominations, for example, Lutherans, Calvinists and Baptists. Religious fanaticism among both Protestants and Catholics resulted in hatred, persecution and religious wars in some parts of Europe. [855, 817-819]

The search for religious freedom compelled many to leave Europe and travel to America. However, even in the New World some people were still persecuted for their faith. [160, 164]

C. Significant Members of the Church

- **St. Angela Merici (1474-1540):** Angela Merici founded a group of lay women in Italy who dedicated their lives to educating poor girls. These lay women later became a worldwide order known as the Ursuline nuns. [369, 917, 2447]
- **St. Thomas More (1478-1535):** Husband, father and English statesman, Thomas More was appointed Chancellor by King Henry VIII. Because Thomas refused to cooperate with Henry's attack on the sanctity of marriage and the teaching authority of the Pope, he was martyred in 1535. [313, 2467, 2473]
- **Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566):** A Dominican priest and later a bishop, Bartolomé de Las Casas worked in Latin America in order to bring the Gospel to the Indians. He struggled to promote their civil rights and to have slavery prohibited. [853, 1586, 2414]
- **St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556):** A young Basque soldier of noble birth, Ignatius was wounded in battle. While recovering, he read about the life of Christ and of the saints, experienced a conversion, and dedicated himself to the service of the Lord. In 1534 he founded the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), a religious community of men noted for their missionary and educational work. His Spiritual Exercises are a great contribution to the Church's tradition of prayer. [827, 1490, 2684]
- **St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582):** A sixteenth century Spanish nun and mystic, Teresa of Avila was known for her courage, her prayer and her profound love of God. She reformed Carmelite religious life and wrote books on the spiritual life which still guide us today. She was proclaimed a "Doctor of the Church" by Pope Paul VI in 1970. [227, 1011, 1821, 2014, 2704, 2709]
- **St. Paul Miki (1562-1597):** Paul Miki was born in Japan and became a Jesuit in 1586. During a terrible persecution in that country he was martyred in 1597 – with twenty-five other religious and lay people – by being crucified. From his cross, Paul invited onlookers to accept Christianity, said he was joyfully giving his life for Christ, and forgave his executioners. [852, 1011, 2473, 2844]
- **St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622):** Francis de Sales became bishop of Geneva, a strong Protestant city, in 1602. Important in the reform movement within the Catholic Church, he was loved for his gentleness and pastoral concern. Through his writings, he taught spirituality, especially for the laity, stressing that the call to holiness is addressed to everyone. [855, 901, 2013]

- **St. Peter Claver (1580-1654):** Peter Claver was a Spanish Jesuit missionary who vowed to be forever a “slave” to his black brothers and sisters. He served in Colombia, South America, in the seventeenth century and is revered for his work among the black peoples. He died in 1654. [852, 2015, 2414]
- **St. Rose of Lima (1586-1617):** The patron saint of the Philippines, Latin America, and florists, Saint Rose of Lima was born in Peru to poor Spanish colonists. Often depicted wearing a crown of roses, she was so named due to her extreme physical beauty as a baby. Rose took a vow of chastity and went to great lengths to make her face look less beautiful. She embroidered things for sale to help her impoverished family and the poor. Mystic and visionary, she was the first social worker in the Americas, although she suffered from many afflictions. Miraculous events were attributed to her following her death. Saint Rose of Lima was canonized by Pope Clement X in 1671 and was the first person born in the Western Hemisphere to be recognized as a saint.
- **St. Isaac Jogues (1607-1646):** Isaac Jogues was a Jesuit priest, missionary, and martyr who traveled and worked among the Iroquois, Huron, and other Native populations in North America. He was captured by the Iroquois and, as a prisoner, suffered physical torment, while comforting, baptizing, and hearing confessions of the other prisoners. Isaac Jogues escaped his imprisonment and went to New Amsterdam where he was the first Catholic priest to visit Manhattan Island. He traveled back to France but was soon eager to return to the missions. He returned to Iroquois territory in the spring of 1646 and was martyred later that year by the Mohawk at their village of Ossernenon, south of the Mohawk River.
- **St. Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700):** A French woman who is considered one of the founders of French Canada, Marguerite Bourgeoys opened the first school of Montreal in 1658 for French and Indian children. She also established the first religious community of non-cloistered sisters in North America, the Congregation of Notre Dame. [5, 799, 851, 927]
- **St. Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680):** Born near what is now the town of Auriesville, New York, Kateri was the daughter of a Mohawk chief and a captive Algonquin mother, but was orphaned at the age of four. She was baptized by a Jesuit missionary at age twenty and moved to a Christian colony of Iroquois in Canada, where her faith, gentleness, kindness and devotion to Christ crucified impressed everyone. She died of disease at age 24. Her last words were, “Jesus! Mary! I love you!” [854, 1717, 1816, 1832]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Read Matthew 28:19-20 aloud. Ask the young people what this means to them.

Tell the group that Jesus sent the first disciples to spread his message and, by virtue of our baptism, he sends each of us to continue his mission today. Ask the young people to consider how Jesus is challenging each of them to spread his message.

Lead the young people in the following prayer for missions and missionaries from the Mass for the Spread of the Gospel:

*God our Father, you will all people to be saved
and come to the knowledge of your truth.
Send workers into your great harvest
that the Gospel may be preached to every creature
and your people, gathered together by the word of life
and strengthened by the power of the sacraments,
may advance in the way of salvation and love.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

VI. THE JOURNEY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUED FROM AD 1800 THROUGH THE 20TH CENTURY

A. The Mission of the Church

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the expansion of the Church throughout the world. In Africa and Asia in particular, the Church grew through the efforts of missionaries. In the United States of America, the Church increased through the influx of Catholic immigrants. Dioceses, parishes, and the Catholic School system in the United States steadily expanded to meet the religious and educational needs of these immigrants. [166, 905, 927]

The First Vatican Council (1869-1870) addressed several issues, among them materialism, inspiration of Scripture, and papal infallibility.

Clergy, religious, and laity developed and fostered the social mission of the Church throughout the world, by supporting the rights of labor, minorities, and all who are oppressed in any way. [2419, 2421, 2460-63]

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was called by Pope St. John XXIII to reform and renew the Church. In a series of authoritative documents, it proclaimed the teaching of the Church for the present day. The Council called for the renewal of the liturgy, a greater participation of the laity in the Church, ecumenism, the study of Sacred Scripture by scholars and laity, and the universal recognition of the right for religious freedom. For the first time in history, a Church council addressed itself not only to the Church but to the whole of humanity. [160, 820-23, 863, 884, 905, 910, 1204-05, 2108]

The Catholic Church is now, more than ever before, a global Church, with all the fervor and zeal of young communities being added to the gifts of an older, well-established Christian civilization. The visible presence of delegates from Third World nations at the Second Vatican Council as well as the diversity reflected in the present College of Cardinals has underlined this new reality. [782, 791, 2820]

Awareness of global, economic, social and ecological issues has likewise brought a new dimension to the Church's moral teaching. [1882-83, 1906-09, 1911, 2831-32]

The ecumenical movement of the twentieth century has been a great force for reconciliation among Christian communities. Catholics continue to work with others toward Christian unity through cooperation and dialogue. Interreligious dialogue between the Catholic Church and other major world religions has also increased our mutual understanding and respect. [817-22, 839-45, 855, 870]

Two of the Popes of the latter half of the twentieth century, Pope Saint Paul VI and Pope Saint John Paul II, were the first to travel extensively as popes. In the twenty-first century, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis have continued to travel and show their solidarity with Catholics around the world, encouraging them in their faith. Throughout their travels, all of these popes have continually challenged unjust structures and called on all people to work for world peace. [2304, 2307, 2420, 2438, 2442]

B. Struggles and Upheavals of the Church

During the modern age, the Church continued to suffer in many parts of the world due to secularism, prejudice, injustice, and persecution. [1928, 1931]

The Church, while suffering persecution in the face of Nazism, Communism, and Radical Islam, has nevertheless survived. It has sometimes even flourished as an underground Church in places such as Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Hungary, China, and Vietnam. [2242, 2244]

The Church in every age has had to face many problems; she is sustained by Christ's victory over sin and his promise to be with her for all time. Today the People of God, as they strive to live the Gospel message, are challenged by relativism, materialism, lack of respect for life and human dignity, and the erosion of religious values. [1930, 1939, 2373, 2424-25]

The continued presence of wars throughout the world, the horror of genocide, the rise of terrorism, and the grave threat posed by nuclear weapons have impelled the Church to intensify her work for peace. [2304, 2307, 2313-15, 2317]

C. Significant Members of the Church

- **Martyr Saints of China (died between 1648-1930):** The Martyr Saints of China, or Augustine Zhao Rong and his 119 companions, are known as 87 Chinese Catholics and 33 Western missionaries who, from the mid-17th century to 1930, were martyred because of their ministry and in some cases because of their refusal to denounce their faith in Christ Jesus. Many died in the Boxer Rebellion, in which 30,000 Chinese converts to Christianity along with missionaries and other foreigners were killed by revolutionaries. Anna Wang, a 14-year-old girl, was among the Chinese converts who refused to renounce Christianity and she spent the hours before her death in prayer and encouraged others to remain faithful. The Martyr Saints of China were canonized on October 1, 2000 by Pope St. John Paul II.
- **Venerable Pierre Toussaint (1766-1853):** A former slave, Pierre Toussaint was brought to New York City in 1787 and there he was apprenticed to one of New York's leading hairdressers. He earned a good living as a

hairdresser and eventually gained his freedom, later becoming a noted philanthropist to the poor of the city. Together with his wife, Juliette, Pierre Toussaint performed many charitable works. He contributed funds and helped raise money to build Old Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Mulberry Street. Pierre Toussaint is the first layperson to be buried in the crypt below the main altar of Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue.

- **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774-1821):** Elizabeth Seton was a New Yorker, a married woman and a mother. After she was widowed, she became a Roman Catholic. Following that, she professed vows as a religious sister and founded the Sisters of Charity in 1809, and in 1817 established the first orphanage in New York City. She helped to develop the Catholic school system in the United States of America and is the first American-born person to be canonized. [5, 1814, 1915]
- **St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890):** Cardinal Newman was an Anglican priest in England who, despite personal and professional opposition, was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1845. His writings have done much to give people a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith. The establishment of Newman Centers (Catholic ministry centers) throughout the world for Catholic students attending secular universities was inspired by the writings of Cardinal John Henry Newman. [157, 1723, 1778, 2144]
- **St. Anthony Mary Claret (1807-1870):** The “spiritual father of Cuba” was a missionary, religious founder, social reformer, and archbishop. He was a Spaniard whose work took him to the Caribbean, Canary Islands, and Europe. Ordained at 28, he was prevented by ill health from entering religious life as a Carthusian or a Jesuit. Despite this, he became one of Spain's most popular preachers. He was present at the First Vatican Council and was a staunch defender of the doctrine of papal infallibility. Anthony spent 10 years giving popular missions and retreats, always placing great emphasis on the Eucharist and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. An interest in publishing led Anthony to found the Religious Publishing House, a major Catholic publishing venture in Spain. Beginning with five priests, he also founded a religious institute of missionaries. Known today as the Claretians, they are active as missionaries in over 65 countries on five continents.
- **Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903):** A pope of the late nineteenth century, Leo XIII is best known for his commitment to the rights of working men and women. His encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) is still considered one of the classic statements on the subject of justice for workers. [1926, 2427-28, 2434-35]
- **St. John Neumann (1811-1860):** A Catholic priest from Bohemia, John Neumann immigrated to the United States in 1836 and was ordained that same year at Old St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. He received permission to join the Redemptorist order in 1840. In 1852 he became the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia and during his tenure he founded the first Catholic diocesan school system in the United States. He is the first United States bishop to be canonized.
- **St. Dominic Savio (1842-1857):** Born into a peasant family at Riva, Italy, young Dominic joined Saint John Bosco as a student at the Oratory in Turin at the age of 12. Saint John Bosco was impressed with Dominic's desire to be a priest and to help in his work with neglected boys. A peacemaker and an organizer, young Dominic founded a group he called the *Company of the Immaculate Conception* which, in addition to being devotional, aided Saint John Bosco with the boys and with manual work. As a youth, Dominic spent hours rapt in prayer and he called his raptures, “my distractions.” Even in play, he said that at times, “It seems heaven is opening just above me. I am afraid I may say or do something that will make the other boys laugh.” Dominic would say, “I can't do big things. But I want all I do, even the smallest thing, to be for the greater glory of God.” Dominic's health was always frail and, after receiving the last sacraments, he died on March 9, 1857. Due to his youth, some thought Dominic was too young to be considered a saint. Pope Saint Pius X declared that just the opposite was true and supported the cause for Dominic's sainthood, leading to his eventual canonization in 1954.

- **St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850-1917):** Born in Italy in 1850, Frances Cabrini founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a religious community of women who work in schools and hospitals. Mother Cabrini was the first naturalized American citizen to be declared a saint. [5, 1509, 1932, 2447]
- **Servant Of God Mother Mary Alphonsa (1851-1926):** Born in Lenox, Massachusetts, Rose Hawthorne was the daughter of the writer Nathaniel Hawthorne and his wife, Sophia. She was married while still young and, along with her husband, converted to Roman Catholicism. After her husband's death, Rose sought greater purpose in life. After spending time with the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent dePaul and training as a nurse to serve cancer patients, she joined the Third Order Dominicans. On December 8, 1900, with approval of Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan of New York, she founded a religious order which would become known as the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne. The establishment of St. Rose's Free Home for Incurable Cancer in Cherry Street in New York City housed fifteen poor women with cancer. The community eventually went on to establish seven nursing facilities in six different states. Today, Rosary Hill Home in Hawthorne, New York cares for the poor who are suffering from incurable cancer.
- **St. Katherine Drexel (1858-1955):** An heiress and philanthropist from Philadelphia, Katherine Drexel, a Sister of the Blessed Sacrament, turned away from wealth and social standing to found a missionary community serving African-Americans and Native Americans. She used her inheritance for the benefit of Native Americans, financing the printing of 500 copies of a catechism that would be used by Navajo children. Her legacy is marked by selfless service for the victims of injustice and her belief in quality education for all. She died at the age of 96 at her order's motherhouse near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- **St. Charles Lwanga (1860-1886):** Charles Lwanga was a young Christian page in the service of a pagan emperor. He protected the other pages from the emperor, who demanded that they participate in homosexual activity. Charles was martyred with twenty-one other Ugandans during the persecutions of 1886. [2357, 2472-73]
- **St. Josephine Margaret Bakhita (Ca. 1869-1947):** Born around 1869 in the Darfur region of Sudan, Josephine grew up happy and relatively prosperous. Historians believe that sometime in February 1877 Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders and for the next 12 years she would be bought, sold and given away over a dozen times. As a slave, her experiences varied from fair treatment to cruel and she eventually arrived in Italy and was placed in the custody of the Canossian Sisters in Venice. While she was with the sisters, Josephine came to learn about God; she was deeply moved by her time with the sisters and discerned a call to follow Christ. Josephine's mistress could not persuade her to leave the convent and Italian authorities eventually intervened on Josephine's behalf. It was determined in the courts that since slavery had been outlawed in Sudan before Josephine was born, she could not lawfully be made a slave. Josephine was declared free and chose to remain with the Canossian Sisters. She was received into the Catholic Church on January 9, 1890 and took the name Josephine Margaret Fortunata (the Latin translation of her Arabic name, Bakhita). She received the sacraments of initiation from the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, who would later become Pope Pius X. For the next 42 years of her life, she worked as a cook and a doorkeeper at the convent. She also traveled and visited other convents telling her story to other sisters and preparing them for work in Africa. When speaking of her enslavement, she often professed she would thank her kidnappers, for had she not been kidnapped, she might never have come to know Jesus Christ and entered His Church. In her later years, despite suffering physical pain and having to use a wheelchair, she always remained cheerful. On the evening of February 8, 1947, Josephine spoke her last words, "Our Lady, Our Lady!" In 1958 the process of canonization began for Josephine under Pope Saint John XXIII and in 1978 Pope Saint John Paul II declared her venerable. While the news of her beatification in 1992 was censored in Sudan, within the year, Pope Saint John Paul II visited that country and publicly honored her. She was canonized on October 1, 2000 and is recognized as the patron saint of Sudan.

- **St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897):** Moved by her love for Jesus, Thérèse became a Carmelite nun when she was fifteen years old. She strove to do all the small tasks of life to the best of her ability, seeing them as expressions of her love for Jesus and for the others with whom she lived. In her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, she teaches “her little way” – how to seek holiness of life in the ordinary and how to persevere in prayer even when it is difficult. Thérèse was a missionary in spirit because she prayed daily and fervently for people who did not yet know Jesus that they might be saved by His divine love. Pope Pius XI declared St. Thérèse, “Patroness of the Missions,” recognizing that some missionaries go out to evangelize in places where the Gospel has not yet taken root while others, like Thérèse, save souls by their faithful prayer for them at home. [201, 258, 826, 2710, 2742]
- **Pope St. John XXIII (1881-1963):** Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, one of fourteen children born to poor parents in Sotto il Monte, Italy, would eventually become one of the most influential popes in recent history. He was ordained a priest in 1904 and served the Church in many ways throughout the early part of the 20th century and after the Second World War. He became a cardinal in 1953 and upon the death of Pius XII in 1958 was elected pope. Shortly after his election, Pope John XXIII called for an ecumenical council which would come to be known as Vatican II. He was canonized a saint by Pope Francis on April 27, 2014.
- **St. Pio of Pietrelcina [Padre Pio] (1887-1968):** Francesco Forgione was born into an Italian farming family devoted to their Catholic faith. From a young age he had a strong personal relationship with the Lord and wanted to be a priest. When he joined the Capuchin Franciscan Friars, he was given the name Padre Pio. He suffered much throughout his life – physically as well as spiritually – and he always offered his sufferings to the Lord for the sake of saving sinners. His physical difficulties never prevented him from continuing his ministry of compassion for the sick and the suffering. He was a profound mystic – a person of deep prayer who experienced the presence of God. One day in 1918, as Padre Pio was making his thanksgiving after Mass, he had a vision of Jesus. When the vision ended, he had the “stigmata” – the wounds of Christ Crucified – in his own hands, feet, and side. Padre Pio used his extraordinary spiritual gifts to express Jesus’ compassion. Thousands of people flocked to him to receive the Sacrament of Penance. All day long, 10 hours a day, he would hear their confessions. The people often said that he knew details of their lives that they never told him, and that he understood their souls.
- **Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro (1891-1927):** “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” – Long live Christ the King! – were the last words Pro uttered before he was executed for being a Catholic priest and serving his flock. Born into a prosperous, devout family in Guadalupe de Zacatecas, Mexico, Miguel entered the Jesuits in 1911. Three years later, because of religious persecution in Mexico, he fled to Spain. After he was ordained in Belgium in 1925, Father Pro immediately returned to Mexico where he served a Church forced to go underground. He clandestinely celebrated the Eucharist and ministered the sacraments to small groups of Catholics. He and his brother, Roberto, were arrested on false charges of attempting to assassinate Mexico’s president. While Roberto was spared, Miguel was sentenced to face a firing squad and was executed on November 23, 1927. His funeral became a public demonstration of faith. Miguel Pro was beatified in 1988.
- **St. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1901):** Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish Catholic priest who fulfilled the Gospel message by laying down his life for another. During the Second World War, he was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp. He volunteered to die in the place of another prisoner, who, when chosen to die, had sighed, “My poor wife, my poor children!” [609, 1826, 2002]
- **Venerable Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979):** Archbishop Fulton Sheen was known for his preaching and especially his work on television and radio. The host of the television program *Life is Worth Living* from 1952 to 1957, Archbishop Sheen’s legacy endures as these episodes continue to be rebroadcast. In 1952 he won an Emmy Award for his efforts, accepting the award by saying, “I feel it is time I pay tribute to my four writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.”

- **Pope St. Paul VI (1897-1978):** Pope St. Paul VI continued the Second Vatican Council that was started by his predecessor, Pope St. John XXIII. His chief concern was that in the 20th century the Catholic Church should continue to be a faithful witness to the teachings of the Church, recognizing their relevance in the present time. Upon conclusion of the Council, Paul VI moved to interpret and implement the mandates outlined in the documents of the Council. He was canonized by Pope Francis on October 14, 2018.
- **Servant of God Dorothy Day (1897-1980):** A convert to Catholicism (she was, in fact, an agnostic), Dorothy Day experienced a period of searching for the meaning of life. After the birth of her daughter, she began a period of spiritual awakening which led her to the Catholic faith; Dorothy was baptized on December 29, 1927 at Our Lady Help of Christians Church on Staten Island. She was a lay woman who, by her example, encouraged many to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Founder of the Catholic Worker movement, she labored most of her life in New York City and died there in 1980. [544, 1929-31, 2306, 2446]
- **St. Teresa of Los Andes (1900-1920):** As a young girl growing up in the early 1900's in Santiago, Chile, Juana Fernandez read an autobiography the French-born saint, Thérèse, popularly known as the Little Flower. This experience deepened her desire to serve God and clarified the path she would follow and at 19 Juana became a Carmelite nun, taking the name of Teresa. The convent offered the simple lifestyle Teresa desired and the joy of living in a community of women completely devoted to God. She focused her days on prayer and sacrifice. "I am God's," she wrote in her diary. "He created me and is my beginning and my end." Toward the end of her short life, Teresa began an apostolate of letter-writing, sharing her thoughts on the spiritual life with many people. At age 20 she contracted typhus and quickly took her final vows. She died a short time later, during Holy Week. Known as the "Flower of the Andes," Teresa remains popular with the estimated 100,000 pilgrims who visit her shrine in Los Andes each year. Canonized in 1993 by Pope John Paul II, she is Chile's first saint.
- **St. Maria Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938):** Born into a poor, religious family in Poland, at an early age Faustina felt called to a religious life. She was so poor that she was not admitted to the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy until she saved enough money to pay for her religious habit. It was during a period of recuperation from illness that Faustina was visited by Jesus, the "King of Divine Mercy." She kept a diary, which was a record of her conversations with Jesus. Beginning in July of 1937 and throughout the 20th century, the image of and devotion to Divine Mercy has spread throughout the world.
- **St. Teresa of Calcutta [Kolkata] (1910-1997):** A native of Albania, Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity in 1950. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her charitable work. She was vocal in her opposition to abortion and was admired by many and honored around the world for her care of the dying. The Missionaries of Charity, with several thousand sisters and a presence in many countries, manages homes for people dying of HIV/AIDS, soup kitchens, orphanages, and schools.
- **Thomas Merton (1915-1968):** Having been previously baptized in the Church of England, Thomas Merton was received into the Catholic Church on November 16, 1938 at Corpus Christi Church in Manhattan. He was a Trappist monk and gifted writer who wrote extensively about the spiritual life, monasticism, and the need for world peace. He was also committed to dialogue with Eastern religions on the subject of mysticism. His autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, tells his conversion story. [843, 925-26, 2304, 2687]
- **St. Oscar Romero (1917-1980):** Oscar Romero, Archbishop and martyr, was assassinated in 1980 while celebrating Mass because of his stand on human rights and his work to promote justice and peace in his country, El Salvador. [1907-09, 1912, 2473]
- **Pope St. John Paul II (1920-2005):** Karol Josef Wojtyla was born in Wadowice, Poland. His early life was very hard. His mother died when he was 9 and his older brother when he was 12. When he was 19 the

Nazis invaded Poland and he and his father had to go into hiding. He became a Catholic priest during the years when the Communists were taking control of Poland. Later, as Pope, he was instrumental in ending the Communist rule in Eastern Europe. Pope John Paul II was the longest-serving pope in modern history – from 1978 to 2005. During his pontificate, he travelled extensively throughout the world, presenting the Church’s teachings in many countries with their vastly different religious traditions and cultures. He had a special love for youth and they for him and in 1985, he began the World Youth Day movement. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which provides the basic content for all Catholic education, was published under his direction. His teachings on the Theology of the Body provide the Catholic context for teaching human sexuality. In 1983 he promulgated the *New Code of Canon Law*. Just three years after he became pope, John Paul II was shot in St. Peter’s Square by a Turkish political extremist. After his recovery, he visited his would-be assassin in prison and forgave him.

- **St. Gianna Beretta Molla (1922-1962):** While pregnant with her fourth child, Gianna Molla, a medical doctor, refused medical treatment, knowing that doing so could result in her own death, which later occurred in 1962. Her medical career was marked by adherence to the teachings of the Catholic Church. She dedicated herself to charitable work and was involved in the work of both Catholic Action and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

- Read Matthew 25:35-36 to the group.
- Ask them to reflect on Jesus’ questions and think about the times they encountered someone who was hungry or thirsty. What did they do? How did they welcome the stranger?
- What did they do to meet the needs of one who needed adequate clothing? How did they help one who is ill or injured? For those who are suffering, how can we let them know we care?
- Lead the students in the following prayer from the Mass for Refugees and Exiles:

*Lord, no one is a stranger to you and no one is ever far from your loving care.
In your kindness, watch over refugees and exiles,
those separated from their loved ones,
young people who are lost,
and those who have left or run away from home.
Bring them back safely to the place where they long to be
and help us always to show your kindness to strangers and to those in need.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

VII. CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

As the Catholic Church continues in the 21st century, the faithful continue to seek a relationship with Jesus Christ in the face of continued persecution, secularism and indifference. Realities such as the increasing presence of technology in everyday life, the investigation of cases of sex abuse in the Church and society, the attempts of followers of radical Islam to terrorize Christians, and the acceptance of assisted suicide have, at

times, presented obstacles to effective evangelization and catechesis. Regardless of one's state in life, whether ordained, lay or religious, through daily life one is bound to share the Good News in word and deed for the building up of God's kingdom on earth.

A. The Papacy at the beginning of the 21st century

Following the death of Pope St. John Paul II on April 2, 2005, a papal conclave was convened during which Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger was elected pope. During his papacy, Benedict XVI advocated a return to fundamental Christian values to counter the increase in secularism that was taking place throughout the world.

Encyclicals written by Pope Benedict XVI include:

- *Caritas in veritate* (Charity in Truth): June 29, 2009
- *Spe Salvi* (Saved by Hope): November 30, 2007
- *Deus Caritas Est* (On Christian Love – God is Love): December 25, 2005

On February 11, 2013, Pope Benedict announced his resignation that would become effective later that same month on February 28. He would be the first pope to resign since Gregory XII in 1415, and the first to resign of his own volition since Celestine V in 1294.

The conclave that followed Pope Benedict XVI's resignation resulted in the election of Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio, who would become Pope Francis. The papacy of Francis was marked by a number of firsts. He was the first pontiff to hail from the Americas and the first South American pope. He was also the first Jesuit pope and the first to choose the name Francis.

From the beginning of his papacy on March 13, 2013, Pope Francis maintained that the Catholic Church should be more open and welcoming. Noted for his humility and emphasis on God's mercy, Pope Francis broke from tradition when he chose to reside in the Domus Sanctae Marthae guesthouse rather than the papal apartments of the Apostolic palace, the traditional living quarters of previous popes. Pope Francis has traveled extensively and has exhibited a deep commitment to interfaith dialogue.

The first encyclical of Pope Francis was issued on June 29, 2013. *Lumen fidei* (The Light of Faith), issued in conjunction with the Year of Faith proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI (October 2012 to November 2013), was the first encyclical in the history of the Church that was written by two popes.

The Jubilee of Mercy was formally declared through Pope Francis' papal bull, *Misericordiae vultus* (The Face of Mercy), issued on April 11, 2015. Beginning on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 2015, the Jubilee of Mercy concluded on November 20, 2016, the Feast of Christ the King. During the Jubilee the faithful were reminded of the importance of mercy and that the Church is more open to all people.

Papal documents that reflect the Holy Father's vision for the Catholic Church as well as the whole world include:

- *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel): Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (November 24, 2013).
- *Laudato si'* (Praise be to You!): Pope Francis' first encyclical concerning care for the planet (June 18, 2015).
- *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love): Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on love in the family (March 19, 2016).

- *Gaudete et exsultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad): Apostolic Exhortation on the call to holiness in today’s world (March 19, 2018).
- *Christus vivit* (Christ is Alive): Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the entire People of God (March 25, 2019).
- *Querida Amazonia* (Beloved Amazon): Post-Synodal Exhortation to the People of God and to All Persons of Good Will (February 2, 2020).
- *Fratelli Tutti* (All Brothers): Encyclical letter on fraternity and social friendship (October 3, 2020).

B. Significant Members of the Church

- **21 Coptic Martyrs:** On February 15, 2015, a video was shared that showed 21 men in orange jumpsuits being forced to the ground in Libya and then beheaded by ISIS-affiliated militants. These men were killed because they were Christians. Reaction throughout the world was swift and condemning. Pope Francis called the killings “barbaric.” He said further that, “The flood of our Christian brothers is testimony that cries out. Be they Catholic, Orthodox, Lutherans, it doesn’t matter. They’re Christian.”

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Read Romans 10:13-15 to the group. Give them some time to reflect upon the questions that are being asked. Encourage those who wish to share their thoughts.

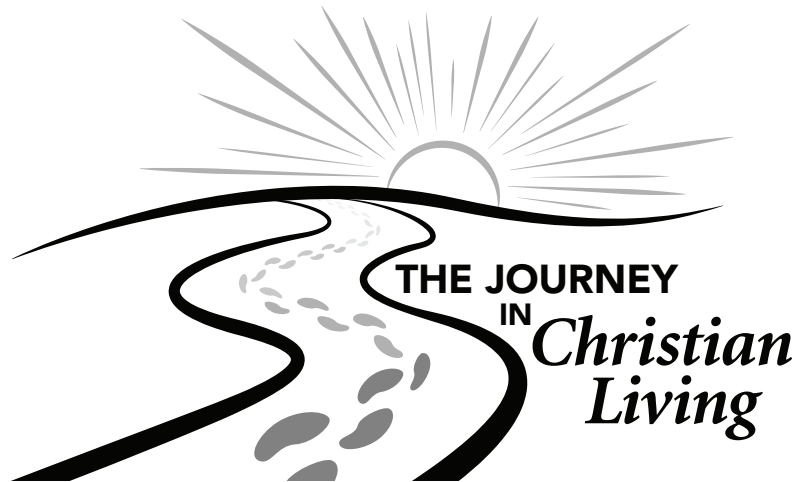
Conclude by praying the *Prayer for the New Evangelization* (USCCB):

*Heavenly Father, pour forth your Holy Spirit to inspire me with these words from Holy Scripture.
 Stir in my soul the desire to renew my faith
 and deepen my relationship with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ
 so that I might truly believe in and live the Good News.
 Open my heart to hear the Gospel
 and grant me the confidence to proclaim the Good News to others.
 Pour out your Spirit, so that I might be strengthened to go forth
 and witness to the Gospel in my everyday life through my words and actions.
 In moments of hesitation, remind me:
 If not me, then who will proclaim the Gospel?
 If not now, then when will the Gospel be proclaimed?
 If not the truth of the Gospel, then what shall I proclaim?
 God, our Father, I pray that through the Holy Spirit
 I might hear the call of the New Evangelization to deepen my faith,
 grow in confidence to proclaim the Gospel
 and boldly witness to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus Christ,
 who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, forever and ever. Amen!*



GRADE EIGHT

MORALITY



Through our relationship with Jesus, we grow in an ever-deepening awareness of who God is, who we are, and how God calls us to live. Catholic Christian morality gives direction to our response to God's call.

OBJECTIVES

- To help the young adolescent grow in an understanding of the moral responsibilities arising from one's relationship with Jesus.
- To help the young adolescent understand what conscience is and how to form his or her conscience according to the Catholic faith.
- To help the young adolescent learn basic concepts of morality and develop skills for moral decision-making.
- To help the young adolescent to recognize the role of the Holy Spirit and the witness and guidance of the Catholic Christian community in moral living.

I. DEFINITION OF MORALITY

As Catholic Christians, we need to remember the great dignity we possess through our Baptism. We have become temples of the Holy Spirit and share in the life of the risen Lord. We must live in accordance with that dignity through our moral conduct. [1691-92, 1694-95]

Morality is the quality of our actions whereby they are right or wrong. Actions are morally right when they are in agreement with God's law and will. [1749, 1786, 1950]

God's will for us is that in our lives we become like Jesus. God's will is always for our good. "God wants you all to be holy." (1 Thessalonians 4:3) [50, 218, 271]

Jesus is the model for morally right living. He most effectively teaches us how to live in harmony with the Creator, others, ourselves, and indeed the whole created world. [459, 520, 1693]

II. THE BASIS OF CATHOLIC MORALITY IN THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS

A. Jesus' Relationship with God the Father

Throughout his years on earth, Jesus lived in an intimate relationship with God, his Father, and was always obedient to God's will. This faithful response is revealed throughout Jesus' life as well as in his death and resurrection. [516, 615, 1693]

Jesus invites all people to that same kind of fidelity. He is the model for Christians, for he said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6) [519, 1596, 1698]

B. Jesus' Teaching on the Commandments

In his teaching, Jesus builds on the covenantal relationship between God and the people of Israel, revealed in a particular way in the Ten Commandments. The first three commandments concern our relationship with God. The last seven concern our relationship with our neighbor.

1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

(Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21) [1961, 1964, 2057, 2060, 2067]

These commandments are summed up by Jesus in the Great Law of Love: “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39; see also Mark 12:28-31) [1822, 1967]

C. Jesus’ Teaching on Love

Jesus adds to this teaching a radically new dimension:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:43-48) [1826-28, 1972]

Jesus is the perfect model of this unconditional love and calls each Christian to follow him in living this love. [520, 1823]

D. Jesus’ Vision of the Kingdom

Jesus describes God’s kingdom as a place where justice, peace and love reign. While the fullness of this kingdom will only be found in heaven, it has already begun here on earth, wherever God’s will is being carried out. [1717, 1721, 1726, 2046]

The Beatitudes reveal the way of living that characterizes God’s kingdom:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven ... (Matthew 5:3-12) [1716-17, 1719]*

E. Jesus’ Invitation to His Disciples

All people are created with the gift of freedom (the power to act or not to act, according to reason and will). This freedom is meant to be a force for growth and good. [1704, 1712, 1731]

However, in all human beings an attitude of self-centeredness often dominates (e.g. “what’s in it for me”). A life marked by choosing the good as God sees it and putting God and others ahead of ourselves is not easy. It calls for a turning away from our basic tendency toward self-centeredness. [1432, 1714, 1739]

Jesus calls his disciples to use their freedom to choose to follow the way of love rather than the way of selfishness. [1730-31, 1749]

Through conversion we turn away from selfishness and the isolation to which it leads. Conversion is the life-long process of responding to God's call to "change our heart." Jesus calls each of us to discipleship through conversion. [1427, 1431, 1721, 1888, 1949]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Remind the young people that before his conversion, Zacchaeus the tax collector was cheating people. Invite the young people to listen as you read the story of how Jesus called Zacchaeus to change (Luke 19:1-10).

Ask them to think of times when their conscience has caused them to stop in the midst of what they are doing and called them to change.

Saint John Henry Newman said, "Once we become friends with Jesus our lives change." Ask the young people to think about ways they may act differently because they are friends of Jesus.

Conclude with the Prayer of St. Francis:

*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;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

III. LEARNING TO CHOOSE

A. Fundamental Choices

The book of Deuteronomy sets before the people of God the challenge to make a fundamental commitment to a life centered on God:

Hear then, I have set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. If you obey the commandments of the Lord, your God, which I enjoin on you today, loving him, and walking in his ways, and keeping his commandments, statutes and decrees, you will live and grow numerous, and the Lord, your God, will bless you ... If, however, you turn away your hearts and will not listen, but are led astray and adore and serve other gods, I tell you now that you will certainly perish ... I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him ... (Deuteronomy 30: 15-20) [1696]

Created with free will, we choose how we will live. Our choices affect not only our life here on earth, but also our life hereafter. [1724, 1732]

Jesus confirms this in his depiction of the Last Judgment:

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me ...' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, ill and in prison and you did not care for me ...' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. (Matthew 25: 34-36, 40-43, 45-46) [1696]

Self-centered living leads to unhappiness in this life and ultimately to eternal punishment: separation from God. [1696, 1861]

Choosing to lead a God-centered life is not easy. At its heart is the call to conversion. As Jesus said, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24) [618, 2002]

God-centered living inevitably bears fruit in love, joy and peace in this life, and leads finally to eternal life with God and the saints in heaven. [1709, 2012-13]

B. Definition of Conscience

Conscience is the inner sense or power by which we judge an act to be right or wrong. [1776-78, 1796]

As Catholics our conscience is based on:

- The natural law, that is, the basic awareness of right and wrong written by the Creator in the hearts of all people and found in the Ten Commandments (Decalogue), and
- Our understanding of right and wrong as expressed in the laws of God, the laws of the Church, and the laws of a just society based on Catholic Social Teaching. (1780, 1952, 2030)

C. The Development of Conscience

Learning to know and to choose the good which God desires is for each of us a lifelong process of conscience formation. Our conscience helps us to make good moral choices. [1730, 1784, 1798]

The process of conscience formation involves learning to know and understand both God's law and the Church's teaching. [1783-85, 2039]

- The law of God is found in our hearts and is revealed to us in Scripture. [1785]
- The Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, plays an essential role in helping us to know the morality of various actions and attitudes. The Church's magisterium – the Pope and bishops in their role as teachers – preach to the people of God the faith which is to be believed and applied in moral life and continue to address new moral dilemmas as they arise. Guided by the commandments, the beatitudes, Jesus' law of love, all of revelation, our Catholic tradition and the community's experience, the Church gives direction to our choices. [1785, 2032, 2034, 2037]

Conscience formation also entails our own personal openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In Baptism and Confirmation we receive the power of the Holy Spirit to help us discern and do what God requires of us in a particular circumstance. [1266, 1302-03, 1785, 2038]

We develop our conscience by integrating into our thoughts, decisions, and our very being what the law of God and the teachings of the Church tell us. [1786-88, 1794]

It is our duty to develop our conscience according to the laws of the Church.

Legitimate authority is necessary in every human community. It is our responsibility to obey the just laws of society. [1897-99, 1916, 2239]

Nevertheless, when we make choices according to our conscience, we will at times find ourselves in direct conflict with the society around us. [1869, 1903, 2244]

- The fact that something is legally acceptable does not necessarily make it morally right. [1902, 2050]
- What is identified as morally wrong by the natural law, the law of God, the teaching of the Church, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit may be condoned by our society or even protected by its law, for example, abortion. [2256, 2270-71]
- As authentic teachers, the bishops pronounce on moral questions that fall within natural law and reason. [2050]
- We are called by our baptism to build a just and peaceful society. This involves not only choosing what is morally right for ourselves, but also working to make laws which reflect moral goodness. [1915-16, 2255]

D. Elements of a Moral Decision

There are three elements in a moral decision: the *object*, the *intention* and the *circumstances*. [1750]

- The ***object*** is the action itself, the thing which is done. [1751]
- The ***intention*** refers to the person's goal or purpose in doing the action. [1752]
- The ***circumstances*** are the particular features of each individual situation in which an action is taken. [1754]

The object may be good or evil in itself. For example, it is good to give to the poor. Lying is evil. [1751]

The intention may also be good or evil. [1752]

- A good intention does not make something which is evil into something good, however. For example, lying with the intention of obtaining something good does not make it good to lie. The end does not justify the means. [1753]
- A bad intention, furthermore, can make something which is ordinarily good into something evil. For example, pretending to be a friend to someone, for the sake of gaining some advantage for ourselves, makes a friendly action hollow, deceptive, and therefore morally wrong. [1753]

All morally good decisions are both good in their object and in their intention. [1755]

The circumstances, including the consequences, do not make a bad action good or a good action bad, but they may increase or decrease the good or evil of the action. For example, Jesus points out that the widow who gave two small coins, which was all she possessed, was more generous than the rich people who gave large sums (Mark 12:41-44). [1754]

Circumstances can affect the degree of responsibility one bears as well. For example, the responsibility of those who act out of fear or ignorance is less than that of those who make a deliberate choice without fear, knowing what they are doing. [1754]

E. The Process of Making a Good Moral Choice

Throughout our lives, we will be faced with situations which require of us a moral choice. Sometimes, especially if we are in the habit of doing good, these choices may seem simple and we are able to make them without a great deal of reflection: We decide to tell the truth rather than to lie, we decide to be kind rather than to be cruel, we decide to be fair rather than to cheat. [1777, 1804]

At other times, however, moral decisions can be complex and difficult, and the temptations to choose other than the good can be great. Having formed our conscience, we must listen to it as we utilize the following decision-making process:

- Reflect on all aspects of the situation and the various possible courses of action open to us.
- Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit.
- Recall God's law and the Church's teaching.
- Consider the consequences of the choice.
- Seek trusted, respected, and competent advice when necessary.
- Remember Jesus is with us and speak with him about the choice.
- Recall that our decision will affect our relationship with God and others. [1787-89]

In utilizing this decision-making process, we must make every effort to arrive at a decision of conscience which is correct and certain.

- A decision of conscience is correct when it is in conformity with the will of God.
- It is *certain* when we have no serious doubt about the rightness of our decision.

Once we have confronted a situation that requires a decision and have followed a process of discerning God's will in that situation, making every effort to arrive at a correct and certain decision of conscience, then we are obliged to act in accordance with that decision and trust in God's mercy. [1790, 1800]

F. Dealing with Temptation

Often we feel drawn to make selfish choices which are against the will of God. This experience is called temptation. [2846-47]

In itself, temptation is not a sin. Still, it is the responsibility of every person to recognize and avoid the persons, places, things and situations which might lead us into temptation. [2848]

The Gospel account of Jesus' temptations in the desert shows that the devil uses many means of tempting. Jesus is our model, because he turned away from what the devil offered and chose the will of God. [2849]

G. Failure to Choose the Good as God Sees It

Sin is deliberately choosing not to do God's will. Some examples are:

- Instead of honoring the Lord's Day, some choose not to participate at Mass.
- Instead of respecting the property of others, for example, we cover it with graffiti or destroy it.
- Instead of recognizing people's rights to their own property, we steal it.
- Instead of safeguarding and respecting human life, assisted suicide, euthanasia, and abortion are tolerated and murders take place.
- Instead of telling the truth, we tell lies.
- Instead of honoring God's name, we use it to curse others or to express our anger.
- Instead of trusting in God's providence and care for us, we put our faith in superstitious practices.
- Instead of respecting and caring for our bodies, we abuse drugs, alcohol, food and sex.
- Instead of respecting and obeying those in authority, we show contempt for them and disobey them.

In other words, instead of doing what God wants, we choose what we have convinced ourselves is good. [1707, 1847-50, 1871]

Mortal sin is the complete turning away from God and God's law. This free, deliberate refusal to accept God's will causes a spiritual death or separation from God. A sin is mortal if the three following conditions are met:

- The action is a grave evil in itself.
- The person has a clear knowledge of the action, that is, one fully understands the evil he or she would be doing.
- The person gives it his or her full consent, that is, one makes a sufficiently deliberate personal choice to sin. [1854, 1856-61, 1874]

Venial sin is not serious enough to break our relationship with God, but it weakens that relationship because it is an action we know is wrong yet freely choose to do it. The continual committing of venial sin can lead us to commit mortal sin. A habit acquired by repeated sin engenders vices. [1854-55, 1862-63, 1875]

Capital sin is the name given to the seven basic tendencies which are part of our sinful nature and the chief sources of sin in our lives. [1865-66]

- *Pride* is a disordered action in which one is seeking praise and honor, and a denial of the real nature of our relationship as obedient children of a loving God. [2094, 2540]
- *Covetousness (Greed)* is a disordered desire for possessions and material things. [2514, 2536]
- *Lust* is a disordered desire for sexual pleasure. [2351, 2529]
- *Envy* is the resentment of another person's talents, personal success or good fortune. [2538-40, 2553-54]

- *Gluttony* is a disordered desire for food and drink. [2290]
- *Anger* is disordered rage which causes one to seek revenge or desire injury to another. [2259, 2262, 2302]
- *Sloth* is a disordered desire to avoid our duties and responsibilities toward God and others. [2094, 2733]

Sin not only jeopardizes our relationship with God, it also has an impact on the entire community. Failure to love lessens the bond of love among us all. [1440]

Sins of individuals can give rise to social situations and institutions opposed to God’s goodness, such as slavery, child labor, prostitution, human trafficking, racism, ecological abuse, and the exploitation of third world countries for profit. Structures which perpetuate violence, injustice, and other disorders in society are called “social sin.” Social sin is an outgrowth of personal sins, and leads its victims to do evil. [408, 1869]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Lead the young people in an examination of conscience based on the Stations of the Cross. After each question, allow time for silent reflection.

- *Jesus was accused unjustly.* Has this ever happened to you? How did you deal with it? Have you ever accused someone unjustly?
- *The cross that Jesus carried was very heavy.* Do you ever feel as if you carry a heavy burden which causes you to feel sad or upset? What do you do at a time like this? Have you ever caused someone to carry a heavy burden?
- *On the road to Calvary, Jesus fell three times.* Have you ever been made to feel like a failure, as if you had not done your part? How did it feel? Have you ever made others feel like failures, making fun of them, or abandoning them?
- *Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus to carry his cross.* Have you ever neglected to help someone when you could have done so?
- *As Jesus hung on the cross, he forgave those who put him to death.* Have you ever been unable or unwilling to forgive someone who hurt you?

Through all his suffering, Jesus trusted that his Father would deliver him. Let us trust that God is always loving, saving, and forgiving us. Conclude by praying the Jesus Prayer:

*Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of the living God,
Be merciful to me, a sinner.*

IV. THE SUPPORTS FOR MORAL LIVING

All people are called to live a moral life. We support one another in living out this calling. [1949, 2030, 2045]

A. Personal Prayer and Openness to the Holy Spirit

The development of a life of prayer is one of the best supports for a moral life. God is with us and, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we discover within ourselves the ability to choose God's will regardless of the cost, even if it be the cost of our very life. [1811, 2544, 2745]

B. The Witness of the Community

All Catholic Christians belong to a community of faith. All the members of the community (our families, the people in our parish, our friends and teachers in our school or parish religious education program) are called to support us with the witness of their lives. Together we strive to be faithful to the love of God in Jesus Christ. [1253, 2030, 2044-46]

C. Sacraments as Nourishment and Strength

The sacraments of Penance and Eucharist are graced events which develop and nourish our moral life. [2031, 2040-41]

The sacrament of Penance gives us the opportunity to receive God's merciful forgiveness and be reconciled to God, the community, and ourselves. [1468-69]

In the sacrament of the Eucharist, we hear anew the call to love, we remember Jesus' willingness to embrace death to save us from our sins, and we receive the real presence of Jesus, his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity as strength for our journey. [1391-1395, 2031]

As we live out our baptismal calling day by day, we become for others a sign of Christ's presence in the world. The more we share the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by mortal sin. [1253-54, 1395, 2073]

D. The Communion of Saints

We also have the support of the Communion of Saints, that is, the whole community of the disciples of Jesus: those on earth, those in heaven, and those who are being purified in purgatory before coming into glory, and living face-to-face with God. We can call on them to pray for us as we struggle to live the life Jesus calls us to live. At the Eucharist when we eat the Bread of Life we are called to pray for one another and for those who have died. [954-57, 1474-75]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

In consultation with your parish director or coordinator of religious education, school principal, and/or parish clergy, plan a celebration of the Sacrament of Penance using the Rite outlined below and involve the young people in the planning. Encourage them to go to confession during the celebration.

Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution:

- Introductory rites (hymn, greeting, opening prayer)
- Celebration of the Word of God
- Homily
- General confessions of sins (e.g. “I confess to almighty God . . .,” followed by a litany and the Lord’s Prayer)
- Individual confession and absolution
- Proclamation of praise for God’s mercy
- Concluding prayer of thanksgiving
- Concluding rite (blessing and dismissal)



GRADE EIGHT

PRAYER



Prayer is an expression of our awareness of and response to God's presence, love, goodness, and saving power.

OBJECTIVES

- To assist the young adolescent to grow in a desire for and appreciation of prayer as essential to the Catholic Christian life.
- To help the young adolescent, through the presentation and experience of a variety of prayer forms, to develop the ability to pray.

I. RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

A. The Nature of Friendship

Friendship is a gift from God. It is one of the most beautiful and challenging ways of relating to another person. [733, 2010, 2347]

Friendship needs time and patience and requires communication which consists of listening, responding and sharing concerns. [1971, 1939, 2469]

Friends need to be “in touch” and to share the joys and sorrows of life. Friends are open to each other when they allow the other person to be himself or herself and desire the very best for the other. [1789, 1803, 1905]

Friends are loyal, faithful and forgiving. [1823, 1829]

B. Friendship with God

God wants to be our friend. In our relationship with God, we are invited not only to do what God asks of us, but also to experience God as the one who loves us beyond any human experience of love. God chooses to love each one at every moment. [277, 374, 396]

God wants our friendship in return. God is always faithful in friendship, and so the challenge is for us, in turn, to be faithful to God. As in all friendships, this relationship develops over a lifetime. It calls for patience and perseverance, and demands communication, which we call prayer. [2558, 2725, 2742]

All people are called to prayer. Deep within the human person is hidden a yearning to communicate with God. This yearning or desire is placed there by our Creator, who wants to be in communion with us. [2506, 2560, 2565]

Yet we are sometimes not aware of our own deep longing to encounter God. We must discover what we really want. We must discover the longing for God, which dwells within us and calls us to prayer. [2560, 2567-68]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE

Recount to the young people some of the ways in which Jesus was a friend to those around him. For example:

- He calmed the sea when his disciples were afraid; when we are afraid, we pray and ask for help (Matthew 8:23-26);
- He fed the hungry people (Matthew 14:13-21);
- He appeared to two discouraged disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32);
- He rejoiced at the wedding feast of Cana (John 2:1-11);
- He wept when his friend Lazarus died; we, too, mourn when we suffer a loss (John 11:32-35);
- He shared a meal with his disciples (John 21:1-13).

Then read the following passage:

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:13)

Invite the young people to write a prayer, thanking Jesus for being a friend in good times and in difficult times.

II. NATURE OF PRAYER

Prayer is a loving, honest conversation with God which is prompted and made possible by the Holy Spirit within us (cf. Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:26). We respond to the mystery of God’s love by praying often, not just when we have a special need. [683, 742, 2697]

There are many ways of praying to God. Our prayer can be personal, that is, an interior communication with God not shared with others, or it can be communal, that is, a communication with God experienced together with others. [2655, 2664]

At times of prayer, we open ourselves to God. We listen to God, and God listens to us. We deliberately choose to spend time in prayer so as to know God more intimately. This knowledge leads us to love, and love in turn leads us to service of God and others. [1695, 2745]

Sometimes prayer is spontaneous: we speak from the heart without planning or preparation. “Pray at every opportunity in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 6:18) [2659-60, 2697, 2742-43]

Just as we make time for our friends, we make time for God. In order to grow in our relationship with God, it is important to set aside time each day for prayer. [2697-98]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE – COMMUNAL PRAYER

Help the young people to enter into a prayerful atmosphere by listening to a recording of instrumental music, lighting a LED candle, or viewing a picture or image. Pray aloud that the Holy Spirit will guide each member of the group.

Read aloud one of the following passages of Scripture:

Isaiah 43:1

Isaiah 49:13-16

Matthew 6:9-13

Matthew 18:19-20

Luke 11:11-13

John 15:9-11

After a period of silence and time for reflection, encourage each young person, if he or she wishes, to share a personal thought or reflection they have on the passage with the group.

Conclude by reading Ephesians 3:20-21:

*Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine,
by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

III. BASIC ELEMENTS OF PRAYER

Prayer is a necessary means for growth in our intimate relationship with God. There are several basic elements of prayer, which are given various expressions in different places and times [2644]. These basic elements are listed below along with examples, most of which are from the mass prayers as found in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal:

- *Adoration*: an attitude of humility and awe before the wonder and greatness of God; [2626-28]
 - *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*
 - *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*
- *Thanksgiving*: an expression of gratitude for the generosity and graciousness of God; [2637-38]
 - Any one of the Eucharistic Prayers recited at Mass.
- *Contrition*: an expression of sorrow for the sinful, hurtful and selfish acts we have committed; [2631]
 - *Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.* [Matthew 8:8]
 - *I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault,*

through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

- *Petition: asking for the help and support of God, for myself; [2629-33]*
 - *Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us.*
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: grant us peace.
 - *The Lord's Prayer (Our Father, who art in heaven...)*
- *Intercession: asking for God's help on behalf of another; [2634-36]*
 - *Prayer of the Faithful*
- *Praise: giving glory to God joyfully, just because of who God is. [2639-42]*
 - *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.*
We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

IV. WAYS OF PRAYING

All prayer involves our heart, mind and soul. It is the whole person who prays. Scripture emphasizes that the source of prayer is the heart, because the heart is the center of the whole person. If prayer is not an expression of the heart, its words and gestures are meaningless. [2562-63]

Frequently, prayer involves our body as well, through posture, gesture and the use of our voice. In some kinds of prayer we pray aloud; in others, we pray silently. [2590, 2702-03, 2717]

The *Liturgy* is the official prayer of the People of God, the Church, publicly worshiping God in the celebration of:

- The Sacraments
- The Eucharistic Liturgy (the Mass)
- The Liturgy of the Hours

In the Liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal. [1073, 1113, 1174, 2698]

The Eucharistic liturgy is the central act of worship and prayer of our faith. To be a faithful Catholic obliges one to participate at Mass every Sunday and holy day of obligation.

Devotional prayer helps us to personalize the mysteries of faith. [1178, 1674-75, 2678]

Some examples of devotional prayer are:

- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- The Stations of the Cross
- The Rosary
- Novenas
- Pilgrimages
- Veneration of Relics

Prayer Groups are intentional gatherings for shared prayer, which may include hymns, readings from Sacred Scripture and other Christian sources, personal reflections, and silence. [2689]

Hymns are religious songs or scriptural verses set to music. [1156-58]

All Christian prayer, which is always personal, includes one or more of the following: [2699]

- *Vocal prayer* puts into words, whether silently or aloud, the prayer of our heart. [2700-04]
- *Meditation* is a prayerful reflection on a passage of Sacred Scripture, another inspirational text, an event, or the wonders of creation. God speaks to us through whatever we are meditating on, and we listen. [2705-08]
- *Contemplation* is the silent awareness of the presence of Jesus, our loving friend. It is the simplest expression of the mystery of prayer. [2709-19]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE – MEDITATIVE PRAYER

To assist the young people in developing a better appreciation of the practice of regular prayer, review the simple steps for personal prayer:

- Select a passage from Sacred Scripture (some examples are Deuteronomy 7:9; John 15:9-17; Ephesians 2:4-5)
- Create a calm environment and situate oneself in a quiet place
- Reflect on the presence of God with us
- Read the selected Scripture passage
- Meditate on the passage, asking oneself, “What is the Lord saying to me?”
- Express thanksgiving to Jesus and conclude with the Lord’s Prayer

After explaining the above steps, lead the youth through the prayer experience.

V. QUALITIES OF PRAYER

Prayer, in any form, is relational. As a good relationship between trusting friends has particular qualities, so does genuine prayer. [2560, 2565]

Genuine prayer is characterized by the following qualities:

- *Attention*: concentration on the presence of God and attentive listening to God speaking to us. [2612]
- *Confidence*: turning to God with an abiding trust that God loves us, listens to us and will give us what is best for us. [2606-10]
- *Perseverance*: faithfulness to prayer even when we do not feel like praying, when we feel we are too busy or when it is difficult to pray. [2742]
- *Devotion*: a deliberate choice to spend time with God in prayer because God is our Creator and Redeemer and we are God's people, who need God at every moment. [2650]

Prayer affects our relationships with others as well as our relationship with God. True prayer arises from and leads to a life of justice, mercy and love. [2745, 2764, 2818, 1831]

PRAYER EXPERIENCE – JESUS SPEAKS TO US THROUGH SACRED SCRIPTURE

Create a calm environment and ask the young people to think about God's presence within each one of them. Choose one or more of the following Scripture passages to proclaim to the group:

- Luke 11:5-10 (Further teachings on prayer)
- John 14:12-13 (Last Supper Discourses)
- John 15:5-7 (The Vine and the Branches)

As they listen to Scripture, ask them to think about Jesus speaking these words to them in their lives. After proclaiming the Scripture, invite anyone who wishes to do so to share what God might be saying to him or her. Conclude by giving thanks to Jesus and praying the Lord's Prayer as a group.

VI. DISTRACTIONS IN PRAYER

We are often distracted in prayer, even when we are in a prayerful atmosphere and have the best intentions. Distractions are thoughts or feelings that draw our attention away from God. [2729-30]

Sometimes our distractions have a message for us, reminding us of some need or desire of our heart that we can place before God in humility. At other times, distractions call for self-discipline, asking God to help us refocus on our prayer. By making an effort to set aside the distraction, we recommit ourselves to concentrating on God. [2729, 2732]

VII. PEOPLE WHO SHOW US HOW TO PRAY

Many people of the Old Testament, such as Abraham, Moses, Miriam, David, Esther, Elijah, Hannah and the writers of the psalms, show us how to pray. The psalms are prayers of the community of faith. [2570-89]

Jesus offers us the perfect model of how to relate to God, our loving Father. Sacred Scripture reveals what Jesus said about prayer and shows us the way he prayed. Jesus was always aware of the presence of God, his Father. He prayed in times of joy, sorrow, pain, and fear. He asked for strength, gave thanks and rejoiced in the love of his Father. [2599-2605, 2620, 2765]

Jesus teaches his followers to pray with:

- Faith: Matthew 21:22
- Persistence: Luke 11:5-8
- Simplicity: Luke 11:11-13
- Directness: Matthew 6:7-8
- Forgiveness: Mark: 11:25 [2607-15]

Jesus teaches us the fundamental prayer of the Church, the “Lord’s Prayer” (Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4), which is a summary of the whole Gospel. [2759, 2761, 2764, 2766]

Jesus teaches us to pray with others as well as alone:

“If two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”
(Matthew 18:19-20). [1373, 2623]

The Church teaches us there is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. Regardless of the type of prayer (communal or personal, vocal or interior) it has access to the Father only if we pray in Jesus’ name. The sacred humanity of Jesus is the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God our Father. [2664]

We can invoke God as “Father” because he is revealed to us by his Son become man and because his Spirit makes him known to us. [2780]

Mary offers an outstanding example of how to pray. In the face of many challenges, she offered her whole self to God in faith (see Luke 1:46-55). [2617-19, 2673-74, 26790] We are encouraged to pray in communion with Mary, entrusting to her our needs and the needs of others to her intercession.

The Blessed Virgin Mary was given the great privilege of being the mother of God. Over the centuries she has been given various titles to honor her and throughout the world many cultures recognize the help Mary offers to them. Some of the titles that we may use when speaking of or praying to the Blessed Mother are:

Our Lady of Good Counsel
Our Lady of Good Help
Our Lady of Guadalupe
Our Lady of Lourdes

Our Lady of Fatima
The Immaculate Conception

[Note to the Catechist/Teacher: A project to consider would be to research some of the many titles of the Blessed Mother, particularly those that have a cultural relevance for the young people in your group.]

Today, in our own parishes, neighborhoods and families, there are many people of prayer who can be models for us. They might also be sources of help and support to us as we grow in our life of prayer. [2685-90]

Our Catholic tradition provides us with some significant witnesses who point the way to prayer [2683-84]; the saints presented below are examples of young people for whom prayer was very important:

- **St. Francis Xavier (16th century):** The great courage and zeal that Francis Xavier brought to his work as a Jesuit missionary priest came from a life of prayer. Born in Spain, he preached in India, Malaya, the Moluccas, and was the first missionary to enter Japan. He died while seeking admittance to China to spread the Gospel there. [428-29, 852, 2611]
- **St. Martin Deporres (17th century):** A Peruvian lay brother of the Dominican order, Martin spent many hours in meditation after a long day of caring for the sick and the poor. His prayer strengthened him as he reached out to those in need. [2447-49, 2705-08, 2745]
- **St. Maria Goretti (20th century):** As a young teenager, Maria was busy taking care of her brothers and sisters, because her mother had to work. Even so, she prayed often and taught her brothers and sisters to pray. [2204-05, 2685, 2745]
- **Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, TOSD (20th century):** Pier Giorgio was born into a prominent family in Turin, Italy. His life was cut short by polio when he was only 24, but his deep love for the Lord, developed through prayer and the reception of Christ in the Eucharist, brought him to great holiness in a short time. As a student, he was active in Catholic youth groups working for charitable causes and social reform. He was a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic and of the Apostleship of Prayer, which helped him to grow in his life of prayer and discipleship to Jesus. His athletic prowess, especially as a hiker and mountain climber, were greatly admired but when polio caused the loss of these activities which he so enjoyed, his faith-filled acceptance of this suffering brought even greater admiration. Pier Giorgio was outstanding in his love for the poor and from his childhood he never ceased helping them. In fact, after his death it was the poor of the city who petitioned the Archbishop of Turin to begin the cause for his canonization.

PRAYER EXPERIENCE – IMAGINATIVE

- Create a prayerful setting and atmosphere.
- Pray aloud to the Holy Spirit asking for guidance that each young person may hear the Lord speaking to them.
- Read one of the following scripture narratives:
 - Emmaus event: Luke 24:13-35
 - Jesus and Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1-10
 - Call of the first disciples: Luke 5:1-11
 - Recognizing Jesus: Matthew 16:13-17

Then ask the young people to imagine themselves in the story and reflect on:

- The setting, the people, the conversation, and the details of the story
- Its meaning and how it touches their lives today
- Have the young people thank Jesus for these insights and the experience of his presence during prayer
- Conclude with the Lord's Prayer