

Virtues in Practice

FAITH - HOPE - CHARITY



Parent Guide

Virtues in Practice

YR./MO.	VIRTUE (emphasis: service)	DEFINITION	GR. PK-2 SAINT	GR. 3-5 SAINT	GR. 6-8 SAINT
FAITH					
SEP.	FAITH	Believing in God and all He has revealed	St. Martha	St. Jerome	St. Augustine
OCT.	REVERENCE	Showing your deepest respect for things of God	St. Hyacinth	St. Tarcisius	St. Margaret of York
NOV.	STEWARDSHIP	Returning to God the first fruits of your time, talent, and treasure	St. Elizabeth of Hungary	Bl. Fra Angelico	St. Joseph Moscati
DEC.	GENEROSITY	Giving without counting the cost	St. Nicholas	St. Mary Magdalene	St. Maximilian Kolbe
JAN.	GRATITUDE	Seeing everything as a gift and being thankful	St. Francis of Assisi	St. Julie Billiart	Bl. Josemaria Escriva
FEB.	HONESTY	Being trustworthy and true	Bls. Jacinta & Francisco Marto	Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha	St. Athanasius
MAR.	MERCY	Caring for those who suffer	St. John Vianney	St. Faustina	Bl. Teresa of Calcutta
APRIL	JUSTICE	Being fair and giving each his due	St. Anthony of Padua	St. Katherine Drexel	St. Thomas More
MAY	ZEAL	Being driven by an intense love for God	St. Paul	St. Dominic	St. Francis Xavier
HOPE					
SEP.	HOPE	Trusting in God's loving plan	St. Joseph	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton	Bl. Louis & Zélie Martin
OCT.	STUDIOUSNESS	Seeking knowledge to grow closer to Truth	St. Albert the Great	St. Thomas Aquinas	St. Edith Stein
NOV.	HUMILITY	Accepting your limitations and God-given talents	St. John the Baptist	St. Pio of Pietrelcina	St. Therese of Lisieux
DEC.	PATIENCE	Waiting or enduring without complaint	St. Monica	St. Isaac Jogues	St. Rita of Cascia
JAN.	FIDELITY	Being faithful to promises and commitments	St. Cecilia	Bls. Luigi & Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi	St. Gianna Molla
FEB.	CHEERFULNESS	Looking on the bright side	St. John Bosco	St. Philip Neri	Bl. Miguel Pro
MAR.	TEMPERANCE	Enjoying things in a proper, balanced way	St. Teresa of Avila	St. Camillus de Lellis	Ven. Matt Talbot
APRIL	OBEEDIENCE	Saying "yes" to the loving will of God and those He has set over us	Our Lady	St. Juan Diego	St. Frances Xavier Cabrini
MAY	DILIGENCE	Doing your best and working hard until you're finished	St. Andre Bessette	St. Francis de Sales	St. Catherine of Siena
CHARITY					
SEP.	CHARITY	Loving God with all your heart, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself	St. Gertrude	St. Vincent de Paul	Ven. Laura Vicuna
OCT.	FRIENDSHIP	Sharing a mutual love that seeks the good of the other	Sts. Benedict & Scholastica	Sts. Basil & Gregory	Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati
NOV.	COURTESY	Being thoughtful of others	St. Martin de Porres	Ven. Solanus Casey	Bl. Pierre Toussaint
DEC.	PURITY	Keeping your soul free of sin	St. Dominic Savio	St. Agnes	St. Maria Goretti
JAN.	FORTITUDE	Being brave and strong in face of trials	St. Bernadette	St. Joan of Arc	Sts. Paul Miki & Companions
FEB.	PRUDENCE	Making good decisions in specific circumstances	Bl. Junipero Serra	St. John Neumann	Bl. John XXIII
MAR.	RESPECT	Recognizing the dignity of all people	St. Jeanne Jugan	St. Damien of Molokai	Pope John Paul II
APRIL	FORGIVENESS	Pardoning those who offend you	St. Patrick	Bl. Margaret of Castello	St. Josephine Bakhita
MAY	RESPONSIBILITY	Being reliable in your duties and accountable for your actions	St. Peter	St. Henry II	Bl. Bartolo Longo

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COVER: Bls. Louis and Zelig Martin, the parents of Saint Therese of Lisieux, were beatified in October of 2008. They are the second married couple to be beatified *as* a couple.

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Virtues in Practice—General Program Information

Virtues in Practice (VIP) is a revised edition of the *Virtue Education Program*. Grades PK-8 study the same virtue each month, to provide a whole-school (and, at home, whole-family) focus. The program covers 27 virtues over a three-year cycle (see program outline inside front cover). These three years emphasize and are named for the three theological virtues. The year of FAITH focuses on Catholic devotions and the idea that “faith works” (Gal 5:6), by a school-wide emphasis on service projects. The year of HOPE emphasizes study skills, because in order to fulfill His plan for our lives we need to develop the talents God has given us. The year of CHARITY emphasizes community, particularly how students interact with one another, because “he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20).

In each month, grades PK-8 learn about the same virtue, but primary, intermediate, and middle school students learn about different Saints. In this way, students who are in the program throughout their elementary school career will have a basic introduction to a virtue at the primary level with one Saint, cover the same virtue again in more detail at the intermediate level with a different Saint, and delve into a deeper meaning of the virtue at the middle school level with a third Saint. It is a great idea for parents to reinforce these Saints as heroes by asking their children to tell them about the Saints they are studying each month. Although the virtue is covered with more depth in the upper grades, the same definitions for each virtue are used at all grade levels, so that students become familiar with the particular meaning of each virtue.

Virtue is not something just to know, but to do. *Virtues in Practice* emphasizes role-playing in the classroom so that students can practice how to act when using a particular virtue, as well as monthly projects designed to help students strengthen themselves in the virtue of the month by practicing it in real situations. These projects rarely involve making a product; they usually involve a discussion and a behavior goal to help increase the student’s virtue. In grades PK-5, students complete a project each month with the help of their parents. Students in grades 6-8 may complete their projects with parents or with their friends. In all grades, a simple form is signed by parents and the student, then returned to school to tell which project was chosen and to reflect on the student’s progress in the virtue for the month. A small completion grade is given to hold students accountable for this assignment.

Since parents are the primary educators of their children, VIP respects their role by placing individualized conversations about a child’s character in the care of the parent. Home projects are not meant to dictate the role of a parent; parents may choose to create their own project for any month. A suggested list of projects is provided as a resource for the parents. It has great effect when parents model the virtue of the month, make references to it, or even chose to do one of the projects themselves. Why is the home component tracked with forms? The strength of any lesson is doubled when it is reinforced both at school and at home, and there is strength in numbers—it is easier for a student to work on achieving a behavior goal when, in one way or another, “everybody’s doing it” because it’s required. For all students, but especially middle school students, the need to sign a form provides parents with an “excuse” to ask their child to work on certain behaviors or discuss difficult topics. Requiring this form shows that your child’s school values growth in virtue just as it values the many other projects and activities for which the school uses grades and forms, and that it does not want other school requirements to supersede what is most important. The school may send home a form each month along with a list of projects, but in case that gets lost, there is a sample form that can be printed from the back of this guide (pg. 48). Following this sample form are notes pages: when children are infants we take delight in noting their physical growth; what a treasure it would be to keep a log of notable moments in their spiritual growth!

Age-Appropriate Definitions

The following definitions are found in the inside cover of student workbooks and will be used in class.

What is Virtue?

PK-Kindergarten

A virtue is a good habit.

If we listen to Jesus He will help us to make good choices. If we listen to Him over and over we get used to making good choices. Then being good is easy, which makes us happy!

Grades 1-2

A virtue is a good habit.

A good habit is called a virtue. A bad habit is called a vice. Habits grow by practice. God always gives us the grace to chose and do what is good. If we think about what is right and open our hearts to God, we will make good choices and grow in virtue. Virtues make us free, happy, and holy.

Grades 3-5

A virtue is a good habit.

If we practice thinking about what is right and opening our hearts to grace, we make good choices and develop virtues. If we often do things that are wrong we develop bad habits, or vices. Vices can trap us. Virtues free us to be our best selves, which makes us happy and holy. There are three virtues that are called *theological virtues*. These virtues are given to us by God, lead us toward God, and open our hearts for God to live within us. We receive these virtues in baptism and develop them as we grow in holiness. They give life to all the other virtues. The theological virtues are *faith, hope, and charity*.

There are four virtues that are called *cardinal virtues*. “Cardinal” is from a Latin word that means “hinge”, like the hinge on a door. All the other virtues rely on these. The cardinal virtues are *prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance*.

Grades 6-8

A virtue is a good habit.

The word virtue comes from the Latin word *virtus*, which means “strength.” Our fallen nature is weak and can easily become entangled in vice, but the graces available to us through Christ enable us to overcome our weaknesses and develop strength, or virtue. People who are virtuous enjoy the freedom of being their best selves and growing closer to God—so don’t forget to pray for this grace!

Human/moral virtues are acquired by education, deliberate acts, and persevering effort. They are purified and elevated by grace. Four of these virtues play a pivotal role and so are called the *cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance*. They lead us to God through other things that are good for us.

The three *theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity* are infused by God at our baptism. They give life to the moral virtues by allowing God to dwell within us and by drawing us to be virtuous out of love for Him. They lead us directly to God.

The seven *gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord*, are poured out by the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Confirmation. They are different from virtues because they are abilities that are given directly by God rather than acquired by repeating good actions. They complete and perfect all the virtues by making us docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. (See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church #1803-1845*)

Who are the Saints?

The following definitions are found in the inside cover of student workbooks and will be used in class.

PK-Kindergarten

A saint is a person who is in heaven.

All the people in heaven are called saints. If we listen to Jesus and make good choices someday we will be happy with Him forever! The Saints in this book are people we know for sure are in heaven.

Grades 1-2

A saint is a person who is in heaven.

God wants us all to become saints in heaven. When the Catholic Church tells us we can be sure a certain person is in heaven, that person is a *canonized* Saint. These Saints loved God very much and led lives filled with virtue. They give us good examples of how to get to heaven and we can ask them to help us with their prayers.

Grades 3-5

A saint is a person who is in heaven.

The Catholic Church *canonizes* some saints. “Canon” means list; canonized means someone is added to the list of Saints. One of the first steps in the process for canonization is an investigation to see if the person lived a life of “heroic virtue”. In the last step of the process, the Church prays for a miracle through the intercession of the person. *Blessed* and *Venerable* are titles for people who are almost canonized. The Church gives us canonized Saints as role-models and intercessors, but every single one of us is called by God to be a saint.

Grades 6-8

A saint is a person who is in heaven.

God desires each of us to be with Him forever in heaven—to be a saint. The Catholic Church canonizes some Saints so that we can look to them as role models and intercessors. Canonization is a process of verifying that the person lived a life of “heroic virtue” and is now in heaven, enjoying the full vision of God with inexpressible happiness, and eager to help those of us on earth. Promoting a cause for sainthood takes years of work and prayer by a group of people devoted to the cause.

Steps of Canonization*:

1. *Servant of God*: Rome and the local bishop have approved the opening of an investigation of the person’s life, writings, and miracles.
2. *Venerable*: the findings of this investigation have been presented at the Vatican and approved by the pope.
3. *Blessed*: a miracle attributed to the person has been scientifically investigated and approved. (For a martyr, a first miracle is not required.)
4. *Saint*: a second miracle has been approved and the person is canonized.

*The Church has the authority to bypass this process, and sometimes does.

Virtues for the Year of FAITH

September: FAITH

—believing in God and all He has revealed

October: REVERENCE

—showing your deepest respect for things of God

November: STEWARDSHIP

—returning to God the first fruits of your time, talent, and treasure

December: GENEROSITY

—giving without counting the cost

January: GRATITUDE

—seeing everything as a gift and being thankful

February: HONESTY

—being trustworthy and true

March: MERCY

—caring for those who suffer

April: JUSTICE

—being fair and giving each his due

May: ZEAL

—being driven by an intense love for God

Introduction to the Year of FAITH

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

“We walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

“Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, “It shall be done to you according to your faith.” (Matthew 9:28)

“He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid, you of little faith?’ Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.” (Matthew 8:26)

“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” (Galatians 5:6)

“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? . . . Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” (James 2:14-16, 26)

Although each of the three years in *Virtues in Practice* is based on a theological virtue (Faith, Hope, Charity), the definition of “theological virtue” is perhaps most clear in the case of Faith. Most virtues are good habits that we gain through practice, but these three virtues are called theological because they are given to us by God Himself, at our baptism. Not only does God Himself give us these three virtues, but they allow Him to live within us, and draw us to direct our lives toward Him.

We often think of faith as an act of our own will: “I choose to believe.” But this is incorrect, and far smaller than what faith actually is. We cannot gain access to God by our choice. Bigger than the universe, more brilliant than all the world’s greatest geniuses combined, the God who created us is far beyond our understanding. We can know Him only because *He* chooses to *reveal* Himself to us. In His goodness He has willed not only to let us know *about* Him, but to let us know *Him*: through the gift of Faith, we participate in God: He dwells within us. Stop and think about that for a minute. We participate in God. It is impossible other than as a gift from God; it is miraculous, and many of us never notice the reality of it.

Similar to the other virtues, the theological virtues grow. We deepen our faith through study and prayer—if we want to deepen our relationship with a person, we seek to learn more about him and to spend time being with him. It’s the same with God. How can your family deepen your faith through study and prayer this year? In baptism, you and your children received the “seed” of faith. What more can you do to help it to grow?

Faith is about seeing and doing.

The person of faith sees what the unbeliever cannot imagine. We believe in the invisible. Faith is not like a political stance, a platform to be agreed with, a membership badge to be worn. To say “I believe” or “I am a Catholic” means that God has given me an entirely different perspective on daily experiences and on the purpose of life. If I am a Catholic, I know that in my daily hum-drum I am surrounded by powerful angels guiding people and nations—including bad angels seeking to lead us astray. I know that the Mother of God and the saints—including those in my own family who have reached heaven—are constantly with me, intimately involved in my life and supporting me by the power of their prayers. If I am a Catholic, I know that physical things have deep meaning—that “stuff” has been chosen by God as a concrete way to share His life: that the grace needed to transform the world is available in the whispered words of the confessional box, in a drop of holy water—that God Himself is awaiting us in tabernacles around the world, hidden under the appearance of bread so that we can be *physically close* to Him. If I am a Catholic, I love the Holy Father as Christ on earth, and the Church—in spite of her faults and foibles—because it is my family, and my source of life because *He* works through it. And most importantly, if I have faith I know that every physical human being is also a spiritual being—that the purpose of life is to gain heaven, to reach life with God in eternal joy and to avoid the danger of eternal misery without Him. This is how a person of faith sees the world.

If we see the world this way, it changes how we act, and it allows God to act in our lives. Christ was not able to perform miracles in communities that closed their minds and hearts to Him. In this year of faith, let us open our hearts to Christ! When we do, He is able to work miracles in us and through us.

Good works follow on faith and prove its authenticity. True faith compels us to evangelize, to run, run, run to the bounds of the earth to proclaim the treasure we have found. And because we know the eternal destiny of each person, we care for them as priceless. We all know that it is one thing to “talk the talk” and a far deal greater to “walk the walk”. We must not only say “I believe”—we must live it.

In the Year of Faith, virtues such as faith and reverence provide an opportunity to renew Catholic devotions at the parish and school. These could include a Living Rosary in October, a Saints Gallery in November, a school Christmas pageant that is focused on the birth of Jesus, a Faith Rally or Family Retreat for Catholic Schools Week, praying the Stations of the Cross or acting in a Passion Play, 40 Hours of Eucharistic Adoration in Lent, or Crowning Our Lady in May. Since “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26), the Year of Faith also emphasizes service. Virtues such as stewardship, generosity, mercy, and justice provide opportunities to focus on class or school service projects (trips, collections), joining the Holy Childhood Association (see page 21 for details), or incorporating service-learning across the curriculum.

In the Year of Faith, let us seek to deepen our relationship with God, to know Him and to serve Him by serving others. May each of us be among those Our Lord had in mind when He told Thomas: “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” (John 20:29)

Home Projects for September

FAITH—believing in God and all He has revealed.

Grades PreK-2—Saint Martha

1. Pray a simple daily prayer for deeper faith, such as: “God, I believe in You, help me to know You more.”
2. Make brief visits to Jesus in the tabernacle a few times this month.
3. Read a Bible passage aloud each night.
4. Discuss what we believe about the Trinity, Incarnation, and Eucharist.
5. Ask a priest to bless a new crucifix, holy water font, or sacred image for your home or your child’s bedroom. Practice using it as a reminder to pray each time you enter the room.

Grades 3-5—Saint Jerome

1. Pray the Act of Faith each day.
2. Spend time together in Eucharistic Adoration using these steps as a guide ACTS(Q): A=adoration, C=contrition, T=thanksgiving, S=supplication, Q=Tell God what is going on in your life; ask Him questions and listen for answers.
3. Discuss different silent prayers to say during the silent moments of the Mass, especially before the Scripture readings (“Lord, place Your word in my mind, on my lips, and in my heart.”) the elevation of the host (“Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!”) and after receiving communion.
4. Discuss the lesson from the readings and homilies at Mass each Sunday this month.
5. Watch video clips of Pope Benedict XVI (see the Vatican’s official YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/vatican) and discuss how we love the Holy Father because he is, as Saint Catherine of Siena said, “Sweet Christ on Earth”. Discuss how the pope and all bishops are successors of the apostles.

Grades 6-8—Saint Augustine

1. Memorize the Apostles’ Creed (used in the rosary) or the Nicene Creed (said at Mass).
2. Pray the rosary or attend adoration with a friend, more than once if possible.
3. Make a commitment with a friend that both of you will spend 5 minutes of quiet reading Scripture each night. Share the effect it has on you.
4. Is there a Church teaching you don’t understand? Look it up in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (available on the web at the Vatican website; www.vatican.va and search “catechism” or http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/ccc_toc.htm).
5. Lead a faith sharing meeting at your house. Read scripture with a few friends and discuss your faith.
6. Follow current news from the Vatican on Zenit and discuss with a friend or your parents. (www.zenit.org)

Home Projects for October

REVERENCE—Showing your deepest respect for God and the things of God

Grades PreK-2—Saint Hyacinth

1. Take a tour of the church when it is empty. In a whisper, point out the statues, sanctuary, altar, tabernacle, sacristy, windows, etc. Choose a part of the church toward which you can show extra reverence this month.
2. Discuss the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Practice making a spiritual communion.
3. Discuss why bowing is a sign of reverence (acknowledgement, submission). Practice bowing gently at some of the following times: communion, entering the sanctuary, passing before the tabernacle, when saying Jesus' Name, when saying the Glory Be, during the Creed at the words "by the power of the Holy Spirit. . . became man".

Grades 3-5—Saint Tarcisus

1. Ask a bishop, priest, or deacon about their ordination, or a religious about the day they made vows. If you are related to someone who is ordained or a religious, ask your relative.
2. Discuss how sacramentals open our hearts to grace. Discuss the proper reverence to be shown for blessed objects (never place them on the floor, never throw them away—when they are worn out or broken, burn or bury them). Choose a sacramental and practice using it this month to open your heart to grace.
 - blessings: blessing before meals, blessing oneself with holy water, signing one's children with the cross at night or before leaving the home
 - blessed objects: Bible, holy water, rosaries, scapulars, medals, crucifixes, statues, images, relics
3. Acknowledge the Presence of Our Lord by making the sign of the cross whenever you pass a Catholic church this month.
4. Learn to pray the Angelus or the Stations of the Cross to show reverence for the Incarnation or Redemption.

Grades 6-8—Saint Margaret of York

1. Decide on some new Sabbath practices (ways to keep the Lord's Day holy). Remember that holy means different, set apart. *Some ideas for each Sunday: spend extra time with your family, appreciate creation, prepare for Mass by looking up the readings, make fancy meals and/or use nice dishes, put flowers on the table, light a candle, do your homework ahead, pray together as a family, give up worrying or complaining, arguing, or fighting on Sundays, wear dressy or comfy clothes/shoes, abstain from whatever consumes you (videogames, TV, texting, Internet), call relatives, send cards, take a nap, etc.*
2. Learn about how clergy, religious, and laity pray the Liturgy of the Hours to sanctify the day. Try it out a couple times this month. See the free features on www.ebreviary.com.
3. Break the habit of using the Lord's name in vain. If you forget, make the Sign of the Cross as a reminder.
4. Practice reverence for Our Lady during the month of October. Pray the rosary or the *Memorare* this month.
5. Pray this month for yourself and for our society to grow in reverence for persons as images of God, for the miracle of life, and for mothers.
6. This month take the time to really listen to those who speak with you. When they talk to you, don't multitask. Give each person your full attention. Why is this important? Do you notice a difference?

Home Projects for November

STEWARDSHIP—returning to God the first fruits of your time, talent, and treasure

Grades PreK-2—Saint Elizabeth of Hungary:

1. Think about something you do well—reading, writing, drawing, tying your shoes, etc.—and offer to help someone younger than you with this skill.
2. Ask your parents if you can put some money in the poor box at church or in the Sunday collection.
3. Sacrifice a treat and give the money to the poor.
4. Practice saying the Sign of the Cross first thing in the morning when you wake up, to dedicate all your time that day to God.
5. If you take a dance class, show your latest routine to someone who is lonely or sad.
6. Choose a way to practice taking better care of the supplies and toys entrusted to you at home or school.

Grades 3-5—Blessed Fra Angelico:

1. Be a good steward of class property: offer to one of your teachers your help in repairing books or other classrooms items that are damaged or need cleaning.
2. Draw or paint a picture as a gift for someone who is sick or suffering.
3. Sing in the church choir.
4. Are you a good reader? Choose a fairytale with a good moral or a story about a Saint and read it to a younger child.
5. Be diligent about remembering to bring a donation for the offertory at Sunday Mass this month.
6. How can we be good stewards of the earth? Choose a new way to conserve resources or recycle.
7. Dedicate to God the time and talent you spend in after school arts, sports, or academic competitions. Make a point to pray before each practice, rehearsal, game, etc. and as you strive for excellence, do it for Him and for your group/team.
8. Is there a class that is hard for you? Consecrate that time to God. In your prayer before that class, ask God to help you put forth your best effort out of love for Him, since it is His will that you do this activity in the time He gave you.

Grades 6-8—Saint Joseph Moscati:

1. Discuss with a friend what cause you are most passionate about, and why. (Examples: clean water, shelter, or rice for the poor in developing countries, medical attention for the uninsured, the pro life movement in our country, shelters for local homeless, food pantries/soup kitchens.) Choose a way that you and your friend can promote awareness of this ministry. If you communicate electronically with your friends, could you use the same media to communicate these needs?
2. Discuss tithing with a friend. Why do you think many people have abandoned this practice? Do you think it is important? Do you plan to tithe when you are older? If so, how can you start now?
3. Try out as a cantor for church.
4. Teach your favorite sport to a younger child who doesn't know how to play.
5. When things get busy we forget to pray, but it's when we need prayer the most! If you have a crazy busy day this month, deliberately set apart a few minutes for prayer. Later, reflect on how that impacted your day.

Home Projects for December

GENEROSITY—giving without counting the cost

Grades PreK-2—Saint Nicholas

Grades 3-5—Saint Mary Magdalene

Grades 6-8—Saint Maximilian Kolbe

Project Choices for this month:

1. Many families already have traditions of giving to the poor during the Christmas Season. We all want to keep a spirit of peace during Advent to prepare our souls for the coming of Christ at Christmas, so if your family already gives to the poor during Advent, please don't feel obliged to start something new! Just reflect on whatever it is you do to be generous every year in December.

2. Is God calling you to give ALL? If you think God might be calling you to be a priest or Sister, pray this month for the grace to answer God's call with a generous "yes".

3. Find out about Christmas giving opportunities at your parish and participate in one during Advent.

4. If you don't already have a family tradition of giving to the poor during Advent, consider starting one, such as

- anonymously adopting a family and leaving gifts on their doorstep
- sacrificing something you want for Christmas and using the money for the poor
- gathering with members of your extended family to do service for the poor rather than exchanging gifts

Home Projects for January

GRATITUDE—Seeing everything as a gift and being thankful

Grades PreK-2—Saint Francis of Assisi

1. Before you go to bed each night, thank God for ten things He gave you that day.
2. Every time you see something beautiful, say thank you to God.
3. Remember to say “thank you” whenever someone gives you something: food, a ride, sharing a toy, etc.
4. Write a thank you card to someone who helps you (parents can take dictation from younger students).
5. Take a nature walk; look closely at God’s creations, large and small, and thank Him for each one.

Grades 3-5—Saint Julie Billiart

1. Before you go to bed each night, thank God for ten things He gave you that day.
2. Whenever someone gives you a compliment, humbly accept it. Then pause for a moment, and in your heart remind yourself that all your talents and goodness are a gift from God and thank Him.
3. Keep a gratitude journal: throughout the day, jot down things that you are grateful for: beautiful things you see, compliments, accomplishments, kindnesses, etc.
4. Think of one person/thing/situation that you think you might be taking for granted. Make a goal of expressing gratitude for that person/thing/situation several times this month.
5. When you eat meals this month, think about the ingredients in each dish, and in your heart thank God for the plants/animals He made/grew and the hard work of the people who contributed to the meal. For example, if you eat bread, thank God for growing the grain, for the farmer who harvested it, the miller who ground it, the trucker who drove it, the baker who mixed it, the hen who laid the eggs, the cow that gave the milk, etc. Isn’t it amazing what we take for granted?

Grades 6-8—Saint Josemaria Escriva

1. Each time you pray, before *asking* God for things, pause to tell Him three things for which you are grateful.
2. With a friend, think of one person/thing/situation that you think you might be taking for granted. Make a goal of expressing gratitude for that person/thing/situation several times this month. Expressing gratitude might be in prayer, by saying “thank you” directly to the person, or telling your friend about times when you are grateful.
3. Discuss with a friend different ways that a person can show gratitude. Do people show gratitude differently, according to their personalities? Try out one of the things your friend does to show gratitude and let them try out one that you usually do. Keep tabs on each other through the month. Was that way of showing gratitude awkward, or helpful?
4. Make a “no whining” pact with your friends. Each time you catch them complaining, they have to say three things for which they are grateful.
5. Have a contest to see which of your friends can say “thank you” to the most teachers/parents during the day—only earnest thanks count!

Home Projects for February

HONESTY—being trustworthy and true

Grades PreK-2—Blesseds Jacinta and Francesco Marto

1. Be careful! We never want to lie, but saying “Well, it’s *true!*” does not make it okay to say something hurtful. Practice saying one thing each day that is true and is a compliment to someone. Don’t say it unless you really mean it! Tell them something you like about the way they are or something they’ve done that day.
2. Discuss and practice respectful ways to tell the truth about how you feel when you are unhappy with something or someone, or don’t want to do what you’re told. Sometimes, we can tell the truth to Jesus in our hearts—without saying anything out loud—and offer it to Him as a sacrifice.
3. Look out! Do not tell any lies this month. That includes being sneaky and hiding things to avoid getting in trouble.

Grades 3-5—Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha

1. Start a “No White Lies” club and promote it among your friends.
2. Start an Anti-Rumor league: it’s dishonest to spread stories that hurt someone’s reputation *even if they are true*, because it makes the person look worse than they really are. It’s even worse if the stories are false! Identify rumors for what they are and STOP them!
3. Analyze some of the ads you see on TV. How do they manipulate the truth?

Grades 6-8—Saint Athanasius

1. Discuss what it means that the truth “sets us free”. Look for movies with examples and watch one together.
2. Rather than doing what’s popular, dare to be yourself. Track how many times you defy the norm to be yourself and make it a contest between your friends.
3. Do you have any small pangs of guilt about hiding something or rationalizing something you know is wrong? Are there rules you know you’ve broken (for example, pirated movies or music, copying from a friend on simple homework assignments)? With a friend, list some socially acceptable/common forms of dishonesty and make a pact to be counter-cultural in one of these, so as to become someone who is totally trustworthy.
4. Fight calumny, rash judgment, and detraction (see your workbook or the Catechism of the Catholic Church #2477 for definitions of these). Make a pact with your friends that this month you will say only what is true, kind, and helpful, and to guard the good reputation of everyone.

Home Projects for March

MERCY—caring for those who suffer

Grades PreK-2—Saint John Vianney

1. Look for those who are hurt on the playground or elsewhere and help them. (Be careful, it's not helpful if there is a big crowd of people trying to help). Sometimes just staying with the person helps.
2. Donate food or clothes to those in need.
3. Pray for someone you know is suffering. It could be someone close to you, or a group of people in another part of the world.

Grades 3-5—Saint Faustina

Choose one of the spiritual or corporal works of mercy and choose a way to practice it this month. If you choose a spiritual work of mercy, make sure you understand what type of suffering it relieves.

Spiritual Works of Mercy	Corporal Works of Mercy
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Admonish the sinner. 2. Instruct the ignorant 3. Counsel the doubtful. 4. Comfort the sorrowful. 5. Bear wrongs patiently. 6. Forgive all injuries. 7. Pray for the living and the dead. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feed the hungry. 2. Give drink to the thirsty. 3. Clothe the naked. 4. Visit the imprisoned. 5. Shelter the homeless. 6. Visit the sick. 7. Bury the dead.

Grades 6-8—Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

1. “A joy shared is a joy doubled; a sorrow shared is a sorrow divided.” Ask someone you know about what causes them suffering, especially in their heart. Fully open your heart to listening to them with loving concern. Show mercy by your care for them, and help to carry their cross by praying for that intention this month.
2. Discuss the relationship between the virtues of mercy and forgiveness. Are all acts of mercy acts of forgiveness? Are all acts of forgiveness acts of mercy? How does lack of forgiveness cause suffering? Choose something from your discussion to practice this month.
3. Practice one of the spiritual or corporal works of mercy (see above).

Home Projects for April

JUSTICE—being fair and giving each his due

Grades PreK-2—Saint Anthony of Padua

1. When you share things this month, take equal amounts.
2. When you have something you cannot divide, give everyone a turn without complaining.
3. Make sure the rules of the games you play are fair to everyone this month. Sometimes fair means different; if your baby brother or sister is playing, the rules should be easier for them than for you because they are new at it.

Grades 3-5—Saint Katherine Drexel

1. Is there a group of people you know who are not given equal pay, opportunities, or rights? Write a letter to a government official asking for justice.
2. Estimate and add up all the expenses it costs to raise a child from birth through college (ask your parents for help). How should children respond, in justice, to the sacrifices and love of parents? How should they respond now, and how when they are older? Choose something to do this month, or write a letter to your 40 year-old self, reminding you what you owe to your parents and how you should try to repay them.
3. See #2; do a similar exercise estimating how much time a teacher gives for you in a year. What do you owe that teacher, in justice?
4. What has God given to you? Make a list. We always give to God in love, but think about what you owe Him, simply in justice. Make a list for that, too. Sometimes we think we are being really generous with God, when in fact, we are barely fulfilling our duty. Ask your parents to check your answer and help you to choose something from your list to practice this month.
5. What has your country given to you? Make a list. What do you owe in return? Make a list for that, too. Choose something from the second list to practice this month.

Grades 6-8—Saint Thomas More

1. Research to find whether you, your family, or your school are purchasing things that are produced through acts of injustice (for example, low wages or child labor in a foreign country). Find an alternative, and write to the manufacturers to tell them why you are no longer buying their product. (Search online for words like “boycott lists” “boycott brands” or “consumer boycott”—but be a critical thinker: you can never believe everything you read and in this area there are many political or finance-driven agendas. If you read something accusing a company of unjust practices, look for a trustworthy source to validate the accusation, write to the company to ask if it’s true, or consult a trusted adult.)
2. Interview a lawyer or a judge. Ask why they think justice is important.
3. Interview an adult you admire. What do they think a person owes to God/Church, family, country?
4. Does giving each his due mean giving each the same? Practice looking for places where exceptions should be made and discreetly standing up for true justice.
5. Research: what are the rights of a US citizen? Write a letter to a government official to defend a right that you think is being violated.

Home Projects for May

ZEAL—being driven by an intense love for God

Grades PreK-2—Saint Paul

1. Every day this month, tell someone something about God.
2. Choose something you're lazy about and do it with extra energy this month as a gift to God.
3. Make little notes/drawings about God and leave them where others will find them (members of your family or strangers—but don't litter!)

Grades 3-5—Saint Dominic

1. Research to find the % of Christians in countries throughout the world. Do you think there are people in the world today who have not even heard of Jesus Christ? Choose a country and pray for the missionaries in that country this month.
2. Do you know someone who is Catholic, but doesn't go to church anymore? Pray for that person this month and offer sacrifices for him/her.
3. Evangelize with holy water or miraculous medals: find places (stores, homes, etc) where you think people need to find God, or places where you suspect people are being led away from God and discreetly make a cross with holy water somewhere in that place or tuck away a blessed miraculous medal there.

Grades 6-8—Saint Francis Xavier

1. Be bold in your faith: go out on a limb and talk about your faith with an acquaintance who does not know you are Catholic.
2. Is there someone you know who is seeking meaning in life? Invite him/her to learn about the Catholic faith.
3. Have you ever thought of going extreme, and becoming a Sister or priest? What are the most austere religious orders? Either read about their practices or interview a member to ask what their life is like. Let them inspire you with ideas about what you could do for God this month.
4. Is there an area of your life where you feel like God is not socially acceptable? Bring Him there! Sometimes we think it's not okay to talk about our faith in certain contexts: a soccer team run by the city rather than our church, a social gathering with people of different faiths, etc. Be zealous enough to bring up a story of one of the Saints or another aspect of your faith.
5. Discuss whether it is prudent or cowardly to hide your faith in certain circumstances. Do you think everyone who knows you knows you are a Catholic? Consider wearing a crucifix or another silent way to preach the faith to everyone you meet.
6. Are there opportunities for mission trips in your diocese? See if you can join one this summer.

Additional Resources

Virtues in General:

Catechism of the Catholic Church. 1994

The Catechism is an amazing compilation of the teachings of the Church both from Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, quoting both the Bible, the Saints, and documents of the Church. The CCC is available online at the Vatican Website (www.vatican.va) under “resources”. CCC # 1803-1845 is a section on the virtues.

Bennet, William. *The Book of Virtues.* 1996 and *The Children’s Treasury of Virtues.* 2000

Two wonderful collections of solid moral stories that engage the imagination. The *Treasury* is for younger children and is filled with beautiful color illustrations. The *Book* is for intermediate ages, containing an explanation of each virtue, and providing a sampling of poetry, stories, etc.

DeMarco, Donald. *The Heart of Virtue: Lessons from Life and Literature Illustrating the Beauty and Value of Moral Character.* 1996

An excellent further reading for the parent, this book provides thought-provoking descriptions of each virtue in a readable, conversational tone, followed by a short story demonstrating the virtue, often an anecdote from the life of a famous person or an excerpt from a great story.

Earl, Sister Patricia Helene. *Building the Builders, Faith Formation in Virtue.* 2006

This is a good resource for teachers (or parents) wanting to deepen their own understanding of the life of virtue in order to form their students/children in virtue. Sister Patricia Helene is an IHM Sister who has served as a superintendent in the diocese of Arlington; the book is a summary of the teacher-formation program she developed for teachers there over ten years. Good summary of doctrine, Church documents, etc. in the context of virtue.

Groeschel, Father Benedict. *The Virtue Driven Life.* 2006

A sometimes gruff and often humorous look at what virtue really means, distinguishing values praised in our contemporary culture with what our faith tells us is necessary to get to heaven.

Kreeft, Peter. *Back to Virtue: Traditional Moral Wisdom for Modern Moral Confusion.* 1992.

Another witty and realistic look at the traditional virtues compared to contemporary culture.

Stenson, James. *Compass: A Handbook on Parent Leadership.* 2003

A great resource for parent support groups, written from a Catholic, virtue-based perspective.

Stenson, James. *Preparing for Adolescence: A Planning Guide for Parents.* 1989, 2001.

A very small book that encourages parents to plan ahead, taking time now to reason through their answers to questions that will come up when their children are in their teens.

Year of Faith:

YouCat. 2011

A question-answer style summary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, approved by the Church, with quotes, photos, and stick drawings very appealing to teens.

www.youtube.com/user/vatican

This is an official Vatican channel with daily videos of papal audiences, etc.

www.zenit.org

A great source for breaking news in Rome and in the Catholic Church around the world. (If the video you want to watch on the Vatican YouTube channel is not in English, you can usually find a translation here.)

www.onefamilyinmission.org/hca.html

An official group run by the Holy See, The Holy Childhood Association is a 150-year old organization connecting children, through prayer and giving, from 130 countries around the world. For \$1.25 a child receives 3 excellent, age-appropriate magazines in fall, Advent, and Lent, telling about Catholic missionary activities around the globe, and providing enrichment in language and culture.

Virtues for the Year of HOPE

September: HOPE

—trusting in God’s loving plan

October: STUDIOUSNESS

—seeking knowledge to grow closer to Truth

November: HUMILITY

—accepting your limitations and God-given talents

December: PATIENCE

—waiting or enduring without complaint

January: FIDELITY

—being faithful to promises and commitments

February: CHEERFULNESS

—looking on the bright side

March: TEMPERANCE

—enjoying things in a proper, balanced way

April: OBEDIENCE

—saying “yes” to the loving will of God and those He has set over us

May: DILIGENCE

—doing your best and working hard until you’re finished

Introduction to the Year of HOPE

*“We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that . . . **hope** does not disappoint.” (Romans 5:3-5)*

*“Though He slay me, I will **hope** in Him.” (Job 13:15)*

*“This **hope** we have as an anchor of the soul, a **hope** both sure and steadfast.” (Hebrews 6:19)*

*“So that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the **hope** of eternal life.” (Titus 3:7)*

*“[He] has caused us to be born again to a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance . . . reserved in heaven for you . . . In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials . . . prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your **hope** completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:9-13)*

*“I wait for the Lord, and in Him I **hope**.” (Psalm 130)*

The theological virtue of hope, given to us in baptism and strengthened as we grow in faith, is very different from the way we use the word “hope” in everyday language. Usually, we say “hope” when we mean “wish” or “want”: “I hope you’re doing well”, “I hope I get this promotion”. Christian hope does not mean a wish, but a certainty, a trust in God’s promise that He has created us to be with Him in heaven.

The virtue of hope (trusting in God’s loving plan) enables us to suffer with joy in this life, knowing that even when the things that happen to us are evil, the Lord will use them for our salvation. The virtue of hope reminds us that the sufferings of this life are short and small compared to the greatness of joy prepared for us in eternity. The Christian knows that hoping in wealth, in persons of power, in anything that is of this world, is foolish: they all fail us at some point. God alone will never fail us, and heaven is the only world which shall not pass away. Therefore we anchor our hearts in heaven, and with that grounding, we can bear all the storms and trials of this life. Like a life line anchored to a faraway shore, hope gives us the strength and direction we need to be continually pulled toward God, seeking the path He has planned for us in this life, recognizing that it is a journey toward eternal life with Him.

Hope also seeks God's plan for us in this life, the variety of paths He has planned for each of us to glorify Him and find our way to heaven. This provides an opportunity for the students to focus on discovering their talents, and honing them through practice, so that they are prepared for the vocation to which God calls them. Properly understanding the virtue of humility (accepting our limitations and God-given talents) allows them to discern the gifts God has given to each of them, and to rejoice in the gifts given to others. Virtues such as studiousness, temperance, obedience, and diligence provide opportunities to focus on developing study skills such as research, time management, following directions, and completing our work well—all within the framework of seeking God's will for us in this life, that we may join Him forever in heaven. The virtue of fidelity reminds them of this purpose, even in schoolwork; the virtue of patience allows them to make mistakes without giving up; and the virtue of cheerfulness reminds them not only to avoid taking themselves too seriously, but that God's command to "be perfect" is different from the common tendency toward perfectionism in our work. A sure sign that we are following God's plan and doing all our work for *His* glory and not our own is *joy*.

Our Catholic tradition cries out in gratitude to the Redeemer, "*Ave Crux, Spes Unica!*" (Hail, Cross, our only hope!), and to His Mother, "*Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve*" (Hail [holy Queen, Mother of mercy] our life, our sweetness, and our hope). This year, we look to the cross and to Our Lady as signs of hope, knowing that the love of God triumphs over evil and that we have a Mother in heaven who will hold us close through life's sorrows, drawing us to rejoice at her side in eternity.

Home Projects for September

HOPE—trusting in God’s loving plan

Grades PreK-2—Saint Joseph

1. Discuss: what promises did God make and keep in the Old Testament? What promises did God make in the New Testament? Each day this month say a prayer thanking God for His promises and tell Him you can’t wait to see how He keeps them, because you know He will.
2. Practice saying the prayer: “Jesus, I trust in You!” especially when you are sad or afraid.
3. Christian hope does not mean making a wish or wanting something. It means knowing for sure that God loves us and will bring us to heaven if we follow Him. Draw a picture of heaven and describe it to your parents.

Grades 3-5—Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

1. Learn and pray the Act of Hope each day this month.
2. Write a poem about how our lives on earth are only a journey to heaven, our true home.
3. Look back on something bad that happened to you. What good might God bring out of it? Pray for the ability to trust, in hard moments, that God will always conquer the devil by bringing good even out of evil.
4. Search for a beautiful image of heaven and post it in your room this month to remind you what to hope in.
5. Pray each night this month, asking God to tell you about your vocation, how He is calling you to give your life and follow Him.

Grades 6-8—Blesseds Louis and Zelig Martin

1. Make a list of songs that talk about “love forever”. Does this life last forever? Whether we know it or not, what do all people truly long for? Find a joyful song that is about loving God in heaven, or could be easily interpreted to be about loving God in heaven, and make it your fall-back tune for humming at random moments this month. If people ask you what song it is, tell them why you chose that one.
2. When you experience evil or discouragement, fight the tendency to look inward and despair—look upward and forward to Christ and heaven, which makes suffering worthwhile. Confirm your soul in hope by saying out loud, to a friend, why this suffering is worthwhile.
3. Interview parents (yours or someone else’s). How have they planned for their children’s future? Have they planned for their children’s eternal future? Ask if their plans have ever failed/turned out differently, and whether the virtue of trusting in God’s plan helped them at those times.

Home Projects for October

STUDIOUSNESS—seeking knowledge to grow closer to Truth

Grades PreK-2—Saint Albert the Great

1. Find something in nature that is really tiny but really beautiful. What does this teach us about God? Find something really, really big in nature that is also beautiful. What does this teach us about God?
2. Ask your mom or dad why it is important to go to school and learn. How does it help us to live God's plan for us? Can it help us to get to heaven?
3. Each day, think of one thing you learned at school that taught you something about God and share it with your parents. Try to find things from all your classes, not just religion class. You can even use things you learned at recess!

Grades 3-5—Saint Thomas Aquinas

1. List every subject you learn about in school. See if you can explain to someone how each subject brings you closer to God.
2. Make an extra effort this month to seek God in all your studies. For example, if you study planets, think about how they glorify God. If you study parts of speech, think of how marvelous it is that He gave us the gift of language and how He wants us to use it. If you read a story, think about how each character is doing in his/her relationship with God.
3. Exercise your ability to wonder. What do you wonder about God? Make a list. Chose one or more questions from your list and try to find out the answer.
4. Study God's design in the universe by researching the Golden Ratio. See if your local library can get the video *Donald in Mathmagicaland*, a little-known treasure that teaches the design we find in nature, architecture, music, and sports.

Grades 6-8—Saint Edith Stein

1. Interview a convert. How did learning about doctrine influence his/her faith?
2. Interview a devout Catholic doctor or scientist. Ask how scientific knowledge brings him/her closer to God.
3. Brainstorm questions about the faith with a friend. Use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or the *YouCat* to try to find the answers.
4. Watch "Indescribable" (available on DVD or YouTube) and discuss how science should strengthen our faith. (Note: this is a sermon by a Christian preacher.)
5. Discuss: does training your mind (in, say, mathematics) make it better able to receive truths about God? How? What does this say about the way we should do our schoolwork/homework?
6. There is a difference between acquiring knowledge, being overwhelmed with information, and seeking facts that are a waste of our time. With your friends, list a few examples for each of those three categories and dare each other to go on a "facts fast" from things that you don't really need to know (no, schoolwork does not count, sorry). Compare your experiences: did you feel starved? Purified? Does how long you kept at it make a difference?

Home Projects for November

HUMILITY—accepting our limitations and God-given talents

Grades PreK-2—Saint John the Baptist

1. Discuss with your parents: is it okay not to be good at something? Does that mean we shouldn't even try? What should we do if we try really hard at something and can't do it? Follow their advice this month.
2. One of the beautiful reasons God gave different people different limitations and talents is so that we can help each other. Talk about the limitations and talents of each member of your family and how you can help each other. Don't miss the simple things, like the older people being able to help the younger ones when they can't reach things!
3. All our talents come from God. When someone tells you "Thank you" for using your talent, say "You're welcome"—and in your heart, say "Thank You, God for giving me that talent."
4. What is the difference between knowing our talents and bragging? If you have a bad habit of bragging, try to break it this month.

Grades 3-5—Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

1. Tell your friends and family members the talents you admire in them—and praise God for them!
2. Don't be shy about proclaiming and using your talents, because it's not about you—*God* gave you those talents, and many of them! Ask your parents and friends what talents they see in you and write a prayer thanking God for them and asking His help to use them well.
3. Sometimes when we're not good at something we get embarrassed. Why? Talk to your parents about something that's like that for you and how you can accept it, to grow in humility this month.

Grades 6-8—Saint Therese of Liseux

1. Why is it important to know our limitations and God-given talents? How is this related to the virtue of Hope? Is it true or false that "you can do anything if you put your mind to it"? Choose sides and debate the question with a friend. Why are there so many movies based on this theme? Is there a difference between overcoming difficulties and ignoring the limitations God has placed upon us? If so, what is the difference?
2. Write a poem or draw a picture about how tiny each person is compared to the universe God made—and yet how hugely important each person is to God.
3. Sometimes we boast about who we know, things we have, or things we do to try to make ourselves feel important. See if you can identify a character in a book or a movie who does this. Do you admire that person? Do you think he/she is more important because of their connections, possessions, or actions? What makes a person truly important or worthy of praise? Avoid boasting this month.
4. Among your friends/class/teammates, pass around a paper with each person's name and ask everyone to write what they think that person's talents are.
5. Discuss areas where you know you lack talent and laugh about them together.

Home Projects for December

PATIENCE—waiting or enduring without complaint

Grades PreK-2—Saint Monica

1. Don't complain whenever you have to wait for something this month. If you forget, say: "Sorry, Lord—give me patience!"
2. Whenever you get a gift or treat this month, wait as least a few minutes before eating or opening it (unless your parents or teachers tell you to have it right away). How long can you wait? Make your waiting a sacrifice to God. Offer it up for someone who needs prayers.
3. During this month, when your family or classmates have to take turns for things, offer to go last.

Grades 3-5—Saint Isaac Jogues

1. Make a list of things that are *fast* today compared to decades or centuries ago. This month, when you're annoyed at something taking too long, see how many things from your list you can name while you wait, and pray for patience.
2. Be patient with yourself: if you don't get something right the first time, stay calm and try again.
3. When you're stuck waiting, pray a decade of the rosary for someone you know needs your prayers.
4. How long can you wait for something? Choose something you want (not something you need) and challenge yourself to wait a day or a week for it.

Grades 6-8—Saint Rita of Cascia

1. List things in our culture that foster impatience—things that people expect to be *instant*. Come up with a revolutionary way to use one of those things to grow in patience rather than the opposite.
2. We get annoyed and complain when we think something is unreasonable or less than we deserve. How are these two viewpoints related to hope and humility? Think of something that frequently makes you complain, and discuss how hope or humility can help you to grow patient with it this month.
3. A good measure of our patience is how we respond to other people's faults—or our own. How is patience related to the virtues of humility and forgiveness? Write a short prayer to use this month asking God for patience and include one or both of these other virtues.
4. The virtue of patience helps us to endure when we ourselves or those we love are suffering. The suffering of Christ is referred to as His "Passion"—a word that comes from the same root as the word patience. On your own, prayerfully read the Passion of Christ (look at the end of one of the four Gospels). With your friends, discuss why Christ had such patience. Ask Him to help you follow His example.

Home Projects for January

FIDELITY—being faithful to promises and commitments

Grades PreK-2—Saint Cecilia

1. Make a new year's resolution and focus on keeping it. Choose something small—if your goal is too big it will be too hard to keep your promise. If you make a mistake, pray for fidelity and try again.
2. Do you trust someone who breaks promises? Don't make promises unless you are sure you can keep them. Make a promise to your parents about something you will/won't do for a day or a week. Do your very best, but remember they love you and they'll forgive you if you make a mistake. Yet they want you to try your hardest!

Grades 3-5—Blesseds Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi

1. At your baptism, your parents made promises on your behalf. What were they? Find out what "baptismal promises" are and use them as an examination of conscience this month.
2. What is a covenant? How many can you find in the book of Genesis? (You can skim and look at the section headings.) Does the Lord ever break a covenant? Which people in Genesis keep God's covenant? What is the "New Covenant" and how can you keep it this month?
3. Why do people say, "talk is cheap"? Discuss and write a poem, song, rap, or pledge titled "Walk the Walk".

Grades 6-8—Saint Gianna Molla

1. Are there commitments that go with the sacrament of confirmation? Find out what they are and choose a way you can practice this month to grow strong enough to make that commitment.
2. Find a priest/Sister/married couple who has/have celebrated the 50th anniversary of their vows of marriage or religious life. When people make these vows, *what* do they promise to God? Find out in your interview, and discuss with a friend whether you should make a similar (less formal) commitment, according to your state in life.
3. Pray every day this month for your future spouse and ask God to strengthen you in the virtue of fidelity in whatever commitment He calls you to make with your life (He might be the Spouse!)
4. Discuss commitment in our culture today. What are some common commitments and how do they compare to the past? Why is the virtue of fidelity important? Is there a revolutionary way you can practice or promote fidelity to commitments this month?

Home Projects for February

Please notify the teacher if you have an alternative project idea

CHEERFULNESS—looking on the bright side

Grades PreK-2—Saint John Bosco

1. List appropriate ways to make people smile. Count how many times you can make someone smile each day.
2. Explain the expression “silver lining”. When you have to do something hard or something you don’t like doing, practice listing what is good about the situation.
3. It’s true: frowny faces aren’t handsome, cute, or pretty. Practice smiles and scowls in a mirror with your child, and comment how much better they look when they are happy. Agree on a signal (such as touching the corner of your mouth) that you will use to remind them to wipe off a frown.
4. Choose a day of the week that will be a “no complaining day” in your house and at school. Be faithful—you can’t complain, either! Discuss afterwards whether the family is happier on these days.

Grades 3-5—Saint Philip Neri

1. Learn some appropriate jokes and share them.
2. Discuss “glass half-empty/half full” mentalities. What are the benefits of seeing the full half? Practice naming positive aspects when faced with hard situations and share how this tool affects experiences this month.
3. Play a family game or watch a fun movie together.
4. Whistle while you work: chose a chore you dread and sing to a CD or the radio while you do it this month (make sure it’s uplifting music!)
5. Practice encouragement: whenever you hear someone complaining this month, give them sympathy, but then point out things they are good at and how they can use them to overcome their troubles.
6. Watch the movie “Annie” and discuss how a positive attitude can affect your life. Choose something that could get you down and be more positive about it this month.

Grades 6-8—Blessed Miguel Pro

1. Discuss your family’s recreational activities. Are they truly re-creative, refreshing and restorative? Or are they draining, causing extra stress and busy-ness?
2. Discuss the self-consciousness and need for peer approval experienced by most teens. When you catch a peer criticizing him/herself, be sure to tell them the true good you see in them, including the good qualities of their character.
3. Discuss signs of teen depression. Are certain types of music and fashion warning signs of depression? Why does society glamorize depression? At what point should a true friend report a concern to an adult?
4. Listen to oldies music together and discuss cultural trends toward happiness or sadness. What is the root? What are the effects? What should we do about it?
5. Practice seeing the good in everything. Even when something bad happens, pray and ask God to help you to see the good He can bring out of it. For example, a bad grade might motivate you to study more than ever before. Being sick might provide extra quality time with your family, or a temporary misunderstanding with a friend might give you a chance to meet someone knew. Try to thank God for everything, even what seems bad. Find the good in it!

Home Projects for March

TEMPERANCE—enjoying things in a proper, balanced way
(PK-2 Translation: only having enough that it's good for you)

Grades PreK-2—Saint Teresa of Avila

1. Talk about nutrition. Practice identifying a balanced meal and reasonable portions. Identify unbalanced meals and super-sized portions. Why is nutrition important?
2. Practice sharing attention: when you talk with people this month, make sure that they get enough time to talk as you do. Some people are quiet; you might need to ask them questions.
3. Try watching TV only on weekends. Discuss how it affects your routine and your relationships.
4. Discuss health and establish expectations, such as “You can only have (#quantity),” or “You have to eat your _____ before you can have any _____.”

Grades 3-5—Saint Camillus de Lellis

1. Discuss video games. What is the difference between having fun and being addicted? What happens if someone spends too much time on video games? Try cutting back just a little this month. Discuss afterwards whether it was hard or easy.
2. Try eating only 2/3 a portion of sweets this month.
3. Discuss how you spend your time. Is there a balance between prayer, rest, work, and play? Is there any one activity that takes over too much of your time and energy? Are there enjoyable activities that deserve more of your time? Make a resolution this month that will help balance your schedule.
4. See if you can eat sweets only on Sundays.
5. Choose something that you think you do too much. Try to see how many days you can go without doing it.

Grades 6-8—Venerable Matt Talbot

1. Discuss addictions: alcohol, drugs, food, smoking, pornography, etc. What causes addiction? How can you help someone who has an addiction? Can caffeine or sugar be addictive? What about texting, music, or talking on the phone? Try to cut back on one of these this month as an experiment.
2. Discuss eating disorders. How are they caused? How can you help someone you suspect has an eating disorder? When should you report a concern? What are your own eating habits: are you too controlling of what you eat? Too indulgent? Take steps to correct any imbalance this month.
3. Discuss how you spend your time. Is there a balance between prayer, rest, work, and play? Is there any one activity that takes over too much of your time and energy? Are there enjoyable activities that deserve more of your time? Make a resolution this month that will help balance your schedule.

Home Projects for April

OBEEDIENCE—saying “yes” to the loving will of God and those He has set over us

Grades PreK-2—Our Lady

1. Make a list of people you should obey. Choose one of those people and work on obeying them better this month.
2. Focus on the teachers’ directions this month. Give them your *full* attention and try to do what they ask right away.
3. Sometimes selfishness or our temper gets in the way of obedience. Make a list of people you should obey, and never say “no” to them this month.

Grades 3-5—Saint Juan Diego

1. Memorize the 10 Commandments in a creative way that you can share with your class.
2. What are your class/school rules? Chose the one that you find hardest, and practice following it carefully this month.
3. Play one of your favorite games—but leave out an important rule. What happens? Leaving out some rules might make the game more fun, but is that true for every rule? Which ones are necessary to make the game work? Make it a goal to follow the rules of all your games this month without arguing.

Grades 6-8—Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini

1. Sometimes we say we’ll do something and then forget. Practice doing such things *right away* this month, or come up with ways to remember (for example, write a note, and put it in your bedroom doorway so that you will see it when you walk over it—or if you can’t scrub the shower right away when your mom asks, put the cleaner on your night stand so you remember to do it before you go to bed).
2. Obedience includes the things you know parents, teachers, etc. *want* you to do, even if they don’t say it. A person who excels in the virtue of obedience is good at figuring out what is wanted/needed *before* he/she is asked. Confuse your parents and teachers this month by trying to figure out what they want/need and doing it before they ask.
3. Often we argue or disobey because we think a rule is unreasonable. Choose a rule like this that is hard for you to follow, and discuss why it might be in place. Does it protect the rights of others? The good of the whole? If you’re stuck, ask a responsible adult to help you understand the rule. See if you are strong enough to submit to it this month, even if you don’t like it. Make it a sacrifice and offer it up for someone who really needs your prayers.

Home Projects for May

DILIGENCE—doing your best and working hard until you're finished

Grades PreK-2—Saint André Bessette

1. Work on finishing puzzles or mazes this month. Don't give up!
2. Make a calendar that shows the last month of school. For every day you work your hardest, give yourself one smiley face during the first week, two smiley faces for a "worked my hardest day" in the second week, three smileys in the third week, and four smileys per day in the fourth week—because it's harder toward the end! How many smileys would that be if you got them all? How many do you think you can get? Make a goal and try to reach it.
3. Choose a chore at home and discuss how you could finish it better (for example: after you clean your room, could you vacuum it? Or after you feed the dog, do you put things away neatly?). Work on doing it your best this month, especially finishing it carefully.
4. Read and discuss "The Little Engine that Could". How can you imitate him this month?

Grades 3-5—Saint Francis de Sales

1. How would you feel if your mom sorted and washed your laundry, but didn't dry it? Or if your dad marinated meat for dinner, but didn't cook it? Name the *last step* of a few of your daily tasks and focus this month on doing the last step well.
2. If we remember to do everything as a gift for God, we'll do our best. This month, say a quick prayer in your heart (such as "All for You, Jesus!") before each task you start.
3. If you feel yourself losing steam while doing your chores or homework, ask to take a break and jog around the block.
4. Make your tasks a game this month: before you start, name a time record or high score that you want to beat.

Grades 6-8—Saint Catherine of Siena

1. Discuss how diligence is related to the virtue of hope. When you're tempted to quit or to do a sloppy job this month, pray the Act of Hope, or doodle the word "hope" in your notes as a reminder of your goal and your reason for putting forth your best effort.
2. Think of something you enjoy doing, and make it a "reward" to yourself by deciding to do that enjoyable thing only after you've completed doing a less desirable, but necessary task.
3. Come up with your own motto/battle cry (perhaps something similar to the cheer for your favorite sports team). Use it to motivate yourself this month whenever you are tempted to give up.

Additional Resources

Virtues in General:

Catechism of the Catholic Church. 1994

The Catechism is an amazing compilation of the teachings of the Church both from Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, quoting both the Bible, the Saints, and documents of the Church. The CCC is available online at the Vatican Website (www.vatican.va) under “resources”. CCC # 1803-1845 is a section on the virtues.

Bennet, William. *The Book of Virtues.* 1996 and *The Children’s Treasury of Virtues.* 2000

Two wonderful collections of solid moral stories that engage the imagination. The *Treasury* is for younger children and is filled with beautiful color illustrations. The *Book* is for intermediate ages, containing an explanation of each virtue, and providing a sampling of poetry, stories, etc.

DeMarco, Donald. *The Heart of Virtue: Lessons from Life and Literature Illustrating the Beauty and Value of Moral Character.* 1996

An excellent further reading for the parent, this book provides thought-provoking descriptions of each virtue in a readable, conversational tone, followed by a short story demonstrating the virtue, often an anecdote from the life of a famous person or an excerpt from a great story.

Earl, Sister Patricia Helene. *Building the Builders, Faith Formation in Virtue.* 2006

This is a good resource for teachers (or parents) wanting to deepen their own understanding of the life of virtue in order to form their students/children in virtue. Sister Patricia Helene is an IHM Sister who has served as a superintendent in the diocese of Arlington; the book is a summary of the teacher-formation program she developed for teachers there over ten years. Good summary of doctrine, Church documents, etc. in the context of virtue.

Groeschel, Father Benedict. *The Virtue Driven Life.* 2006

A sometimes gruff and often humorous look at what virtue really means, distinguishing values praised in our contemporary culture with what our faith tells us is necessary to get to heaven.

Kreeft, Peter. *Back to Virtue: Traditional Moral Wisdom for Modern Moral Confusion.* 1992.

Another witty and realistic look at the traditional virtues compared to contemporary culture.

Stenson, James. *Compass: A Handbook on Parent Leadership.* 2003

A great resource for parent support groups, written from a Catholic, virtue-based perspective.

Stenson, James. *Preparing for Adolescence: A Planning Guide for Parents.* 1989, 2001.

A very small book that encourages parents to plan ahead, taking time now to reason through their answers to questions that will come up when their children are in their teens.

Year of Hope:

Burpo, Todd. *Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy’s Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back.* 2010

A Christian pastor recounts the story of his four-year-old son’s trip to heaven, including meeting a sibling (who had died in miscarriage) and Jesus—with strange marks in His hands that dad had never told him about. A very inspiring story that really reinforces belief in the title.

Covey, Sean. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens.* 1998

Although not a Catholic resource, a virtue is a good habit—so this book on habits aligns well with VIP. Written in a format that is deliberately fun in an effort to appeal to teens, this book is “stuffed [with] cartoons, clever ideas, great quotes, and incredible stories about real teens from all over the world”. The 7 Habits it teaches are: being proactive (taking responsibility), beginning with the end in mind (goal setting), putting first things first (setting priorities), thinking win-win, “seek first to understand—then to be understood” (listening), synergize (teamwork), and “sharpen the saw” (renew yourself regularly). This book does *not* aim at the goal of heaven, but it does teach teens how to hone their study-skills and talents, and how to be live purposefully.

Virtues for the Year of CHARITY

September: CHARITY

—loving God with all your heart, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself

October: FRIENDSHIP

—sharing a mutual love that seeks the good of the other

November: COURTESY

—being thoughtful of others

December: PURITY

—Keeping your soul free of sin

January: FORTITUDE

—being brave and strong in face of trials

February: PRUDENCE

—making good decisions in specific circumstances

March: RESPECT

—recognizing the dignity of all people

April: FORGIVENESS

—pardoning those who offend you

May: RESPONSIBILITY

—being reliable in your duties and accountable for your actions

Introduction to the Year of CHARITY

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 Jn 4:7-8)

“Love is patient, love is kind. . . faith, hope, love, remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor 13)

“ ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ [Jesus] said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.’” (Mt 22:36-40)

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20)

“From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith . . . an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom.” Vatican Congregation for Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, #25

“. . . let us consider the saints, who exercised charity in an exemplary way. . . The saints are the true bearers of light within history, for they are men and women of faith, hope and love.” Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #40

The theological virtue of Charity is given to us in baptism. It allows us to love God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. Like any other virtue, we must grow in charity by practicing charitable deeds. Saint Paul reminds us that no matter how great or how glorious our deeds, if they lack charity, they are empty; Saint John reminds us that the true test of our love for God is how we treat our neighbor.

There is a widespread concern regarding bullying in education today. Cruelty between students is especially distressing in the environment of the Catholic school, where all are called to love one another in the Spirit of Christ. Many schools have addressed this problem with bully-prevention programs. Yet these types of programs place extraordinary amounts of time and emphasis on only one aspect of student behavior, a negative one. Some schools have pointed out that they wish they hadn’t used the word “bully” in their programs, because this resulted in a witch-hunt mentality, where some children were labeled and treated in an uncharitable way. Research and popular prevention materials themselves indicate this caution: on the very first page of the book *The Bully-Free Classroom* by Allan L. Bean, the author says: “The term ‘bully’ is used . . . The label is not intended to typecast students. . . when talking with and helping students who bully others, *do not use the label*. Instead, focus attention on the inappropriate behavior” (Beane, 2005, p. 1, emphasis added). This is an echo of the old Catholic saying, “love the sinner, hate the sin”. In this tradition, VIP avoids labeling children, and focuses instead on behaviors.

Researchers also point out that this issue of aggressive behavior should not be isolated, but addressed in the broader context of morality, religion, and character formation:

Bullying is related to elemental beliefs about the worth of individuals and the way they should be treated. The topics of morality, moral education, ethical reasoning, and spirituality lie at the core of society's problems, including child-on-child aggression. As practitioners think about bullying in the future, it would be beneficial to examine the role moral development plays in learning to care about one another. Education leaders may look to their spiritual communities. . . . Nearly all religions and ethical codes support protection of the weak and respect for the individual; this may also be brought to bear on the issue of bullying. (Hoover & Oliver, 2008, p. 174)

In other words, aggressive behavior is best addressed in the broader context of moral formation, which is the approach taken by VIP.

Charity goes far beyond a prevention of bullying—but it should include it. In order to address this problem, a PK-8 program such as VIP is needed. When not only physical, but *relational* aggression is considered, patterns of negative social behavior are equally prevalent among girls and boys, and although these vices tend to peak in the middle school years, they are typically developed before age 8 (Hoover & Oliver, 2008). The *Virtues in Practice* Year of Charity seeks to foster a love for God above all, and also the love of our neighbor. As mentioned by Hoover and Oliver above, our faith teaches us to protect the weak (virtue of fortitude) and to have respect for every individual. Gleaning the wisdom from contemporary research, VIP lessons include role-playing, I-messages, assertiveness training (fortitude and prudence), reporting (covered within the virtue of purity), naming/identifying behaviors (covered under friendship), and other social skills taught in secular bully-prevention programs. Contrary to the popular meaning of the word “charity”, VIP does not focus on service projects, food collections, etc. in this year. This is in keeping with another piece of traditional Catholic wisdom: “charity begins at home”. In the VIP Year of Charity, we focus not on loving people on the other side of the globe, but on loving the person next to us—which is usually more difficult. In the Year of Charity, a Love of Neighbor survey may be given to assess relationships between students. Voluntary discussions groups for parents/students/teachers may be held to identify problems and discuss ways to create a culture of charity at the school. Guest speakers may be invited to address students. Buddy programs, peer mediation, or programs inviting older students to present topics to younger students may be initiated.

Communication and cooperation between home and school is key to overcoming negative behavior and strengthening positive behavior. It is necessary that parents help students who feel excluded or targeted to report the situation and to “develop potential talents” in order to build confidence; it is equally important that parents of children with habits of negative teasing or physical aggression make and enforce clear rules against such behaviors, praise the child's progress, and “spend time together with the child and his/her friends” (Olweus, 1993, p. 101-103.)

Developing charity, along with all virtuous behavior, requires grace and is best learned by a good example: parents and teachers must strive to grow in virtue themselves, in order to give students the powerful gift of a good example. Let us strive together to love our neighbor by speaking of others only in kindness, especially within the hearing of the children. Recognizing that aggressive behavior is, at its root, a spiritual problem engrained in our culture, members of the school community are strongly encouraged to join together to pray this year for all the school's efforts to deepen in the virtue of charity. The graces from this prayer are needed to open hearts, to protect leaders, and to beg the healing that only Our Lord can provide. Above all, let us show the children that God is first and foremost in our lives, by developing our own habits of daily prayer, weekly Mass, and eliminating from our lives anything that interferes in our relationship with God.

Home Projects for September

CHARITY—loving God with all your heart, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself

Grades PreK-2—Saint Gertrude

1. Discuss performing secret, random acts of kindness. Try to do one each day at home or at school. Tell only your parents about it (unless it's one for them!).
2. Pray the aspiration "Jesus, I love You!" softly or silently throughout the day. Choose a signal to remind you, such as every time a bell rings (to change classes at school, the telephone at home), every time you pass through a doorway, or every time you sit or stand.
3. Practice sacrificing for others. Give up a treat or do an good deed, then close your eyes and pray "Jesus, I love You and I love (name) for You."
4. Practice being the leader for prayers at home: grace before meals, bedtime, etc. Keep your shoes under your bed to remind you to get on your knees and pray before bed and when you wake up!

Grades 3-5—Saint Vincent de Paul

1. Be the first one in your family to be ready for Mass each Sunday this month.
2. Each night, ask other family members about their day.
3. Clean out your closet and donate some items to the Ladies of Charity.
4. Commit to offering one sacrifice to God each day. Let your parents help you keep track.

Grades 6-8—Venerable Laura Vicuna

1. Discuss priorities: is God a clear first? Do other people or activities impede your relationship with Him? If so, what can you do to prioritize?
2. Choose a regular time to stop and make a quick visit to the Blessed Sacrament during this month, such as before sports practices.
3. Think of the person who you like least in your class. Don't tell who it is—that would *undermine* charity! Commit to praying for that person every night BY NAME. Ask God to help you love the person and see Him in that person. Does anything happen to your relationship with that person, or even to the way you think of them, over the month?
4. Make a lunchtime pact: with your friends, choose three people at school who do not eat at your lunch table. Get to know them this month, even if it means some of you have to take turns eating elsewhere. If you're really brave, try to get to know people you don't get along with. Often times, you'll be surprised to find out how much you have in common, and by knowing them better, you'll get along better.
5. Rally your friends to be lunch/recess monitors. Make it your personal goal to look after anyone you see being left out, for love of God: "as you did for them. . . You did for Me" (Mt 25).
6. With a friend, pledge to show more interest in your brothers/sisters/parents at home this month. What specific goals can you make? Give updates on your progress: keep each other honest!

Home Projects for October

FRIENDSHIP—sharing a mutual love that seeks the good of the other

Grades PreK-2—Saints Benedict & Scholastica

1. Practice sharing your friends. Tell someone else how fun it is to play with your friend and invite them to join you.
2. Talk to your parents about your friends. Do they have any bad habits that you can work on together?
3. Do you copy any bad things that your friends do? Break that habit and help your friend practice the good habit that is the opposite. Good friends copy good habits from each other.
4. Practice making friends. Smile and ask the other person what things they like/like to do.
5. Are any of your friends sometimes mean to you? What do you do when they are mean to you? Practice politely telling them “I don’t like that” and “please stop”.

Grades 3-5—Saints Basil and Gregory

1. Who are your closest friends? What virtues are strengths for them? This month, make a goal of telling your friends which virtues you admire in them. This is a great way to encourage them to grow even more in that virtue.
2. Each night this month, pray for your friends by name.
3. Discuss: Who are your friends? Do you talk about important things together, and help each other to do what’s right? Try doing that once per week.
4. How often do you talk to people who do not eat at your lunch table? Set a goal number of times per week and discuss your success.

Grades 6-8—Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

1. Discuss friendships you have. Do they help you to be yourself, or do you have to act a certain way around your friends? True friends will love you for who you are. This month, take mental note of who among your friends most encourages you to be yourself, even if the two of you disagree.
2. Would you do something mean to keep your friends? This month, pay attention to whether your friends are habitually kind to each other. How do your friends talk about someone when he/she isn’t around? See if you can raise the bar.
3. How often do you ask/give advice to your friends? Take mental note this month of how often you share advice and whether the advice is based on faith and solid values.
4. “No friends”? Discuss what you have in common with the different kids in your class. Do you really know them? If you really feel that they share little in common with you, is there a club, group, or team you could join? What are your interests?
5. Invite a friend to spend the night on Saturday and join you for Mass Sunday morning (someone you have never been to Mass with before). Discuss the homily and how you can help each other to grow in holiness.

Home Projects for November

COURTESY—being thoughtful of others

Grades PreK-2—Saint Martin de Porres

1. Choose some of the following words/phrases and practice using them this month: “Please” “Thank you.” “You’re welcome.” “May I?” “Excuse me.” “What would you like to do?” “Would you care for any?” “Good morning” “How are you today?” “Let me get that for you.”
2. Practice looking people in the eye and listening to all they say—can you restate it?
3. Practice how to politely interrupt a conversation: stand nearby and wait; if the person doesn’t speak to you, say “excuse me” softly, then step back and wait until they answer (unless it’s an emergency!).
4. Make a list of things/places that are shared by all members of the family. Discuss and practice: what is the thoughtful way to leave it, if you know someone else will use it after you?
5. Practice project #1 or #2, then visit a friend or relative as a “test” of how courteous you can be.

Grades 3-5—Venerable Solanus Casey

1. Practice frequently offering to help parents and teachers (and remember to say thank you when they do something for you!).
2. Practice being on time/slightly early for things, as a courtesy to others.
3. Choose 3 table manners to practice this month.
4. Set the table with your best dishes one night, and practice table manners.
5. Discuss the most polite things to say when answering the phone (and taking messages). Make it your responsibility to answer the phone this month, even if others are home.

Grades 6-8—Blessed Pierre Toussaint

1. Share your views on courtesy. Is it old fashioned? What makes some people so courteous? Is it possible to be *too* courteous, or courteous in the wrong way or for the wrong reason? What is the reason for the different courtesies between men and women? How can you live out your views?
2. Interview an elderly friend or relative. Ask him/her what common courtesies they think have been forgotten in today’s society. Choose a few to practice this month.
3. Netiquette vs. Cyberservice: Do you notice a difference between how you speak to people online, texting, etc. and how you speak to them in person? Are you respectful of each person’s dignity, in person or otherwise? Which kind of conversations are better held in person? Which should never be held at all? Make a list of positive and negative ways people communicate on the Internet and agree on one improvement. Practice it for the month.
4. With a friend(s), look up a Code of Chivalry. Do any of these attitudes apply today? Write a code of courtesies ideal for a today’s man or woman. Chose at least one of the courtesies to focus on this month.

Home Projects for December

PURITY—Keeping your soul free of sin

Grades PreK-2—Saint Dominic Savio

1. Practice ways to end a fight before it starts.
2. Discuss sin and why we want to avoid it. Pray together: tell God how much you love Him and ask God to never let you turn away from Him! Remember, too—God will always forgive us.
3. Practice quickly closing your eyes and praying “Jesus, help me!” when you feel like telling a lie, getting angry, or doing something you know is wrong. Role play using this prayer in some tempting situations.
4. Discuss telling vs. tattling: tattling is when you are trying to get someone in trouble; telling is when you know they are in trouble (doing something that is bad for them) and you are trying to get them OUT. What kinds of things are tattling? What kinds of things are telling?

Grades 3-5—Saint Agnes

1. Plan a special way to celebrate the Immaculate Conception on December 8th. Discuss the purity of Our Lady and how we are called to imitate her by being pure tabernacles for Christ.
2. Discuss what to do if a friend is trying to talk you into doing something you know is wrong (cheating, excluding someone, stealing, etc.) Practice ways to avoid the temptation and save your friend from it, too.
3. Praise modesty: for girls, praise modesty in clothing; for boys, praise as “real men” those who protect women and look away when they see a woman who is immodestly dressed. Watch TV together and take turns identifying clothing and actions that are beautiful, and clothing/actions that are in “poor taste”, or “embarrassing”.
4. If you think God might be calling you to the joy of loving Him with an undivided heart as a priest or a Sister, pray to Our Lady this Advent and ask her to guard your vocation so that you can bring Christ to the world like she did.
5. Discuss the effects of music on our emotions. Listen together to songs that make you happy, sad songs that ease your sadness, sad songs that make you more depressed, and excerpts of songs that make you feel angry or cruel. Can the kind of music we listen to affect our relationship with God? What kinds should we listen to?

Grades 6-8—Saint Maria Goretti

1. Discuss how men and women are portrayed on commercials, in magazines, in music, in video games. Is it beautiful, or base? Is it realistic? How can you avoid what isn't good for your soul? How can you change the current culture?
2. Discuss what to do when inappropriate images or messages pop-up on the Internet or in email.
3. Discuss qualities to seek in a spouse. What would make someone a good spouse after 30 years?
4. Discuss where TVs, computers, & phones are located in your homes. Can this have an impact on purity? Why?
5. Be *truly* mature: throw out any music or video games with foul language or “mature” content.
6. Work with a friend to make a list of 5-10 ways you can protect your purity of heart and body during your teenage years. Don't forget to include some spiritual helps such as prayer and devotion to Mary. Ask Our Lord or Our Lady to show you which practices you should adopt.
7. Choose a practice to help you when you see, hear, or think of something impure. For example: look in another direction and pray “Jesus, Mary, Joseph, give me a pure heart.”

Home Projects for January

FORTITUDE—being brave and strong in face of trials

Grades PreK-2—Saint Bernadette

1. Name some things you're afraid of. What small step can you make this month to be stronger when you're afraid?
2. Fortitude means being strong enough to stand up for others. Is there someone in your class who is hurt by others? Describe what happens. How can you be strong enough to help? Talk to your parents about how you can help this month.
3. Are you strong if other kids are bothering you? With your parents, practice saying "please stop" in a way that is polite but strong, and use it this month if someone does something that bothers you. Remember to be kind to everyone—sometimes they are trying to make friends, and they don't *know* that they are bothering you or hurting your feelings.

Grades 3-5—Saint Joan of Arc

1. Is someone bothering you or hurting your feelings? Be brave enough this month to tell them "please stop." So that they know you don't think it's funny. If that doesn't work, try talking to them about it privately (see the PRUDENT acronym for next month.) If that doesn't work, report it!
2. Talk to your parents about the definitions of passive, assertive, and aggressive behavior. Assertiveness is another word for fortitude. Can you come up with other words for passive and aggressive? Talk about how both passive and aggressive behaviors are not respectful of others' dignity.
3. Practice using one of the methods in the FORTITUDE acronym below to stand up for someone else who is being mistreated.

Grades 6-8—Saints Paul Miki and Companions

1. How would you feel if you found out you were insulted, and one of your best friends just listened, and said nothing? Which of the ideas in the FORTITUDE acronym best fit your age and personality? Use them this month.
2. As you grown older and prepare for high school, the social scene can have higher risks that could change the course of a person's life. In addition to "just say no" to drugs, what are other things you and your friends don't want to get peer-pressured in to? Resolve now to help each other to be strong.
3. Is someone pressuring you to do things you don't like, or things you think are wrong? Stand up for yourself this month. Often we wimp out because we feel alone. Look around: are there others who share in the problem? Ask them to rally with you.

FORTITUDE: ideas of how to stand up for someone else

Fine/Penalty

"Yikes! Give him a compliment to make up for that."
"Foul! We get five yards!"

Opposite

"Well, I think it's a *cool* haircut."
"I think it's a *great* idea."

Report it

Hand a note to the teacher.
Talk to the teacher after school.

Take over

"Hey, everybody—let's have a race to decide."
"Let's vote on a movie to watch."

Investigate

"Why did you say that?"
"What made this such a big issue?"

Talk about it later

"I think we really hurt her feelings yesterday."
"That was pretty mean, what we did this morning."

Understanding

"That wasn't fair. I'm on your side."
"Want to hang out with me at recess today?"

Distract

"Look, who is that?"
"Hey, have you heard my favorite corny joke?"
"Wait—do we have any tests this week?"

Exclaim

"That's mean!"
"Don't say that!"

Home Projects for February

PRUDENCE—making good decisions in specific circumstances

Grades PreK-2—Blessed Junipero Serra

1. Practice pausing to “think!” before doing things this month. Is it right and good to do? Is it the best thing to do?
2. Practice using I-messages at home (“I felt ____ when you _____, please _____”).
3. Practice thinking out loud about decisions: what are your options? What is good about each option? What is bad about each option? What will happen if you choose this one or that one?
4. Choose a person you think is wise (parent, grandparent, older sibling, neighbor, teacher) and practice going to them once each week for advice on a tough decision.

Grades 3-5—Saint John Neumann

1. Discuss the short and long term effects of decisions. Practice thinking through long term effects when you are faced with decisions this month.
2. Discuss “ripple effect”: how your decisions affect other people’s decisions and then their decisions affect still other people. Practice thinking through “ripple effects” when you are faced with decisions this month.
3. Once each week share about a tough decision you made and why you chose the way you did.
4. Befriend a wise, elderly neighbor or relative who you haven’t spoken much to in the past. Get to know the person. Ask about big decisions he/she made in his/her life. How did they choose? What were the results of the decision? Ask advice of this person when you have a tough decision to make.
5. Pray for prudence each night before you go to bed as well as pausing to pray to the Holy Spirit before making decisions. Throughout the month, discuss whether this habit of prayer helps you.
6. Discuss the P-R-U-D-E-N-T way of addressing a problem with a peer (see below). Practice using it this month and share the results.

Grades 6-8—Blessed John XXIII

1. What are your priorities in life? With a friend, write a list of your priorities in order of importance. Is there ever a situation where the order of importance changes? Think of situations where you would have to choose between two of your priorities. What would you do?
2. With a friend, discuss a big decision made recently by an authority figure (family, school, or government). How did the decision affect you, and did you agree with it? Try to imagine the point-of-view of the person in authority: who besides you would this decision affect? What could be the long-term outcomes? What types of inside information might have affected the person’s decision? Why do you think that person made the decision that he/she did?
3. Discuss the P-R-U-D-E-N-T way of addressing a problem with a peer (see below). Practice using it this month and share the results.

PRUDENT: speaking privately to solve a problem **SAMPLE:**

P-plan ahead what to say.

R-request a private moment.

U-utter a prayer.

D-describe the deed. Maintain eye contact.

E-effect on me

N-nothing. Wait for a response.

T-terms

P: Mentally go through all the steps

R: You see the person alone in the hall; ask to talk.

U: As you lead them aside, pray “Help me, Jesus!”

D: “When you poured out my beaker in lab today
E: it really embarrassed me.”

N: (Pause until the other person says something.)

T: “Please don’t touch my things again or I’ll have to report it to the teacher.”

Home Projects for March

RESPECT—recognizing the dignity of all people

Grades PreK-2—Saint Jeanne Jugan

1. Dignity means that every single person is worth more than a *billion* dollars, because each one is made in the image of God and will live forever. Think of someone that it is hard for you to get along with. This month, pray for him/her and ask God to help you see what is good about that person. Tell your parents some of the things you discover.
2. Jesus said whatever we do to others, we do to Him. Think of someone that it is hard for you to get along with. This month, when you see that person, imagine that they are Jesus in disguise, and treat Him well!
3. Ask your mom or dad to teach you about a different culture, and what they like about it. Maybe they will even make a meal for you based on that culture!

Grades 3-5—Saint Damien of Molokai

1. Differences make us unique. Sometimes, everybody wants to dress the same way, or listen to the same music, just because it's popular. If someone doesn't do those things, should they be less popular? Think of an example among your friends of something everybody does just to be popular, and find someone who doesn't do it because it's not what they like. Congratulate them on being themselves, and ask what kinds of things *they* like.
2. If we respect others, we keep boundaries: we don't make people do what we want, or try to find out things that are private, if we think that person has real dignity. Make a list of boundaries, rules of how you should treat someone if you respect them. Review the list: are there some items that you forget with certain people? Work on them this month.
3. Sometimes we tease and joke around with our friends to show affection—and other times we tease in a way that has a mean “edge” to it, that cuts people like a knife. This month, be careful about “teasing”. If a person isn't your friend, and you “tease” them, it is probably mean—stop it this month. Or, if you only tease with your friends, take a private moment to ask one of your friends if the way you tease hurts his/her feelings. You might be surprised. If they say yes, ask forgiveness.

Grades 6-8—Blessed John Paul II

1. How is prejudice related to ignorance? Think of a person or a group your friends have a habit of pre-judging, and work together to learn about them this month, or work together to learn about a culture that is just foreign to you.
2. Are all stereotypes wrong? Are they all mean? Ask a friend to list stereotypes they think are mean, and those that they think are complimentary. Without looking at their list, make your own list, and compare. Discuss in the light of faith: are there stereotypes your friends need to drop? Should you drop all stereotypes or not?
3. The popularity game is often a cruel one that disrespects others. Be honest and make an examination of conscience: do you respect others less if they don't dress in the way you think is “right”, talk, eat, play, etc. in the way you think is “right”? Who decides what way is “right” when it comes to preferences and styles? From your examination, come up with goal to help you grow this month in respect for the dignity of every person.
4. Poor boundaries is a sign that respect is lacking. Is it hard for you to take the answer “no” from someone, or do you respect their right to say “no” to what you want? List verbal and non-verbal ways that people say “no”. Notice them this month, and show respect by giving people the right to say no to you.

Home Projects for April

FORGIVENESS—pardoning those who offend you

Grades PreK-2—Saint Patrick

1. Practice saying “I forgive you”. Look for chances to say it this month.
2. Discuss how grudges split us apart and how Jesus wants us to be one. Pray this month for yourself and all people to open our hearts and forgive one another so that we can be one.
3. Practice giving someone the benefit of a doubt. When someone seems mean, could there be another reason? Maybe they are hungry or sad about something, etc.
4. Remember specific mistakes and how your family forgave you. Choose your favorite memory of being forgiven and when someone makes you angry or hurts your feelings, pause and think of that memory.
5. Practice cooling down, walking away, praying, waiting, and when you are calm, using an I-message (see February) to tell how you feel; then forgive the person.

Grades 3-5—Blessed Margaret of Castello

1. Name a few little behaviors of others that annoy you at school or home. Sometimes prudence tells us to help people to solve their problem, but sometimes the fact that it annoys me so much is *my* problem. Decide beforehand that when this thing happens, you will acknowledge it and move on. Practice telling the Lord, in your heart: “XYZ doing XYZ is really annoying me—but I forgive him/her.”
2. Discuss Christ’s desire that all of us be one. Division is often a clever tool the devil uses to weaken the Body of Christ. Think of some local examples of things that divide good people. Could this division be overcome by forgiveness, even if unasked? Pray for a forgiving heart for yourself and others.
3. Is there someone you have trouble forgiving? Discuss why and compare to how God forgives you. What would it take for you to forgive that person? Work toward making that happen this month.
4. Read together MT 5:38-48. Does it make sense? Why does Christ teach this? Make a resolution about one way you can better live Christ’s teaching during this month.

Grades 6-8—Saint Josephine Bakhita

1. “Offend” means someone has violated your rights. We sometimes think someone has violated a right when they have only removed a privilege. What are your rights? When someone really has violated your rights, why should you forgive the person? Is there a difference between forgiving someone and letting a person walk all over you? Is forgiveness a wimpy option? Resolve one way you can better forgive this month.
2. Read up on Saint Josephine Bakhita, Immaculee Ilibagiza, or other refugees or concentration camp survivors. How did forgiveness help them to survive? What would have happened if they hadn’t forgiven those who wronged them? Pray this month for those who suffer extreme injustice, and when you are tempted not to forgive, compare their situations to your own.
3. Discuss how to ask for and grant forgiveness. What is the difference between saying “I’m sorry” and asking “Will you forgive me”? Are there things that are better not to say when you’re apologizing? Is the response “That’s okay” or “I forgive you” always true when someone apologizes after hurting you? What other ways could you respond to an apology?
4. With a partner discuss how important it is to forgive those who have hurt us. How does it free us when we forgive others? Write a forgiveness prayer and commit to praying for each other throughout the month to be able to forgive those who have hurt you.

Home Projects for May

RESPONSIBILITY—being reliable in your duties and accountable for your actions

Grades PreK-2—Saint Peter

1. Grown ups are often too embarrassed to say “I’m sorry”—so practice while you are young! This month, practice saying: “I’m sorry, will you forgive me?” For a few pretend situations. Then use these words when you have done something wrong or accidentally hurt someone.
2. Discuss how it feels when someone hurts your heart or body on purpose or accidentally. How does it feel when they say they are sorry and ask forgiveness? How does it feel if they do NOT say they are sorry? Which way do you want to be? How can you do a better job on it this month?
3. Discuss how excuses and lies multiply and make matters worse. Resolve to simply take responsibility for your mistakes this month by saying things like “I did it” or “I made a bad choice”.
4. Take on an extra chore at home this month.

Grades 3-5—Saint Henry II

1. Review the Act of Contrition. What is the meaning of each phrase? Pray it together slowly.
2. Discuss *excuses*. Why do we make them? Role play situations where you are tempted to make excuses, but instead tell the plain truth, apologize, and ask forgiveness. Do you feel differently? Fight the temptation to make excuses this month. Discuss how well you do.
3. Resolve to be more faithful this month to a chore or homework and discuss your progress. Be sure to make practical changes of timing, location, or rewards to ensure your success.
4. Go to confession as a family.
5. Use a sticker chart to track responsibility on homework or chores. Name a goal and a meaningful reward, such as quality time with one of your parents.

Grades 6-8—Blessed Bartolo Longo

1. Make a pact with your friend(s) that each of you will use the OWN UP acronym to ask forgiveness from someone you’ve hurt. Share how it went.
2. Tell your friend(s) of a duty you wish you were more responsible about (such as homework, chores, taking care of your siblings, packing lunch, practicing for a sport). Decide together on an improvement goal and track your progress.
3. Agree that each of you will offer to take over one of your parent’s responsibilities at home, such as cooking for a night (or a week!), helping a sibling with homework, sorting the mail, or cutting the grass. Share how it went.

OWN UP: admitting you were wrong and asking forgiveness

O—OPINION: Ask God His opinion: “Am I in the wrong?” Listen humbly.

W—WHO: Who did I hurt?

N—NEXT TIME: What made me do it? What will I do next time?

U—UNBURDEN: Go to the person. Name the deed you regret. Explain why you did it and what you will do next time. **ASK FORGIVENESS.**

P—PAY EXTRA ATTENTION: Watch closely for small ways to show you like that person over the next few days, to mend the relationship.

Additional Resources

Virtues in General:

Catechism of the Catholic Church. 1994

The Catechism is an amazing compilation of the teachings of the Church both from Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, quoting both the Bible, the Saints, and documents of the Church. The CCC is available online at the Vatican Website (www.vatican.va) under “resources”. CCC # 1803-1845 is a section on the virtues.

Bennet, William. *The Book of Virtues.* 1996 and *The Children’s Treasury of Virtues.* 2000

Two wonderful collections of solid moral stories that engage the imagination. The *Treasury* is for younger children and is filled with beautiful color illustrations. The *Book* is for intermediate ages, containing an explanation of each virtue, and providing a sampling of poetry, stories, etc.

DeMarco, Donald. *The Heart of Virtue: Lessons from Life and Literature Illustrating the Beauty and Value of Moral Character.* 1996

An excellent further reading for the parent, this book provides thought-provoking descriptions of each virtue in a readable, conversational tone, followed by a short story demonstrating the virtue, often an anecdote from the life of a famous person or an excerpt from a great story.

Earl, Sister Patricia Helene. *Building the Builders, Faith Formation in Virtue.* 2006

This is a good resource for teachers (or parents) wanting to deepen their own understanding of the life of virtue in order to form their students/children in virtue. Sister Patricia Helene is an IHM Sister who has served as a superintendent in the diocese of Arlington; the book is a summary of the teacher-formation program she developed for teachers there over ten years. Good summary of doctrine, Church documents, etc. in the context of virtue.

Groeschel, Father Benedict. *The Virtue Driven Life.* 2006

A sometimes gruff and often humorous look at what virtue really means, distinguishing values praised in our contemporary culture with what our faith tells us is necessary to get to heaven.

Kreeft, Peter. *Back to Virtue: Traditional Moral Wisdom for Modern Moral Confusion.* 1992.

Another witty and realistic look at the traditional virtues compared to contemporary culture.

Stenson, James. *Compass: A Handbook on Parent Leadership.* 2003

A great resource for parent support groups, written from a Catholic, virtue-based perspective.

Stenson, James. *Preparing for Adolescence: A Planning Guide for Parents.* 1989, 2001.

A very small book that encourages parents to plan ahead, taking time now to reason through their answers to questions that will come up when their children are in their teens.

Additional Resources—Year of Charity:

Beane, Allan. *The Bully-Free Classroom.* 2005.

This is a great resource for teachers, containing classroom activities. A helpful compilation of research. The son of the author was a victim of bully-related suicide.

Elman, Natalie Madorsky & Kennedy-Moore, Eileen. *The Unwritten Rules of Friendship: Simple Strategies to Help Your Child Make Friends.* 2003

Great tone. This resource is a very insightful guide to relationship building, mostly for intermediate grade students. It is not directed only toward children who “have no friends”, but toward guiding all different types of children toward virtuous friendship.

Hoover, John & Oliver, Ronald. *The Bullying Prevention Handbook.* 1996, 2008

A massive and thorough compilation of the latest research on bullying.

Olweus, Dan. *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do,* 1993

Foundational research on bullying. The first major study, nationwide in Norway, by request of the government.

Tomeo, Teresa and Dickow, Cheryl. *All Things Girl, All Things Guy.* 2008

Excellent book series covering topics like beauty, manners, social skills. Thoroughly Catholic and now an EWTN television series.

Wiseman, Rosalind. *Queen Bees and Wannabes.* 2002

Warning: explicit content. This is pop-culture’s best known book on social aggression, the source of the movie “Mean Girls”. Very secular and somewhat disturbing; positive aspects include scripted conversations, and insights into current teen culture and its dangers.

+
M

DUE: _____

(Student First & Last Name)

(Homeroom)

(Month)

(Virtue)

Home Project

DIRECTIONS: At the beginning of the month, choose a project. Work on it all through the month in order to grow in the virtue of the month. At the end of the month, think about how the project helped you/your child to grow in that virtue. Write your answers on this form and return it to the teacher at the end of the month.

PK-5: Students complete their monthly project with their parents.

6-8: Complete a project with parents or with friends, but parents should still sign the form.

Note: only a completion grade will be given for this assignment.

Project Number (see reverse): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Alternative (describe)

Parent comments (optional for grades 6-8):

Student comments (may be transcribed for younger students):

Parent Signature

Student Signature

Notes on Child(ren)'s Progress

Child: _____

Virtue(s): _____ Month/Year: _____

Child: _____

Virtue(s): _____ Month/Year: _____

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Virtue(s): _____ Month/Year: _____

Act of Faith

O my God, I firmly believe
that You are one God in three divine Persons,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I believe that Your divine Son became man
and died for our sins and that He will come
to judge the living and the dead.

I believe these and all the truths
which the Holy Catholic Church teaches
because You have revealed them
who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Amen.

Act of Hope

O my God, relying on Your almighty power
And infinite mercy and promises,
I hope to obtain pardon of my sins,
The help of Your grace, and life everlasting,
Through the merits of Jesus Christ,
My Lord and Redeemer.

Amen.

Act of Charity

O my God, I love You above all things,
With my whole heart and soul,
Because You are all good and worthy of all love.
I love my neighbor as myself for the love of You.

I forgive all who have injured me,
And ask pardon of all whom I have injured.

Amen.

Virtues in Practice

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