

The Spirit at Work



Parents & guardians, start here.
Read these numbered instructions
to yourself throughout the process.

1

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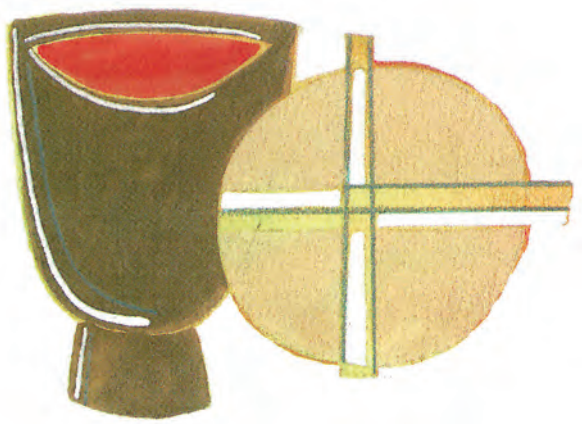
The Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, may be a difficult concept for young persons. The Spirit was given to us by Jesus so we would continue to be aware that God loves us and has a Plan, the Reign of God, for how we should live. We are called to love God, to love ourselves, and to love others. As the doxology in our Sunday Mass reminds us, we live *through*, *with*, and *in* Jesus, and in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

3

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

4

Getting started. Discuss together: Who are some of the people you love? How do you show your love? How do they show their love to you?



1

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

When God made the world, God had a plan. Everyone and everything would live in peace and harmony. In the Plan of God, people would love God more than anything. They would love others as they loved themselves. But something went wrong. People misused their gift of freedom. They broke God's peace. They forgot about God's love. They forgot that they were supposed to love everybody.

God sent Jesus to remind people about the Plan. God sent Jesus to help people remember the Good News. This is the Good News: God will always love us. God will always be with us.

Jesus was God's Son. When Jesus walked the earth, God was with us in a very special way. Jesus' love was God's love. His hands were God's hands. His voice was God's voice. Jesus did not just tell people the Good News; Jesus *was* the Good News.

After Jesus died, the Holy Spirit came to be with Jesus' friends. God is still with us in a very special way because the Holy Spirit is with us and in us.

Now our love can become God's love. Our hands can become God's hands. Our voices can become God's voice. Together, we become God's people. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can be the Good News to the world.

God is also with us in a very special way when we receive the sacraments. The sacraments are seven very special gifts. When we receive one of the sacraments, the Church celebrates "God with us" here and now. These are the seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and the

Sacrament of the Sick. In these sessions, we will talk about some of these sacraments.

We will also find out how the Church was born. You will find out how our Church celebrates that God is with us and that we are with God. You will hear about people who heard God's call and became the Good News. You will learn to listen for the Holy Spirit in your life.



Church

Sometimes a church is very big.
Sometimes it is quite small.
Sometimes when we say the word,
We don't mean a place at all.

I know that Church can also be
Grown-up folks and kids like me
Who come to pray and worship God
And make God's Plan a reality.

2

Ask your child to retell the story to you in their own words.

3

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What do we mean when we talk about the Plan or Reign of God?
2. Who are the three Persons in the Holy Trinity? How do we see the actions of these three Persons today?

1

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The matching flames are numbers two and six.) Then continue to read below.

2

Just for you: The Reign of God happens whenever we live with love for God.

There are three persons—Father, Son and Spirit—in our one God. This is the teaching we call the Holy Trinity. Just as we live in relationships, so God lives in relationship both within God and with us. This is a central belief and a deep mystery, something we know through God's revelation but do not completely understand. God creates us, redeems us and saves us.

These three actions show us God's love and grace.

Familiar Flames

Fire can remind us of the Holy Spirit. After Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to disciples on the road to Emmaus, they said that their hearts were “burning within us.” The Holy Spirit continues to give us passion and power to do what God calls us to do.

Below, find and circle the two flames that are exactly the same.



Spirit Stories

1

Together, read through the titles of the stories we will be reading through these sessions. What do you think these titles say about how the Spirit is with us?

The Spirit at Work



◀ Pentecost:
The Day the
Spirit Came

Spirit of Belonging



◀ Philip and
the Ethiopian

The Maiden
Who Finally
Came Home ▶



Spirit of Prayer



◀ The
Church That
Began at
Home

The Woman
who Laughed
with God ▶



Spirit of Forgiveness



◀ The Man Who
Made Trouble

The Soldier
Who Had No
Enemies ▶



Spirit of Action



◀ A Letter of
Good News

The Bishop for
the Poor ▶



The Not-the-End



◀ The Spirit
Is With You

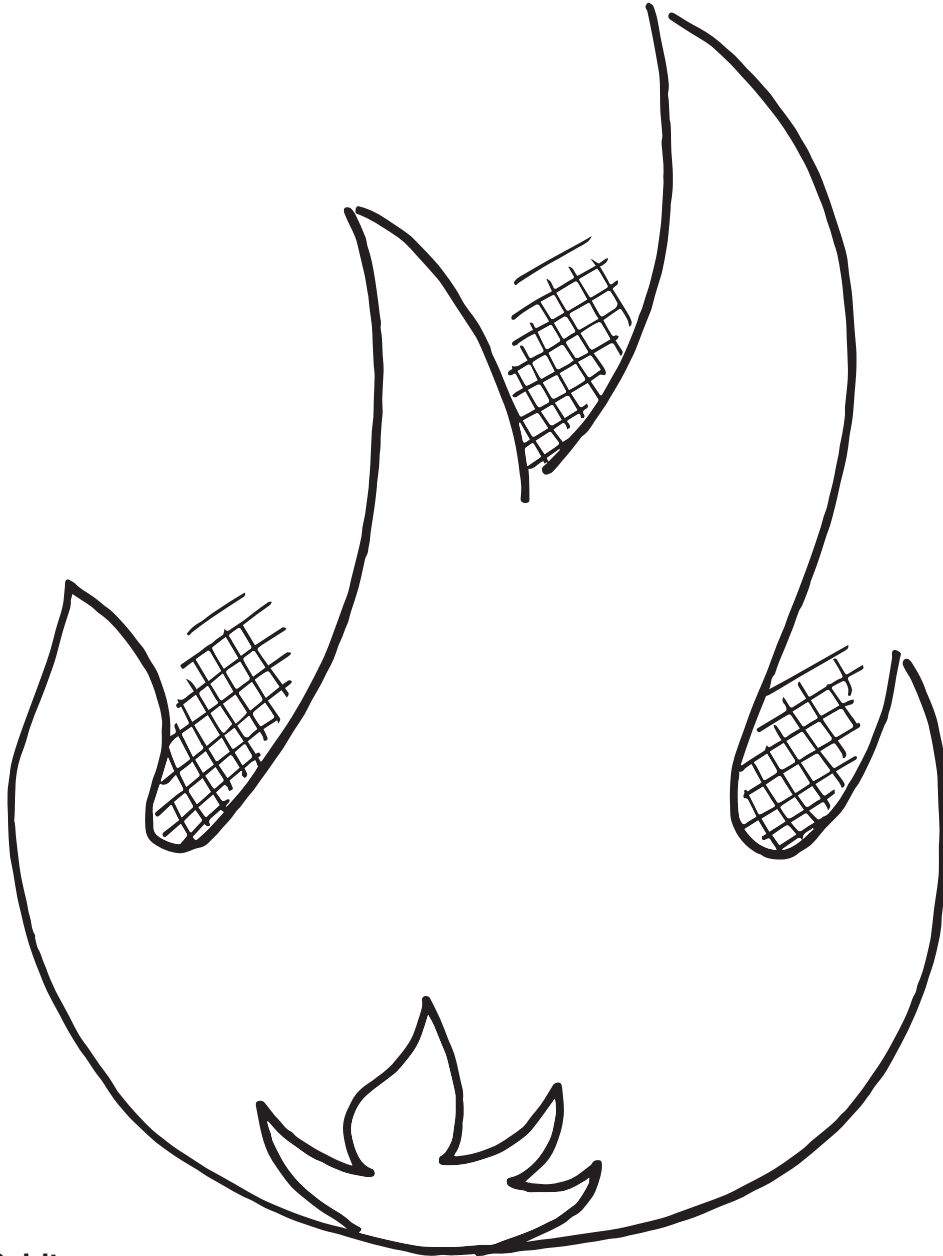
2

Now move on to the next page and complete the activities together.

My Story of God's Spirit

Think about what in your life brought you to this day and this time. Are there times when God was obviously present to you through community? With forgiveness and action? In prayer? When are the times when you are aware of the Spirit at work?

Adults: Write a word or phrase inside the flame reminding you of one of those times when you knew the Holy Spirit was present. Ask your young person to do the same in the space around the flame.



Petitions to the Spirit

Finish the sentences below together.

Spirit of God, we know you work through us when we _____.

Spirit of God, we know you are present with us when we _____.

Spirit of God, we know you are alive in our world when we _____.

Draw God

1

Go through the pictures in a children's Bible, Bible storybooks, or other such books to find images of Jesus and God. Ask your young person to draw God however he or she best imagines God to be. These drawings may be symbolic rather than portraits of God.



Closing Ritual

2

Pray together the petitions you wrote for the Spirit of God on pg. 7. Finish by praying together the doxology.

The Doxology

“Through Jesus, in Jesus, and with Jesus,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father,
forever and ever. Amen.”



Pentecost: The Day the Spirit Came



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3

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

4

Getting started. Discuss together: What makes a special event “special” for you? What everyday events do you make special? How?

This retelling of the event of Pentecost comes from the first two chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. Pentecost is often called “the birthday of the Church” because receiving the Spirit enabled the apostles to preach and build community. God wants us to continue being a Church family. The Church helps us grow ever closer to God and to each other through the sacraments.

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.



A long, long time ago, the apostles, Jesus' mother Mary, and some other women were together celebrating the Jewish feast of Pentecost. They went to the same room where they had celebrated the Passover with Jesus. It was hard for the apostles to believe that seven weeks had passed since their last supper with Jesus.

They spent a lot of time together after Jesus ascended into heaven. They prayed and they talked. They liked to share stories about Jesus. They liked to say, "Remember when....?" They also worried about what would become of them now that Jesus was gone.

The apostles wanted to do what Jesus had told them. They wanted to share the Good News with others. But they just did not know how they could do this. Jesus' friends had so many questions. They had all seen Jesus after he had risen. They had all been with Jesus when he left the earth and returned to heaven. They just did not know what to do next.

Jerusalem was crowded. People from all over the world were there to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. Jesus' friends were glad to be together in the Upper Room. They were glad that they had a place to come to pray. They prayed for each other. They prayed for their families. They prayed that they would be able to do everything Jesus had asked them to do.

Suddenly, they heard a great noise. It sounded like a roaring wind. The noise filled the whole house. The apostles looked around to see what was making the sound. In front of them, they saw what looked like tongues of fire. They should have been afraid, but they were not.



The tongues of fire came to rest on each of their heads. The fire did not feel hot. It did not burn their hair. Yet inside their hearts they began to feel the power of the wind. Inside their hearts, they began to feel the warmth of the fire.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. When they opened their mouths to talk, they began to speak in different languages. This really surprised them. They had never been outside of Palestine. Yet here they were, talking in whole sentences to each other in strange languages. They were so excited they began to shout. They ran out of the room and down the stairs. They ran outside into the street.

They were so loud that a crowd began to gather. The people in the streets stopped and stared at them. A man said to his friend, "That man over there looks like a fisherman, but he is talking in Latin." The other man said, "They all look like they come from Galilee, but this one here is talking in Egyptian." It was true. People from Asia, people from Africa, people from all over the world heard the apostles speaking in their own languages.

Peter stood up in front of everyone. He began to talk about Jesus. He told them how Jesus had died and risen from the dead. He reminded them that the Messiah would be a relative of King David. He told them Jesus was this promised Messiah.

Many, many people listened to Peter. They wanted to know more about Jesus. Peter told them they would have to be sorry for their sins. He told them they would have to be baptized. When they were baptized, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Many of those people became believers.

Now Jesus had many more followers. The Holy Spirit showed the apostles what they must do. The Holy Spirit filled them with the power to share the Good News. People who had never met Jesus came to believe in Jesus' message. Pentecost became the birthday of the Church.

God called out to the people gathered. The people listened and answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not only with them but also in them. And when they let the Spirit move them, great things began to happen.



1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. How did Jesus' friends feel after Jesus ascended into heaven? How did that change after the Holy Spirit came?
3. Pretend you were in the crowd listening to the disciples and Peter at Pentecost. What would you have thought? What would you have done?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. Then continue to read below. The answers to the first part are: 1. room, 2. fire, 3. afraid, 4. Mary, 5. city 6. nations, 7. words, 8. Church. The answers to Peter's Speech: are 1. baptized, 2. gift, 3. your, 4. made, 5. off, 6. calls.

3

Just for you: The Spirit of God is with us. Great things happen when we are open to the Spirit.

Peter promised those who listened to him at the first Pentecost that great things would happen. This promise is with us today! Peter used Old Testament stories and the stories of Jesus' life to convince those around him that the Messiah had come. We are saved by our Messiah, and we are called to do great things. Our present lives continue to teach us this, whatever our age.

Speaking in Tongues

Unscramble the words to help retell the story of Pentecost.

The disciples were together in the Upper _____. (MORO)

The Holy Spirit came to them in tongues of _____. (RIFE)

After the Holy Spirit came, the disciples were no longer _____. (FIARDA)

Jesus' mother was with them. Her name was _____. (RAMY)

The disciples were in Jerusalem, the Holy _____. (TYIC)

There were people in Jerusalem from many different _____. (TANNIOS)

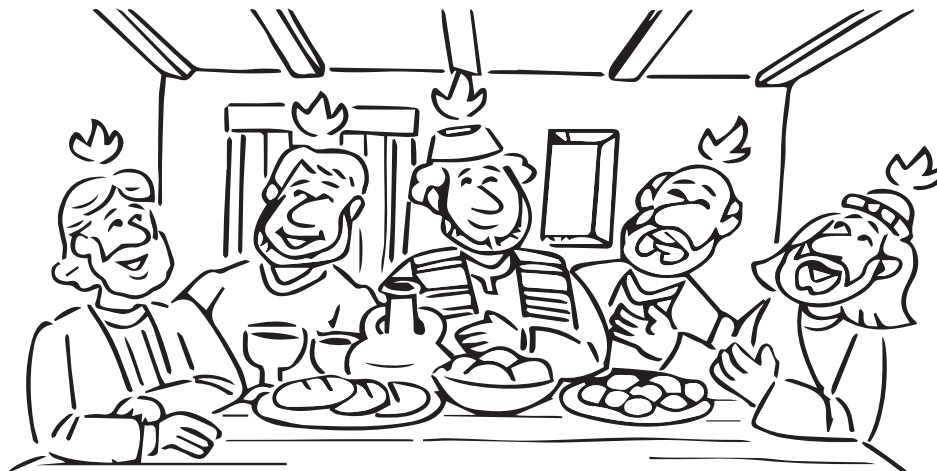
Peter spoke to the people and they could understand his _____. (RODWS)

Pentecost is the birthday of the _____. (HRCUHC)

Peter's Speech

Unscramble the words to find out what Peter said to the people in Jerusalem.

"You must reform and be PABIZTED _____ ... and you will receive the TIGF _____ of the Holy Spirit. It was to you and ROYU _____ children that the promise was DEMMA _____, and to all those still far FOF _____ whom the Lord our God LACSL _____."



The Spirit Weaves With Our Lives

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to step 2.

2

Our stories, woven in with the stories of our faith family, form the fabric of salvation. In the blank spaces on the horizontal strips below, write down faith events that occurred through the years in your own family, including past generations. You could include sacraments received, when you joined a parish, or other ways your family has lived out its faith. Leave the last strip empty for events related to your child.

3

Talk to your child about how you each did your activity. Work with your child to write in faith events from their own life, such as their baptism, on the last strip.

The diagram shows a weaving loom with four horizontal strips and four vertical strips. The vertical strips contain the following text from top to bottom:

- Abram and Sarai follow God
- Elijah the Prophet
- The Spirit Came on Pentecost
- St. Kateri Tekakwitha Becomes Christian

The horizontal strips contain the following text from left to right:

- God Creates the World
- God leads Hebrews out of Egypt
- Jesus Is Born
- Jesus Dies... and Rises!
- Saul Becomes Paul the Apostle

There are empty boxes at the intersections of the strips for writing family faith events.

The Spirit is With Us

Think about a time when you knew God was with you. Answer the questions below.

How old were you?

Who was with you?

Where were you?

How did you feel?

What would you like to name your story?

In the frame below, draw a picture for your story.



Special Events

1

Look at family pictures of weddings, Baptisms, First Communions or Confirmations. Notice how special we make these moments with fancy clothes, flowers, rings and so on. Make note also about who we invite to be with us at such cherished events.



Closing Ritual

2

Thank God by naming all the people related to the events on the weaving page. Finish with the closing prayer.

Through Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, forever and ever.
Amen.



Spirit of Belonging



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

We all need to belong to someone or something to feel connected and not alone. First and foremost, we all belong to God. This section of stories deals with the desire we all have to be part of God's family. The Catholic Church recognizes this desire, and receives new members through the Sacrament of Baptism.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: When was the last time you felt truly accepted or appreciated? How did it feel?



1

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

It feels great to belong! It feels comfortable. It feels safe. It feels right. It is especially good to belong to our Church. It is like being a part of a great big family. We take care of each other. We help each other. We celebrate with each other.

The people in our Church are all different, just as in regular families. We like different things. Some people like loud music. Some people like soft music. Sometimes we even speak different languages. But that is all right because our Church is still one big family.

Our Church is one family because we all have the same Creator, God, and the same Brother, Jesus. We also share the same great and Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that makes us one.

Jesus promised his friends before he died that God would send the Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit would be with us. Jesus promised that the Spirit would be in us. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, great things can happen. Together, through the Holy Spirit, we can begin to make the Plan of God happen.

The way we become members of our Church family is through the Sacrament of Baptism. That is why we call Baptism the sacrament of belonging. In the Sacrament of Baptism we receive the great and Holy Spirit.

In the stories found in the upcoming sessions, you will hear about two people who wanted to become members of our Church family. One person heard about Jesus and believed. He was baptized right away. The other person believed in Jesus, but had to wait a long time before being baptized. The important thing is, they both received the sacrament of belonging and great things happened.



2

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. When are you most likely to feel lonely? Why?
2. When are you most likely to feel accepted and/or wanted? Why?
3. How can you show others in your life that you welcome them?

1

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The answer is “...the Spirit of God descending like a dove coming upon him.” Then continue to read below.

2

Just for you: The Sacrament of Baptism gives us new life and makes us members of our Church family, the Catholic community.

Once we feel welcome some place, we are free to be our true selves. Acceptance provides us with the strength to act in kindness and with justice. Belonging isn't simply a “warm feeling”; it is the foundation upon which we build our lives.

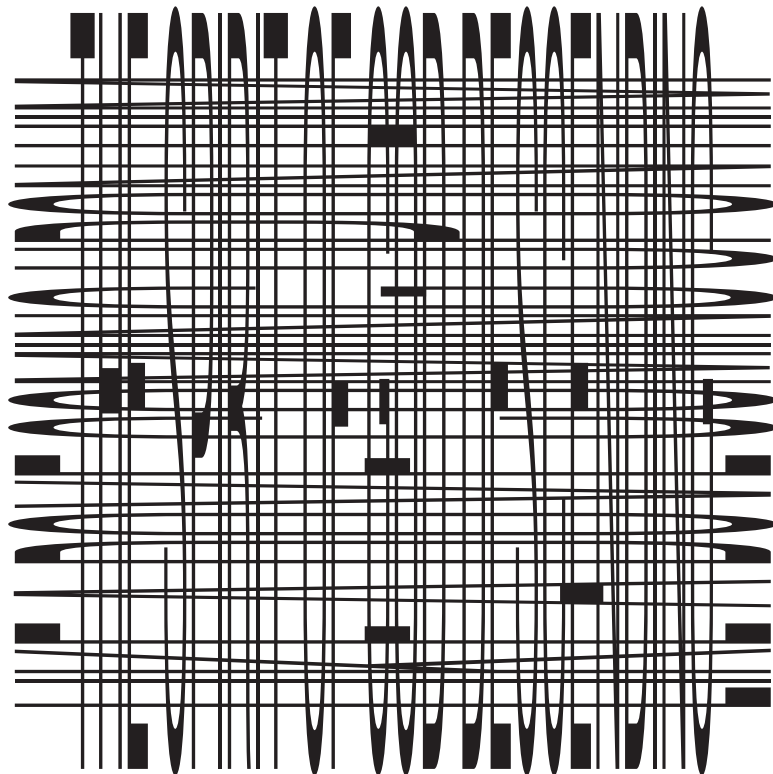
Baptism with the Holy Spirit

When a person is baptized today, it is done in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. When John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, all three were present: the voice of God the Father coming from the heavens, Jesus in the water, and the Spirit in a mysterious way.



Complete this Bible verse that describes what happened.

Tilt the page so it is almost at eye level to read the words. Then fill them in to the right.



*After Jesus was baptized, he came up
from the water and behold, the heavens
were opened, and he saw...*

—Matthew 3:16

Within a Circle of Friends

1

Work on this activity together with your child. Begin by reading the questions below.

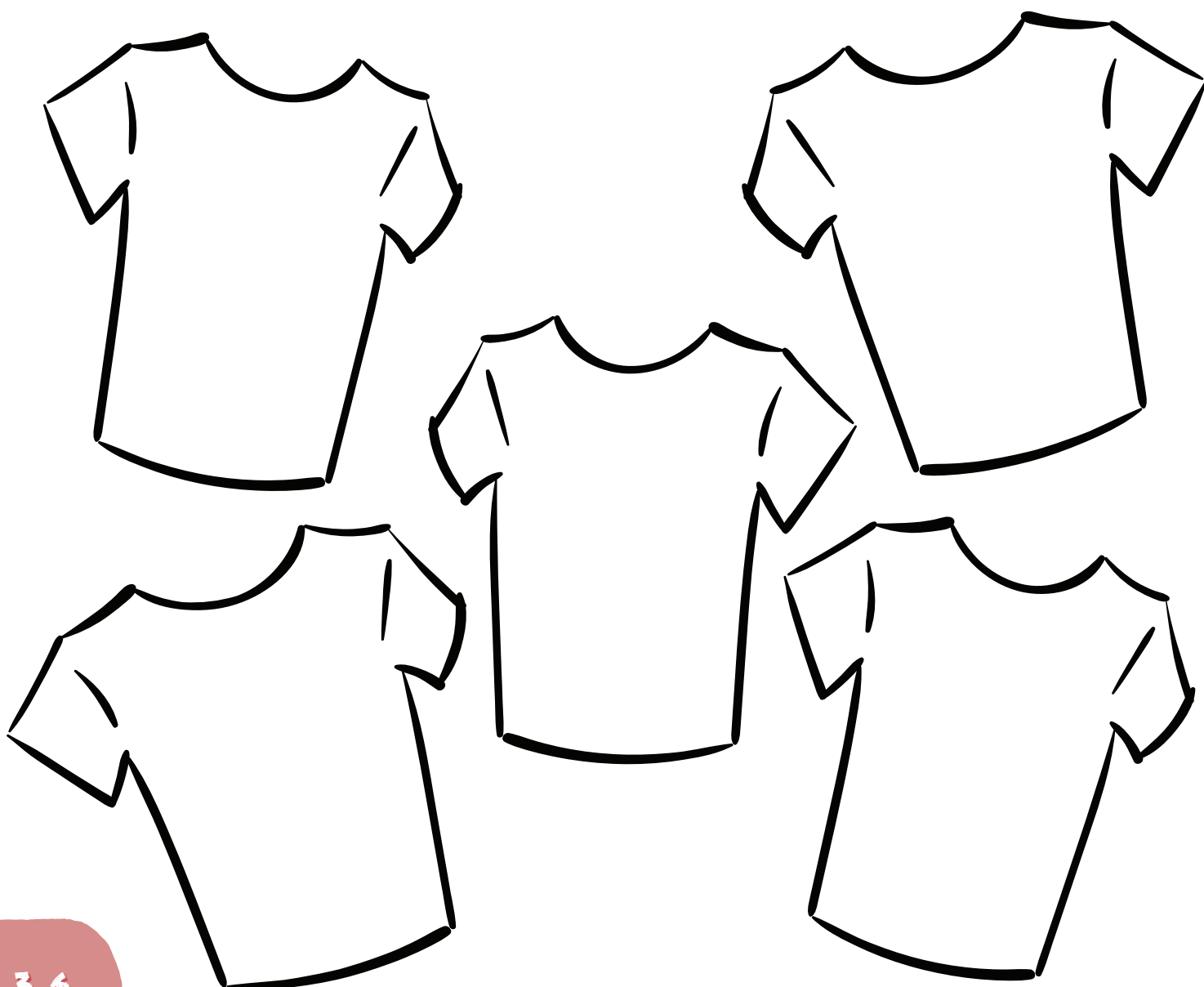
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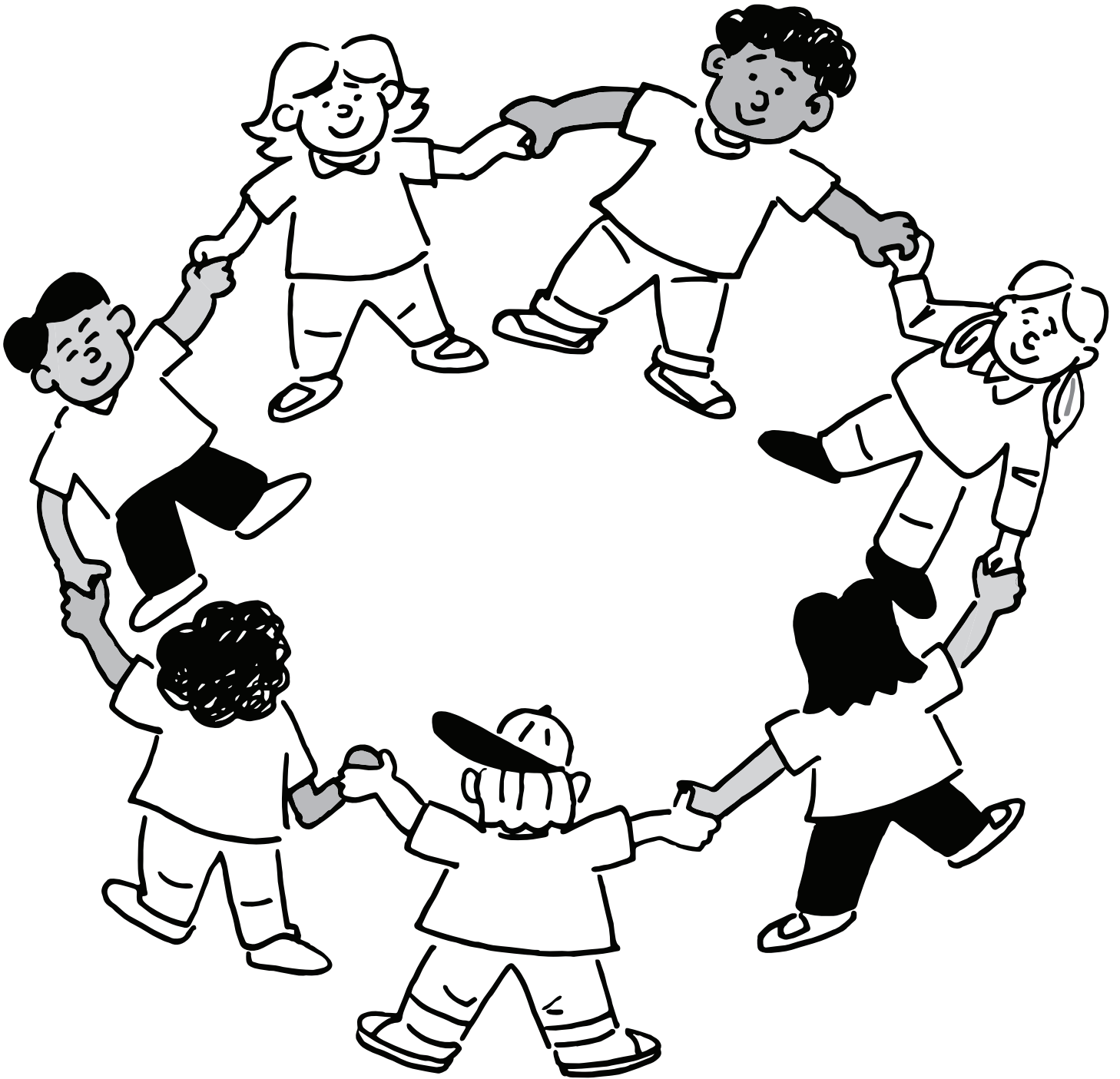
Write your answers on the T-shirts below, and have your child write their answers on the shirts of the people on the next page.

3

When you are done, share what you wrote with each other and discuss why you chose those words.

What are some words that describe how you feel when you know you belong?
What are some ways you can help others feel like they belong?





The Baptism Ceremony

Fill in the missing words: "I baptize you in the name of the _____,
and of the _____, and of the _____.

A _____."

Groups

1

Tell your child about groups you have belonged to in the past or still belong to. Have your young person do the same. What have each of these groups done for you?

Watch television shows to see how groups form and how people relate to each other as family or friends.



Closing Ritual

2

Place a pitcher of water and an empty bowl on your table. Pour the water into the bowl, saying, "Spirit of God, wash me in love." When the bowl is full, use the water to bless yourselves and each other with the Sign of the Cross.

Close with the doxology, on the right.

Through Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, forever and ever.
Amen.



Philip and the Ethiopian

**1**

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: Who was the first person to tell you about God? Or who was your favorite teacher? Why?

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.



A long, long time ago, a man named Philip began to share the Good News. Philip was a Jew who spoke Greek. As the early Church got bigger and bigger, the apostles realized they could not do everything themselves. They told the believers to choose seven people to help them. Philip was one of those chosen.

Philip liked to tell people about Jesus. He told them what Jesus said. He told them what Jesus did. He told them how Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. Philip did such a good job talking about Jesus that many Jews came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

One day, an angel spoke to Philip. The angel told Philip to get ready to leave by noon. The angel told him to set out on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Philip knew that this road went right through the desert. He knew that it would be very hot walking down the road at noon. Philip went anyway. He trusted God's messenger.

As he walked down the road, Philip noticed a fancy chariot. (A chariot was a special wagon in which rich people rode.) Philip could tell by the decorations that this chariot came from a faraway land. The Holy Spirit told Philip to go and walk along beside the fancy chariot.

The chariot belonged to a man from Ethiopia. Ethiopia is in Africa. The man who owned the chariot was a very important man. He worked for a queen. He took care of all of her money.

The Ethiopian was on his way home. He had been in Jerusalem to worship. He had also gone there to learn



more about God. He liked to read the Jewish holy books. He was reading one of them when Philip began to walk beside his chariot.

In those days, people liked to read out loud. It was another way of praying to God. These are some of the words the Ethiopian was reading when Philip joined him:

*“He has been humiliated and has no one to defend him.
Who will ever talk about his descendants,
Since his life on earth has been cut short!”*

Philip said to the Ethiopian, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The Ethiopian answered, “How can I, unless someone helps me?” Then he invited Philip to ride in his chariot with him.

They rode together for a long time. Philip began to talk about the words that the man had been reading. He explained all about the Good News of Jesus. Finally, he told him how people had made fun of Jesus before they killed him. He told the man how young Jesus was when he died.

As they traveled down the road, they came to a lake. The man told Philip that he wanted to be a follower of Jesus. He told Philip he wanted to be baptized. So they stopped the chariot, and they both got out. Philip and the man both went into the water. Philip baptized the Ethiopian. After they came out of the water, Philip left the man.

Philip went to many different towns and baptized a great number of people. The Ethiopian took his new faith all the way back to Africa. The Church was growing beyond Palestine. Now even people from other lands believed in the Good News.

*God called both Philip and the Ethiopian. They both listened, and they both answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just **with** Philip and not just **with** the Ethiopian, but also **in** them. Philip and the Ethiopian let the Spirit move them and great things happened.*



1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. Do you feel more like Philip or more like the Ethiopian? Why?
3. Who talks to you about God? To whom do you talk about God? What are you saying?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The answers to the word search are on page 8.) Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: We need to risk talking about God so we and others can grow in faith and love.

We learn about God in many ways, but certainly the most common way is by listening. We listen to parents, teachers, clergy, and other committed Christians. After we learn about Jesus, then we have another responsibility: we have to speak to others and share our faith! Talking about God is what disciples do.

The Waters of Baptism

Find these words from the story of Philip and the Ethiopian in the puzzle below.

PHILIP

BELIEVE

AFRICA

BAPTIZE

CHARIOT

ANGEL

WATER

ROAD

R	O	A	D	P	N	I	C
K	O	L	A	H	S	R	B
J	A	C	O	I	B	E	E
A	N	G	E	L	P	T	L
E	A	F	R	I	C	A	I
T	E	R	P	P	H	W	E
C	H	A	R	I	O	T	V
I	B	A	P	T	I	Z	E

In the each of the four squares below draw a different way that we use water.

Building a Church of Belonging and Welcome

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to the step 2.

2

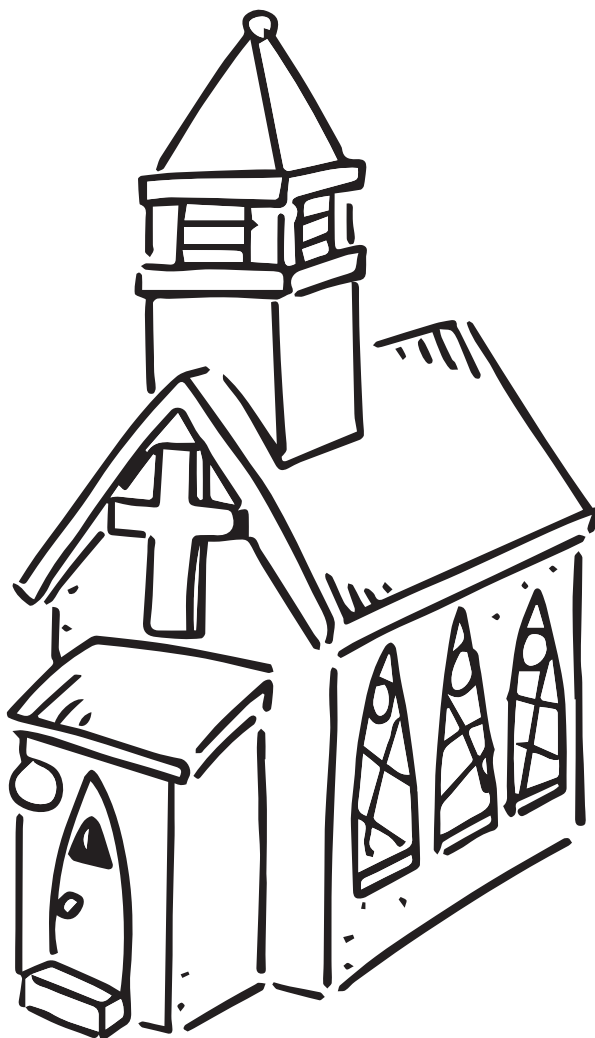
Just for you: There may be particular people you recognize who help to make Mass a welcoming and prayerful experience (for example, the greeters, musicians, lectors, priest, altar servers, eucharistic ministers, etc).

All these people build up our Church family. In the space below, list some things that happen at your church to make you feel welcome.

3

When your children have finished these reflections, come up with a common list of five things or people that make you feel welcome. The more we feel like we belong, the more real the Church becomes to us! Let younger children color the church building.

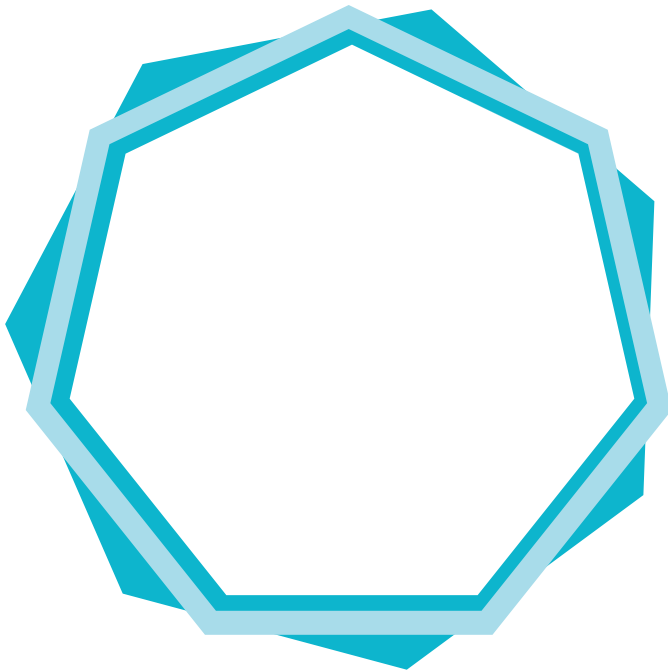
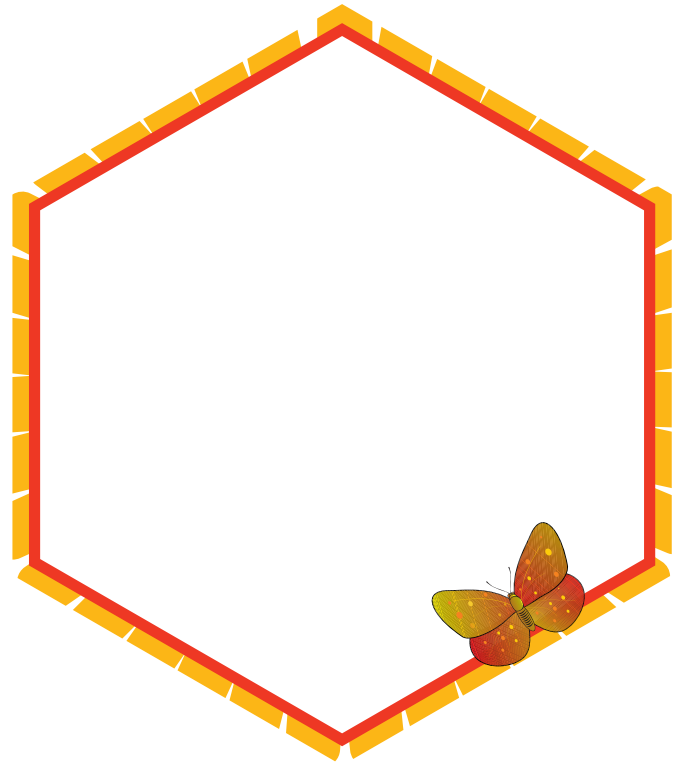
1.
(color the roof)
2.
(color the windows)
3.
(color the door)
4.
(color the cross)
5.
(color the whole church!)



Feeling Like You Belong

Many people in your church work very hard to make your parish feel like a family.

In each of the frames below, draw a picture of the different people who help out at your church
(ex: greeters, musicians, priests, altar servers, eucharistic ministers, etc).



What We Know About God



1

Prepare a small notebook by writing on it “What we know about God.” Then use it as a scrapbook, a place to save pictures, articles, stories, jokes—whatever.

Add to your memories of God anytime you recognize them.

Closing Ritual

2

Read together the very same passage from the prophet Isaiah that the Ethiopian was reading, Isaiah 43:1-7, in your Bible. What promise do you hear in this reading? End with the Our Father.

Answer to activity on page 5

R	O	A	D	P	N	I	C
K	O	L	A	H	S	R	B
J	A	C	O	I	B	E	E
A	N	G	E	L	P	T	L
E	A	F	R	I	C	A	I
T	E	R	P	P	H	W	E
C	H	A	R	I	O	T	V
I	B	A	P	T	I	Z	E



The Maiden Who Finally Found a Home



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha's life is known through a combination of journals written by Jesuit missionaries and stories told and retold by admirers. She blended the Native American ways of her people with the Christian teaching of the Blackrobes (Jesuits). Kateri Tekakwitha was a young woman of strength, faith, and courage. She overcame much adversity to belong to the Christian family.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: Who makes you feel safe and "at home"? Why? Where is your true home? Why?

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.



A long time ago, there lived a young girl named Tekakwitha. Tekakwitha was born in North America about a hundred years before Benjamin Franklin and George Washington were born. She belonged to the Mohawk tribe. Her father was the chief.

Tekakwitha's mother belonged to a tribe that was at war with the Mohawks. When she was a young woman, she was captured. Tekakwitha's mother was so beautiful that the Mohawk chief decided he would marry her. Life was not easy for Tekakwitha's mother. She was a Christian and the Mohawks did not like Christians. Her happiest day was when Tekakwitha was born.

Tekakwitha was a beautiful child. She had shining black hair, sparkling brown eyes, and dark olive skin. She was also beautiful on the inside. She was kind and good. She would help anyone who needed help. She liked to run and play with the other children. She liked to plant and gather the crops with her mother. She loved to listen to her mother sing lullabies to her baby brother. But Tekakwitha's favorite time of day was evening. After the sun went down, her mother would tuck her in her blankets and tell her stories about Jesus.

When Tekakwitha was four years old her whole life changed. A terrible sickness called smallpox began to attack the people in her village. Every day more and more people died. Before very long, Tekakwitha's whole family became sick. Within a few days her father and mother and her baby brother all died. Tekakwitha was sick for a long, long time, but the smallpox did not kill her. Instead she was scarred for the rest of her life. Her beautiful olive-skinned face was covered with deep pox marks. Her sparkling brown eyes could no longer see clearly.

It was a very sad time for Tekakwitha. Her uncle, who was the new chief, took her into his family. Tekakwitha worked very hard for her aunt and uncle. She gathered firewood and cooked. Tekakwitha spent most of her time alone. She could no longer see well enough to play with the rest of the children. She liked to remember the stories her mother told her. "Someday," she thought, "I would like the holy water to be poured on me. I would like to be a Christian just like my mother."

When Tekakwitha was a teenager, a Blackrobe (that is what the tribe called priests) came into the village. When Tekakwitha had a chance, she asked him to baptize her. “First,” said the good priest, “you must ask your uncle if it is all right.”

Tekakwitha was afraid. She knew that her uncle did not like Christians. She prayed and prayed that she would be brave enough to ask her uncle’s permission. She prayed and prayed that he would say yes.

The next day she asked her uncle if she could become a Christian. “If you have the water poured, Tekakwitha, life will not be easy for you,” he said, “but I will not stop you.”

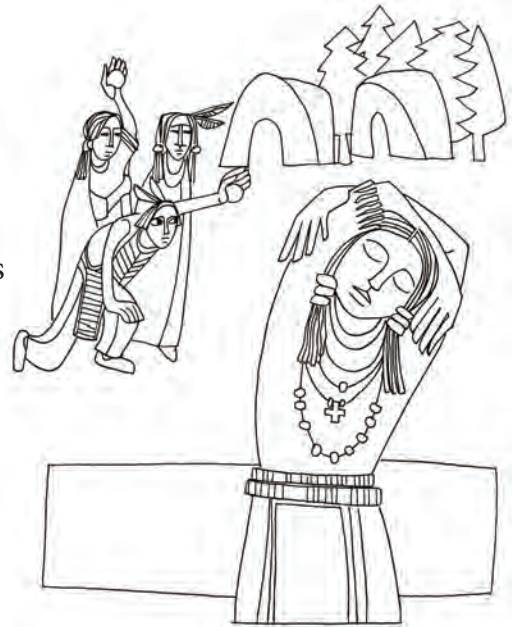
Tekakwitha was so happy! She had loved Jesus for a very long time. Now she would be able to call herself one of his followers. She could not wait— but that is just what she had to do. A whole year passed as Tekakwitha got ready for her baptism. Tekakwitha prayed and listened to the teachings of the Blackrobes.

Finally, the day came. On Easter morning, April 18, 1676, Tekakwitha became a Christian. Tekakwitha took another name when she was baptized. Her Christian name was Kateri. Now she had two names, Kateri Tekakwitha.

Kateri’s uncle had been right. Life became very difficult for her. No one would talk to her. When she walked to church on Sunday, people threw stones at her. After many months of such treatment, the priests became afraid for Kateri’s safety. They told Kateri about a village on the other side of the river. The people in this village were of many different tribes, but they were all Catholics. Kateri wanted with all her heart to go to this village.

Kateri knew that her uncle would never let her leave. She would have to sneak out of the village. Finally, the priests decided on a plan to help her escape.

In the middle of the night, when everything was ready, Kateri crept out of her hut. Two friends were waiting to help her escape. They had to be very careful as they went through the forest. Finally, they



came to the river. In a short time they were on the other side.

For the first time in many years, Kateri felt safe. She was so happy to be with people who welcomed her and loved her. She was happy to have other people to pray with her. She was so happy to find a place where she could not only honor her tribe but also her faith. Kateri felt she really belonged.

God called Kateri Tekakwitha. Kateri Tekakwitha listened and answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with Kateri but also in her. Kateri Tekakwitha let the Spirit move her and great things happened. Kateri found the courage to face her fears, to live her life as a follower of Jesus, to find a place where she could belong.

1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. Why was it so hard for Kateri to be baptized?
3. Have you ever wanted something as much as Kateri wanted to belong to the Christian family? What happened?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The answers are on page 8.) Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: Belonging to a faith community gives us support and strength.

If, as we've already discussed, it is risky to talk about God, then it is even more scary to do what God wants us to do. But the Spirit makes sure we are never alone. Belonging to God and to the Church means we *have* a home and *are* a home for others, just like Kateri. There is challenge in following Jesus' Spirit, but there is safety and assurance as well.

Tekakwitha's Story

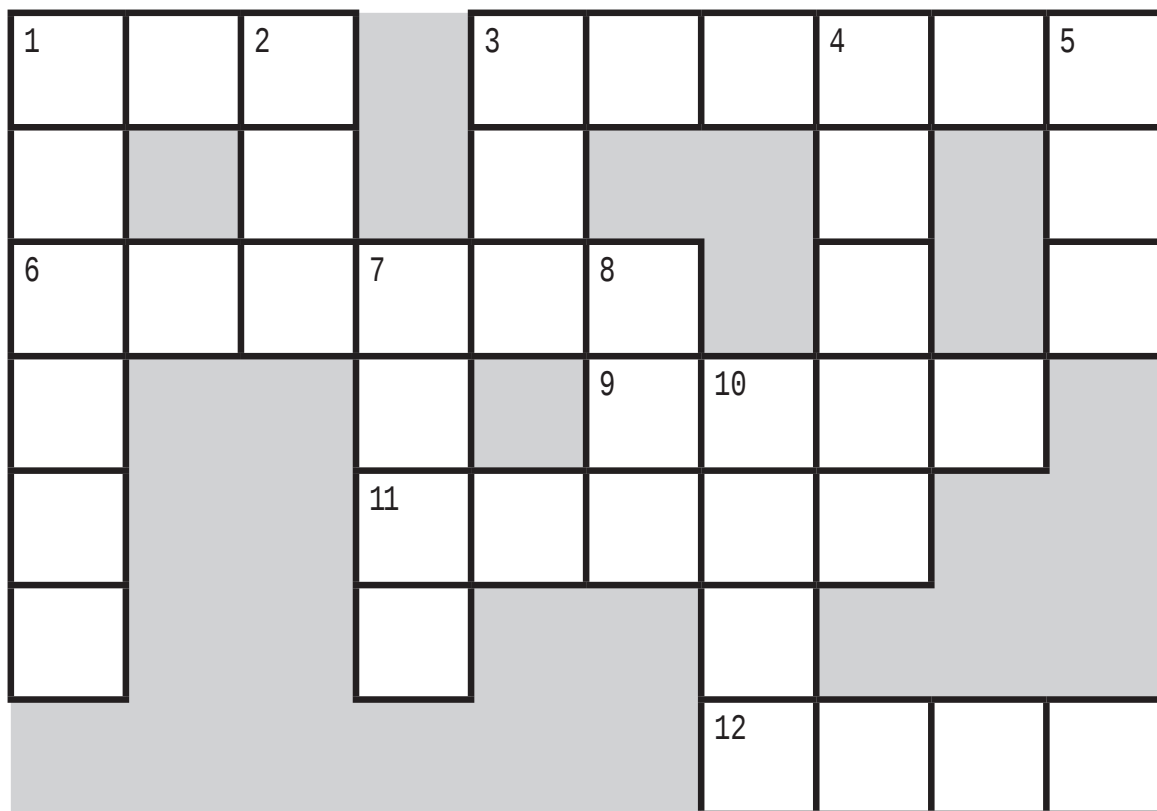
See if you can fill in the crossword puzzle below. If you need help, ask a grown-up.

ACROSS

1. When the priest asked Tekakwitha if she wanted to be baptized, she said ____.
3. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy ____.
6. Something you climb on
9. What you say at the end of a prayer
11. What we use when we baptize someone
12. Tekakwitha could not be baptized right away. She had to ____.

DOWN

1. Some people like to color the sun this color.
2. When the other children teased Tekakwitha, she felt ____.
3. Tekakwitha's illness made it difficult for her to ____.
4. Tekakwitha had to cross a _____ to get to her new home.
5. Something to play with
7. The opposite of up
8. A small animal with a long thin tail
10. What a cat says



Welcome Home!

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to step 2.

2

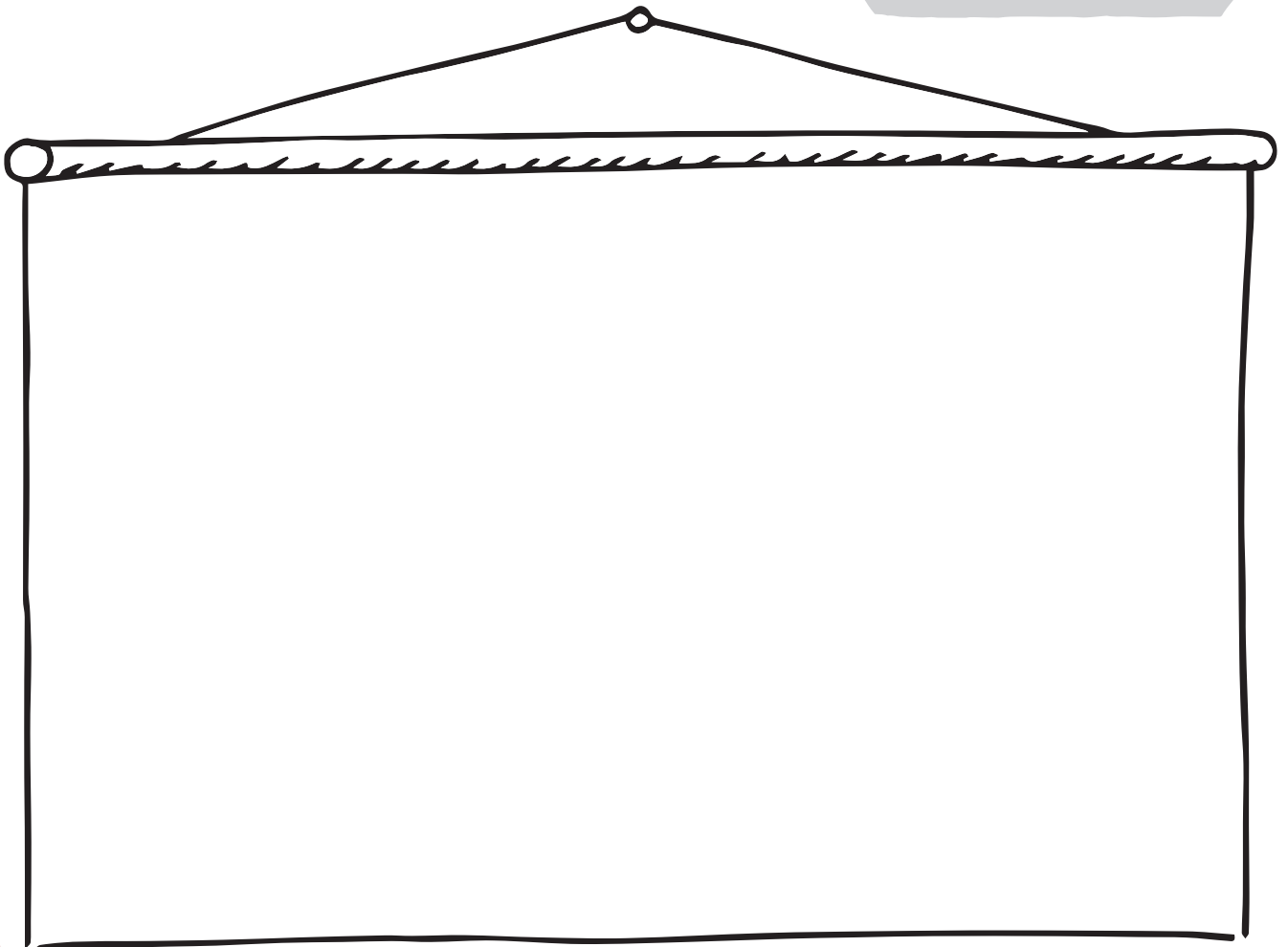
Just for you: Some churches have a “Homecoming” or “Welcome” Sunday. This is a time when parishioners who have moved away, alienated Catholics, and those still seeking a Church family are warmly invited to attend.

Pretend your church is having a “Welcome” Sunday and you are in charge of designing a banner for the front door. Consider how you would answer the questions below.

3

- What is especially good (unique, valuable) about your church?
- How do the people in your church make others feel welcome?
- Why is it important for us as Christians to be a welcoming community?

Once your child has completed the activity, design your banner together. Remember, a banner has only a few words on it and uses color and design to catch the eye.



Welcome Banner

On the lines below write down some words that make you feel welcome. In the square draw some pictures of how people can make you feel welcome. Circle the words and pictures you would like to put on a "Welcome" banner.

Keeping Others Safe



1

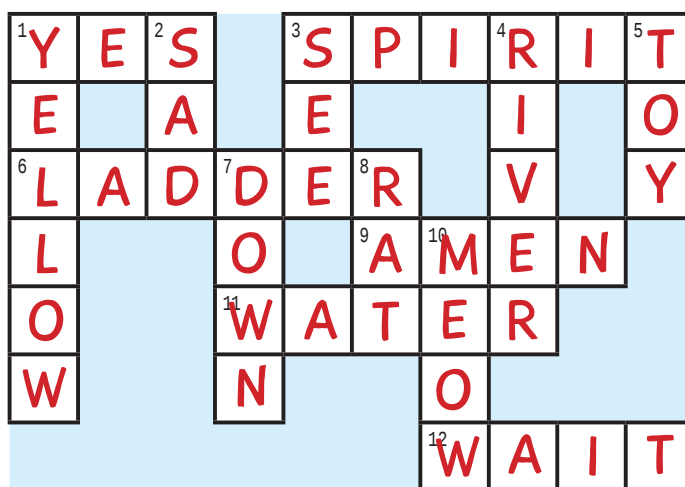
Our society tries in many ways to keep us safe. Visit a fire station, a police department or a hospital. Talk to someone who works there about how they help others and support their colleagues at the same time.

Closing Ritual

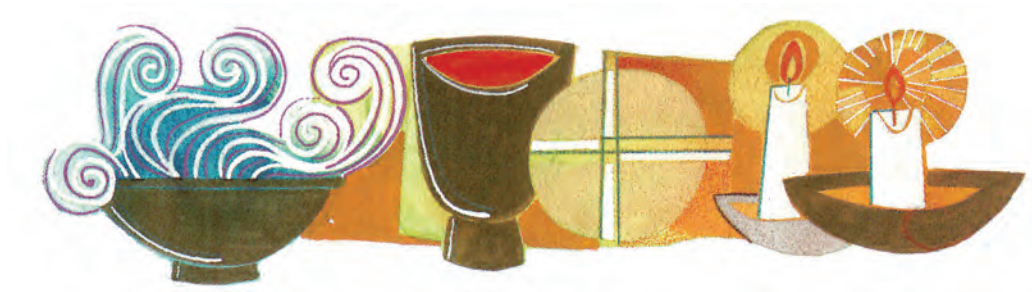
2

Native Americans teach us much about belonging. Tribal ties are unbreakable and constant, a family of unconditional love. All creation is united in importance, all life is respected. In prayer now, ask St. Kateri Tekakwitha to help you take care of our world and all life upon it.

Answer to activity on page 5



Spirit of Prayer

**1**

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

3

Getting started. There is no right or wrong place to pray. In fact, you can pray anytime, anywhere! Is there someplace where it's easier for you to pray? Why? Is there someplace where it's harder for you to pray? Why?



1

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

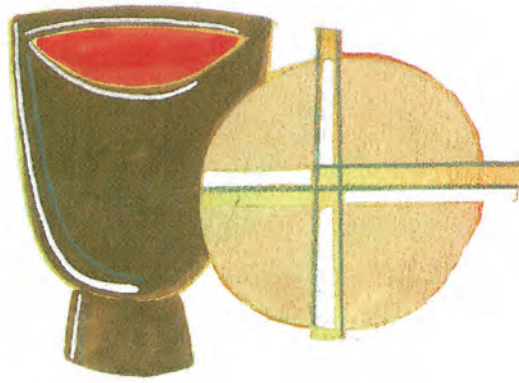
Prayer is spending time with God. When we really like people, we like to be with them. We like to talk to them. We like to go places with them. We even like to watch shows or movies with them. Sometimes we invite them to our house for a sleepover. At a sleepover we can spend lots of time together.

God loves us so much that God is always with us. God talks to us. God goes places with us. God even watches shows and movies with us. God is our very special friend. With God, life is like one big sleepover, because God is always spending time with us. When we spend time with God we call it prayer.

There are all sorts of different ways to pray. When we talk to God about our problems and ask for help, that is prayer. When we thank God for all the good things we have been given, that is prayer. When we do something wrong and tell God we are sorry, that is prayer. When we say “Alleluia! God is good,” that is prayer.

Prayer is when we read stories about Jesus and think about him. Or sometimes we do not have to think or say anything at all. Prayer can just be listening. Sometimes prayer can happen when we are just sitting and watching television after a long day of doing our best. Prayer can be spoken out loud or be just thoughts in our head. Prayer can be straight from our hearts without words or thoughts at all. Prayer can be sung and prayer can be danced. Prayer is any time we spend with God.

Sometimes we pray alone and sometimes we pray with other



people. Our biggest and best prayer is the Eucharist or the Mass. It is a very special time when God is with us. It is a very special time for us to spend with God.

During the Mass we get to spend time with God in all the ways we have been talking about. We have time to pray alone. And we have lots of time to pray with others. During the Mass we hear about Jesus and the Good News. We even have quiet time to think about Jesus. During the Mass the bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood, and the priest offers Jesus' sacrifice to God the Father. During the Mass there is time just to be quiet and listen. And there is time to pray out loud with our brothers and sisters in our Church family.

During the Mass we tell God we are sorry for the things we have done wrong. We ask God for the things that we need. We say, "God is good!" in lots of different ways. And we say "thank you." Did you know that *Eucharist* is the Greek word for "thank you"?

Prayer is a very important part of a Christian's life. It is how we say yes to God, who is always reaching out to us.



2

Now discuss the reading with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. Out of all the different ways of praying described here, which do you like the best? Why?
2. Do you ever pray on your own? When?

1

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. Start by reading the description in the palm of the hand, then have them read each numbered step in order.

Once they can continue on their own, read your next step below.

2

Just for you: The Sacrament of the Eucharist nourishes our relationship with God. There are many different ways to spend time with God in prayer.

There are many ways to pray, but all of them require intention and awareness. We choose to spend time with God. Learning formal prayers helps us pray with others and to pray when our own words fail us.

Spontaneous prayer, aloud or silent, can open our deepest needs to God's care. Praying in community, especially at the Sunday Eucharist, helps us remember that we are part of a family and can help carry us through times of doubt or confusion. Whatever the type, prayer places us firmly in God's presence.

Five-Finger Prayer

4

Our ring finger is our weakest finger. Pray for **those who need the most help**, such as those who are sick, poor, or vulnerable. Write down some people you want to pray for.

5

On your smallest finger, pray for **your own needs**, especially for growth of your mind, body, and spirit. Write down something you want to ask God for below.

3

Our tall finger reminds us to pray for **leaders and people in authority**, such as political leaders, government workers, and police. Write down some leaders below.

2

Using your pointer finger, pray for **people who point the way**, such as teachers, church leaders, and other role models. Thank God that these people can guide us. Write the names of one or more people on the pointer finger.

1

Your thumb is closest to you. Pray for **people who are close to you**, like your friends and family. Also thank God that they are in your life. Write names of one or more people close to you on the thumb above.

*One way to pray is to ask God for help. This form of prayer is called **petition**.*

The Five-Finger prayer is an easy way to make this kind of prayer. Touch each finger as you pray, using them to remind you of who to pray for.

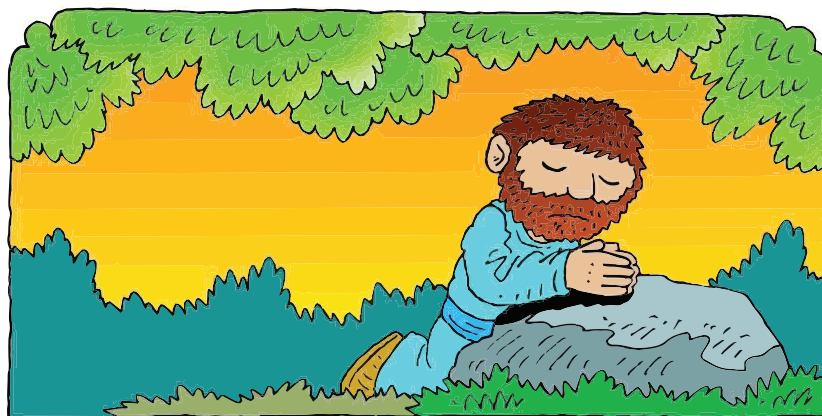
Jesus as Our Model of Prayer

1

In Scripture we see that Jesus prayed in many different ways. Look up the Scripture readings on the next page to see some examples.

2

Next, together list in the left column the ways you notice Jesus praying in those passages. In the right column list the ways you can use Jesus as a model for your own prayer.



Jesus prayed by

We can do this by

Matthew 3:13-17

Matthew 6:5-15

Matthew 14:22-24

Mark 1:35-37

Mark 6:41-44

Luke 4:14-21

Luke 22:39-46

Luke 22:34

Your Prayer Notebook

1

Many prayer books and spiritual resources are available in libraries and bookstores. Start a small notebook with your favorite prayers in it. Ask for a tour of your church so you can see up close the building where the community gathers.



Closing Ritual

2

Eucharist uses the important symbols of bread and wine, which become the Body and Blood of Christ. Place some snack to share between you. Then say whatever form of grace before meals you wish. As you eat, talk about how Jesus ate with his friends, too. Close with the doxology, on the right.

Through Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, forever and ever.
Amen.



The Church at Home



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

Nympha and the Church in her house are mentioned in Colossians 4:15. There is evidence that the early gatherings of the followers of Christ were held in what we call "house churches." Those who had homes large enough would host these celebrations.

This story is a fictionalized account of what one of these early Eucharists might have been like.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: What was the best party you ever attended? What made it so?

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

A long, long time ago, there lived a good Christian woman named Nympha. Nympha lived during the time of Jesus. She lived in a land hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem in a town called Colossae. Nympha had never met Jesus, but she knew all about him.

Nympha learned about Jesus from one of his disciples. After Jesus died, the disciple traveled to her country and told the people about Jesus. He told the people the Good News. He told the people how Jesus had died and had risen from the dead.

Some people just laughed at the disciple, but others listened and became believers. Nympha and everyone who lived in her house were baptized. They worked very hard to make the Plan of God happen.

Nympha had a special gift. She knew how to give great parties. People always felt comfortable when they came to her house. People would come for dinner and stay late into the evening. Everything about Nympha and her home said “Welcome!”

When Nympha became a Christian, her parties were even better. She would invite her Christian friends for dinner, and always they would stay late into the evening. Every week they came to her home for a very special dinner. This is how it went.

“Is everything ready?” Nympha asked.

“Yes,” said her servant. “The meat is cooked, the vegetables are ready and the bread is baking.”

“Just in time,” said Nympha. “Here come our first guests.”

The people began to gather in small groups, chatting and laughing. Sometimes Nympha could hear a few people arguing about whose turn it was to read Paul’s letter. She also noticed that some people seemed to be avoiding other people. “Oh my,” she thought, “it is a good thing it is almost time to begin the supper.”

They began as they always did with a prayer and a song. During the dinner people shared their favorite stories of Jesus. “I like the story about Jesus and



Zacchaeus,” said one of the guests. He told the others how Jesus had changed the tax collector’s life.

Everyone laughed when he described how fast Zacchaeus had slid down the tree when Jesus had called him. “I hear old Zack is collecting money for the widows in Jerusalem now,” said another woman.

When the story of Zacchaeus was finished, Nympha took the latest letter from Paul out of her pocket. She turned to the man sitting next to her. “Would you please read Paul’s letter?” she asked.

The man read the letter nice and loud. “What a good letter,” Nympha thought. “It is almost as if Paul is with us tonight.” Nympha really liked the part where Paul told them how much God loves them, and asked them to be kind and humble, gentle and patient with each other. She was also glad Paul reminded them to forgive each other as soon as a quarrel began, telling them to remember that God was always ready to forgive them. As always, Paul told them to let peace live in their hearts.

After the letter was read, it was time to pray again. Then the servant brought out the freshly baked bread and a pitcher of wine. The bread was prayed over and broken. The wine was blessed and poured. And everyone who was baptized shared in the Lord’s Supper. They knew that Jesus was with them. They knew that Jesus was in them. And they knew that through Jesus all things were possible.

As they left the table, they began to sing again. Nympha was happy as she walked her friends to the door. She knew that they had their problems. They had their faults. But she also knew that they loved each other. They were one family.

It is the same today when we gather for the Lord’s Supper. We come to pray together as a family. When we receive the Body of Christ at Communion we remember that we are the Body of Christ in this world. And we know that with Jesus, in Jesus and through, Jesus all things are possible.

God called Nympha. Nympha listened and Nympha answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with Nympha but also in Nympha. Nympha let the Spirit move her and great things happened.



1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. If you were Nympha, what would you want to do to get ready?
3. Can you think of ways to make your meals with family or friends a little more special? How?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: The most special time we gather with others to pray is the Sunday Eucharist.

In the Gospels, Jesus commissioned Christians to “do this in remembrance of me.” The Sunday Eucharist can be traced back to these gospel times.

Eucharist is still the greatest source of grace and nourishment for our community. At every Mass Christ offers his sacrifice to the Father for our salvation. He gave his life in self-giving love for us, and we pray that we might also live lives of sacrifice. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ, and we reclaim our title as “the Body of Christ.”

The House Church

Nympha is getting her house ready to celebrate Eucharist. Circle all the crosses you can find in the picture below. When you are finished, color the picture.



The Pleasure of Your Company is Requested

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to step 2. (The answer at the bottom of page 7 is “altar.”)

2

Read the text below to yourself to learn about the Mass.

3

Explain to your child that one way to think about the Mass is as a special celebration that Jesus gives for his friends. Work together to fill out the invitation below. Decorate the invitation in any way you like. When you finish, hang your invitation somewhere to remind you that the Mass is an ongoing celebration and all are welcome!

Just for you: Have you ever heard Mass called a celebration? While we approach Mass in a different way from other celebrations—prayerfully and reverently—the similarities can help us better understand what happens at the Eucharistic celebration.

Sunday Eucharist is divided into two main parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word, when we hear the readings and the homily, is not unlike that time period at any gathering when people catch up with each other. We hear the stories of our tradition, the Good News of Jesus, and applications to our lives.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is an even more obvious parallel. At some celebrations we bring gifts, while at Mass we prayerfully bring forward our offering of bread and wine, plus gifts for those in need. At Mass, the altar (“Eucharistic table”) is prepared. Bread and wine are consecrated by the priest during the Eucharistic Prayer to become the Body and Blood of Christ which are offered to God as a pleasing sacrifice. Finally, the Body and Blood of Christ are shared as Communion.

An Invitation

You are cordially invited to a special gathering of friends!

Who is invited:

When:

Where:

Why:

What you will bring:

RSVP

See you soon!
Love,
Jesus

Eucharist Today

In many ways the Eucharist we celebrate today is similar to the way it was celebrated in the early days of the Church with two main parts: 1) re-telling stories about Jesus' life and 2) sharing the Body and Blood of Christ. Follow the directions below to learn more about today's celebration.

Liturgy of the Word. The Bible readings at Mass tell stories about Jesus just like the early Christians told or read stories about him during those first celebrations.

In the space below draw a picture of your favorite story of Jesus.



Liturgy of the Eucharist. During this part of the Mass we celebrate Jesus' being with us in a special way. At the altar, the bread and wine become Jesus' Body and Blood, just as they did in the days of the first disciples.

Color the picture below, and then answer the question at the bottom of the page.



What do we call the special table where we celebrate Eucharist? _ _ _ _ _

Food for Thought

1

Discuss the upcoming or recent Sunday readings. Look for whatever “food for thought” you may find.

Make a plan to volunteer some time or somehow support a program in your community that feeds the poor.



Closing Ritual

2

Answer your invitation from Jesus to come and remember him at Mass by finishing this prayer:

“Thanks for inviting me, Jesus. I look forward to your celebration because....”



The Woman Who Laughed With God

**1**

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: What makes you laugh? Has there ever been a time when you “laughed with God” because you were so happy? What happened?



1

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

Not so very long ago, there lived a wonderful, joyful woman named Thea Bowman. Thea liked to talk about God. She liked to sing about God. Thea was a great talker and a great singer. People loved to hear her talk and sing about God. Thea had many, many friends because she was such a happy and loving person. But Thea's best friend was God.

Thea was born in 1937 in Mississippi. Her father worked very hard. He was the only African American doctor in the town. Thea's mother was a teacher and a good woman who helped everyone. Thea's grandfather had once been a slave.

Thea lived during a time when African Americans were often treated badly. But Thea's parents were both loving people. They taught Thea not to return hate for hate. Thea's mother would say, "Hate will just eat into your soul." Thea learned how much God loved her from her parents and from the people in her neighborhood, especially the "old folks."

When Thea was growing up she spent a lot of time with the elders in her neighborhood. Her parents wanted her to learn the old songs and old stories. They wanted her to hear from the elders' lips about slavery and what they had lived through.

The elders taught Thea lessons she would remember all her life. They taught her to be thankful and joyful during the good times. They also taught her to be thankful and joyful in the not-so-good times. Thea would tell people, "The old folks taught me how to face life and pain and even death."

When Thea was ten years old, some Catholic sisters came to her town. They opened up a school for all of the children. Thea liked going to the school. She liked learning how to read. She liked learning more about Jesus. She liked being with the sisters. Thea was a happy, active child. She liked to run and play. She liked to laugh and sing. She liked to learn and pray.

After a while Thea decided she wanted to become a Catholic. Thea's parents gave their permission, and Thea joined the Church. Thea liked to spend time with the Catholic sisters. She liked to help them as they worked for the poor.

After high school Thea decided she wanted to give her whole life to God in

a special way by becoming a nun. She wanted to become a Catholic sister just like the sisters who had taught her. And that is just what she did.

Thea left the South and traveled to Wisconsin to learn more about God and the sisters. Sister Thea went to college to learn how to be a teacher. She traveled to a university in Washington, D.C., to learn all about English literature.

Sister Thea loved to learn and she loved to teach. But it was not teaching English literature that made her famous. People all over the world came to know Thea when she began to write and teach about the music and the history of her people.

Everywhere Sister Thea traveled, she taught people to respect the gifts African Americans have to offer our country and our Church. She also taught all people to respect their own heritage. Thea used to say, “No matter who you are or what your background, always remember to be proud because you can say, ‘I am a child of God. I am somebody.’”

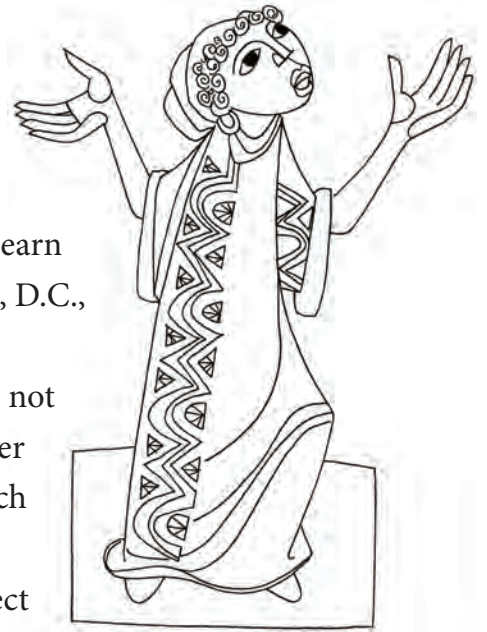
Sister Thea had many talents. She was very smart. She was a great teacher. She was a powerful singer. When Sister Thea sang, she would get everyone to sing. Sister Thea would clap and get everyone to clap. Sister Thea also had a special talent of making people feel good about themselves. She kept telling people, “Always remember who you are and whose you are.”

Sister Thea had friends of every race and color. She had friends from all different countries and of all different religions. Sister Thea had so many friends you could not even count them. But Thea’s best friend was always Jesus.

Sister Thea prayed all the time. She liked praying at Mass. She liked praying every day with the sisters with whom she lived. She liked to pray when she was alone in her room. She liked to pray with the thousands of people who came to hear her speak. Sister Thea and God were so close that Thea’s whole life was a prayer.

In 1984, Sister Thea learned she had cancer. The doctors told her she only had a little while to live. Thea remembered what the old folks had taught her: “Even when you are scared, you got to keep on ‘steppin.’” And that is what Thea did. Even when she was in great pain, she would still talk and sing about the God she loved so much.

Hundreds and thousands of people would come to see Sister Thea and hear her. She would look tiny and weak as her wheelchair was lifted onto the



platform. But then something wonderful would happen. As soon as Sister Thea began to sing, she became filled with great strength and power. Even when she spoke in a whisper, everyone could hear. Sister Thea was filled with the Spirit of God, and she shared that Spirit with everyone who heard her.

On March 30, 1990, Thea Bowman died. Now she is singing and talking with the God she loved to laugh with all her life.

All through Thea's life, God called to her and Thea answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with Thea but also in Thea. Sister Thea let the Spirit move her and great things happened. Sister Thea's singing and celebration of life were her ways of praying. By getting other people of all races and cultures to sing and celebrate their lives, she taught them to pray, too.

1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What is your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. What does the story about Sister Thea teach YOU about how to live as a Catholic?
3. When do you do your best praying? Where? Alone or with others?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The words hidden in the picture are "I am God's child.") Then continue to read below.

3

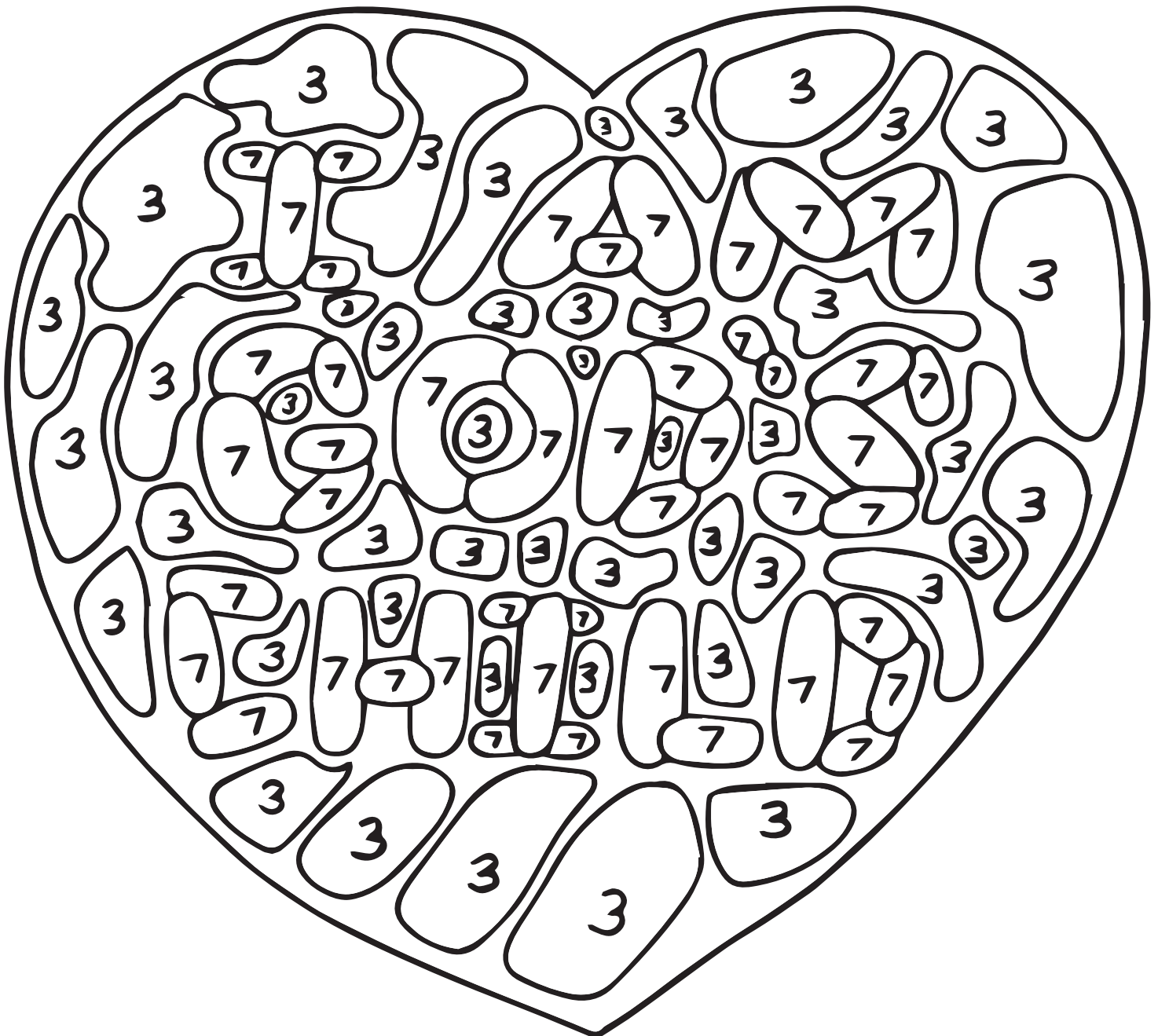
Just for you: When we pray individually, we bring back to God the rich diversity of creation.

If we limit ourselves to one way to pray, the way most common to our culture, we will lose opportunities to grow in our awareness at God. We are created as individuals who bring our own experiences, background, and stories to our prayers. The beauty of the Spirit of Jesus lies in our recognition of the diversity of humanity. There are many ways to pray!

Who We Are, Whose We Are

Sister Thea used to say “Always remember who you are and whose you are.” Using the color code below, fill in the spaces in the heart. Inside the heart is the answer to Sister Thea’s reminder.

3 = red 7 = yellow



How Do You Pray?

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to the next step.

2

Just for you: There are many ways to pray, and we use them at different times. Sister Thea was very clear in her message to us: It is not important *how* we pray. It *is* important *that* we pray.

3

Please look at the list below (your young person has a similar list). How many of these “ways of prayer” have you tried?

1. Place a check mark by any of these you have tried.
2. Place a star by the ones you like best.
3. Place a question mark by the ones you would like to try.



- ___ Drawing pictures or writing letters to God
- ___ Meeting God outside in nature
- ___ Sunday Eucharist
- ___ Weekday Mass
- ___ Saying the rosary
- ___ Sitting alone and talking to God
- ___ Singing a song about God
- ___ Listening to music that brings you closer to God
- ___ Creating artwork while chatting with God

Many Ways to Pray

There are many ways to pray. Some may not seem like praying, but they can be. Read the list below.

X Put an X next to the ways you have prayed.

***** Place a star by the one you like best.

? Place a question mark by the ones you might like to try.

- ___ Drawing pictures or writing letters to God
- ___ Meeting God outside in nature
- ___ Sunday Eucharist
- ___ Weekday Mass
- ___ Saying the rosary
- ___ Sitting alone and talking to God
- ___ Singing a song about God
- ___ Listening to music that brings you closer to God
- ___ Creating artwork while chatting with God



Exploring Prayer

1

Talk with a variety of people about when they most like to pray and how they pray. This group could include your pastor, a pastor from another tradition, members of your family, your Church, or other faiths.

Go to the library and see if you can rent a DVD or borrow a prayer book from another faith tradition. How are we different? How are we alike?



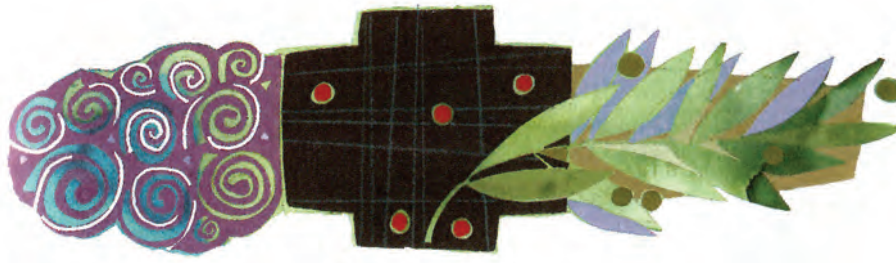
Closing Ritual

2

Think of a song you could both listen to and reflect upon together. Where is God in the lyrics of this music? Thank God for all our differences and for the rich diversity in our world!



Spirit of Forgiveness

**1**

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: When was the last time you had to say "I'm sorry"? When was the last time you were asked to forgive someone?

Along with "please" and "thank you," "I'm sorry" is one of the first things we learn to say as children. The ability to be forgiven and to forgive others is important to relationships and families. It is important to our relationship with God as well. We believe that God is always ready to forgive us when we ask.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is an opportunity for us to recognize when we have hurt others, to confess our failings to a priest, and to receive God's forgiveness. Our sins result in broken relationships, especially between us and God and our neighbors. This sacrament helps us to receive God's grace and mend these gaps, lifting a weight from us in the process. We encourage you to take advantage of this gift, both for your own benefit and to serve as an example to your child.



1

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

Nobody is perfect. Everybody makes mistakes. Sometimes we even hurt other people. And sometimes we are hurt by others. The important thing about making mistakes and doing hurtful things is how we behave afterwards. Do we run and hide? Do we make things worse by telling a lie? Do we say, “It wasn’t me”? It takes a lot of courage to say “I did it. I am sorry.”

Sometimes when people hurt us with mean and angry words, we want to yell back with even meaner words. We want to get even. We want to make them hurt. When people hurt us, it is hard to forgive them. It is hard to say, “It’s OK. Let’s start over.”

When we hurt others or others hurt us, we need to take a deep breath, count to ten and ask God for help. With the help of the Holy Spirit we can find the words to say, “I’m sorry” or “I forgive you.” It is not easy, but with God’s help we can do it.

In our Church we have a special sacrament of forgiveness. It is called the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we confess our sins to a priest and tell God we are sorry for what we have done. We promise to try our best not to do it again. And we ask God’s help in changing our ways. What a blessing to know that when we receive this sacrament our sins are not only forgiven by God but also forgotten by him.



2

Now discuss the reading with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. How do you feel when you have made a mistake that has hurt someone? What if you have hurt someone on purpose?
2. How do you make up to the person you hurt?

1

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The answers are: A-4, B-3, C-1, D-2.) Then continue to read below.

2

Just for you: When we hurt others, we have to take active steps to make things right.

First we have to admit we have done something wrong. Then we have to apologize to those we hurt. Finally, we have to change our ways to avoid doing the same wrong again. If we are the ones receiving the apology, we need to risk forgiving that person. The two stories in this section both talk about how we ask for forgiveness and how we give forgiveness to others.

3

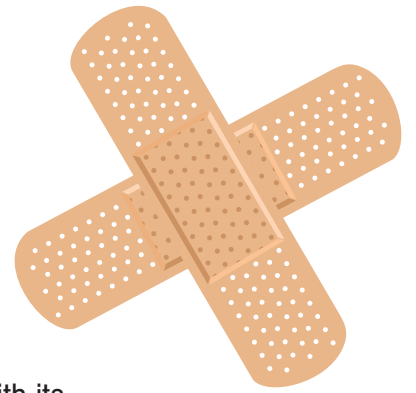
The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the Church's celebration of God's mercy and forgiveness which helps us when we have done wrong:

- We prepare for the sacrament with an **examination of conscience**, to help us realize how we have failed.
- We **confess** our sins to a priest, and then **apologize** to God (and the rest of the Church).
- We commit to changing our ways, often with an **Act of Contrition**.
- The priest gives us a **penance** as a way to make amends for our sin.
- The priest gives us God's forgiveness through **absolution**.

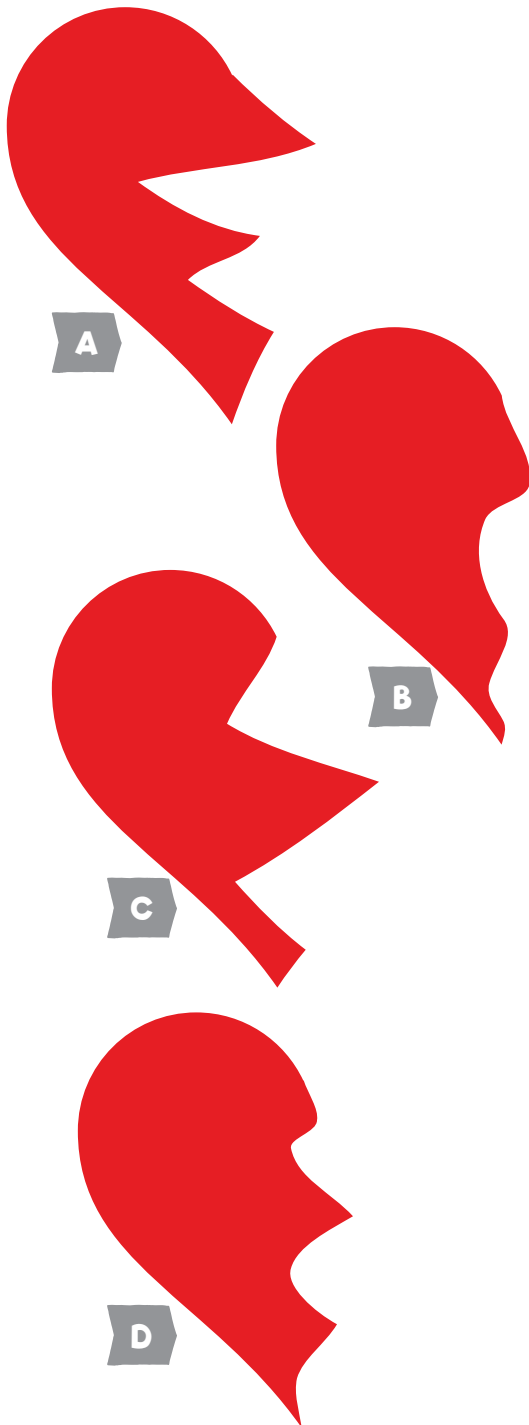
If your child has received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, make sure they remember these steps and encourage them to receive the sacrament again soon.

Broken Hearts

When we hurt others or others hurt us, it breaks our relationship with them. The person who was hurt may feel angry, scared, upset, or all three. Forgiveness and reconciliation are about healing our relationships and bringing us back closer together.



Below, find some broken hearts. Draw lines to connect each half heart on the left with its matching half on the right side.



Circles of Hurt, Ripples of Sin

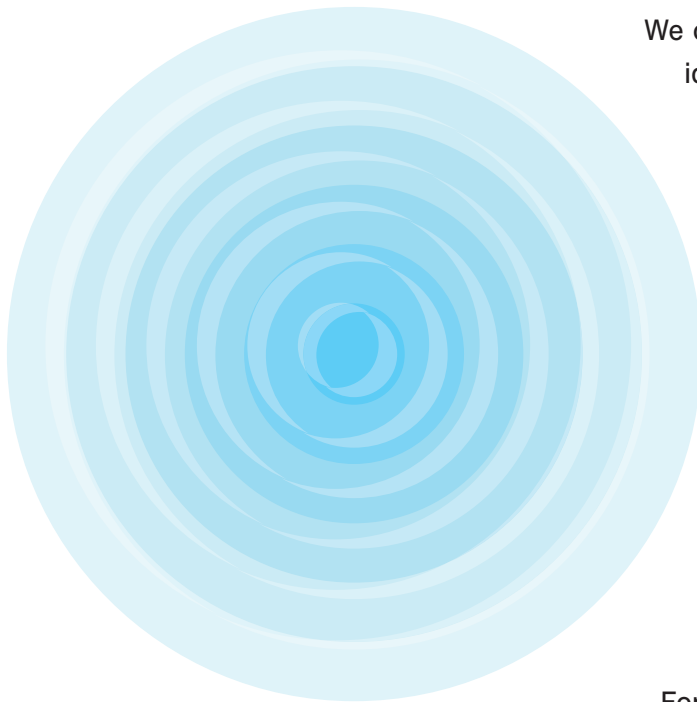
1

Work on this activity together with your child. Begin by reading the text below together.

2

On the next page are three circles, one for family and friends, one for our community and one for our world. List in each circle the hurts that happen, on purpose or unintentionally. (You'll notice at the end how each one can "ripple" into the other!)

Before we can talk about forgiveness, we have to recognize the reality of sin. We all make mistakes, and when we deliberately are selfish or hurt others, these mistakes become sin.

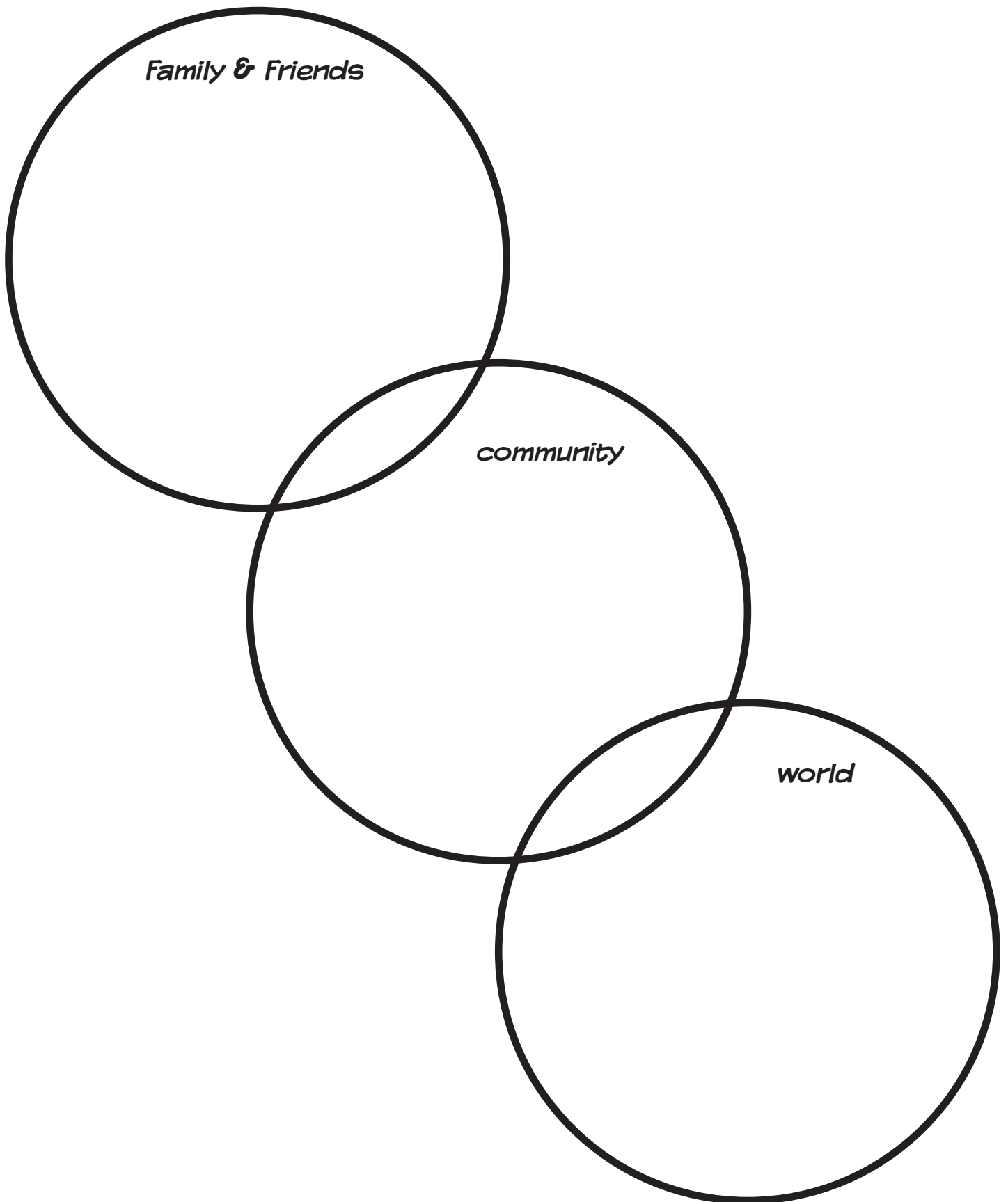


We call the time when we look at our lives to identify sinful actions an "examination of conscience." That means we examine, or look at closely, the inner voice and thoughts that tell us when we have done something wrong.

Hurtful things have a way of "rippling out" to others. We hurt someone in our family circle, and they may take their anger to work or school. Then they hurt someone there! So, just like a pebble dropped in a lake, one sin can spread out to hurt many, many other people.

It happens in the other direction as well!

For example, a government may cut funding for school breakfasts, so a particular school has to stop offering help to its children. Then a child in that school may go hungry all day because there is no food at home



Forgiveness

1

Many family-appropriate videos and movies deal with forgiveness. Find one you would like to see with your young person. (*Beauty and the Beast*, *Mighty Ducks*, *Field of Dreams*, and *Clara's Heart* are just a few.)

Also notice what your friends and family members do when they want to be forgiven. Do you have any personal rituals of reconciliation like a hug or a special phrase you say?



Closing Ritual

2

Say the closing prayer on the right together.

God of mercy,
we ask for your forgiveness.

Teach us how to forgive others.

We ask this through Jesus, in Jesus, and with Jesus,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
forever and ever. Amen.



The Man Who Made Trouble



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: What does it mean to get a second chance? Do you ever wish you could get a second chance so you could change something or improve something?

The story of Paul's conversion is in the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The Saul we read about early in Acts is certainly different from the Paul of the later chapters or the Paul we know through his letters in the New Testament! The difference is Paul's acceptance of Jesus' loving forgiveness, even after he had imprisoned Jesus' followers.

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.



A long, long time ago, there lived a man named Saul. He lived in Jerusalem when the Church was just beginning. Saul did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. He did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He thought that the followers of Jesus were being disrespectful to God when they preached the Good News. Saul wanted to get rid of all of Jesus' friends.

Saul worked for the Council of Jerusalem. His job was to make trouble for the early Christians. Saul went from house to house, arresting the men and women who believed in Jesus. Saul worked as hard as he could to get rid of all the Christians in the city. The followers of Jesus were afraid of Saul.

When Saul had arrested or chased almost all of the Christians out of Jerusalem, he went back to the Council. "I have done such a good job," he said. "Let me go to Damascus and get rid of the Jesus followers who live there. I'll find them all and put them in jail." The Council gave him permission, and off Saul went.



Damascus was a long way from Jerusalem. Saul traveled for days and days. "I'll show those troublemakers," thought Saul. "Those Jesus followers will not have a chance to escape." Saul could not wait to get to Damascus.

Then something absolutely amazing happened. When Saul was just outside the city, a great, blazing light came shooting down from heaven! Before he knew what happened, Saul found himself flat on the ground. He was surrounded by the light.

As Saul lay in the middle of the road he heard a voice. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" the voice asked.

Saul was really afraid. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Jesus, and you are persecuting me," the voice answered. "Get up now and go into the city. You will be told what to do."

Saul got up from the ground. He felt sick. He rubbed his eyes. He blinked

and squinted. He opened his eyes as wide as he could. But Saul could not see. He was blind!

The men who were with Saul took him by the hand. They led him into the city. For three days Saul could not eat or drink anything. Saul knew that it was Jesus who had spoken to him. “What they are saying must be true,” Saul thought. “This Jesus who was crucified is somehow still alive. He has beaten death. He must surely be the Messiah.”

Saul prayed and prayed. He must have felt very sorry for hurting so many of Jesus’ friends. Finally, on the third day, Saul had a visitor.

Saul’s visitor was a man named Ananias. Ananias was a follower of Jesus. Jesus had spoken to Ananias in a vision. Jesus told him that he was to go to a certain house on Straight Street. Jesus said, “When you get there you will find a man called Saul. I want you to put your hands on him so that he can see again.”

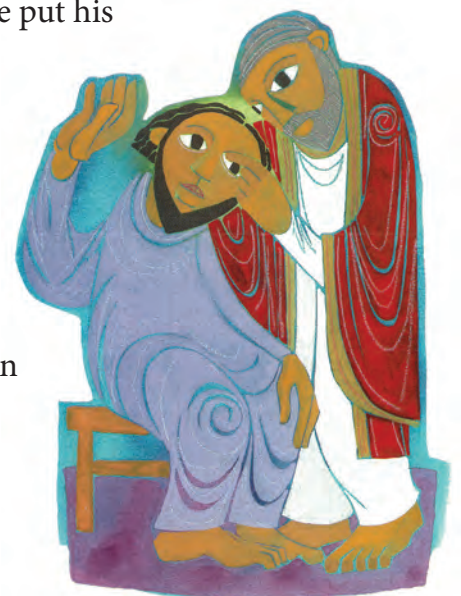
Ananias was afraid. He had heard all about Saul. “Lord,” Ananias said, “people have told me about this man named Saul. He has come to our city to make trouble for your followers. If I go there he will arrest me.”

Jesus said to Ananias, “I know you are afraid, but you still must go. I have big plans for Saul. He is going to help people from all over the world to know me.” So Ananias went to Straight Street.

As soon as Ananias entered the house, he went up to Saul. He put his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, I have been sent by Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here. I have been sent so that you can see again. I have been sent so that you may receive the Holy Spirit.”

At that very second Saul could see again. He was baptized there and then. After he ate a little food, Saul began to feel strong again. In a few days, Saul began to preach. “Jesus is the Son of God,” he said to anyone who would listen.

God forgave Saul, who had spent so much time making trouble for Jesus’ friends. And Saul went on to become one of Jesus’ best disciples. As Saul began to preach in other parts of the world people began to call him by his Roman name, Paul. He



traveled everywhere telling people his story. He would tell them how good and forgiving God was. He would tell them about Jesus, who had died and risen from the dead. Paul would tell everyone he met all about the Good News.

God called Paul. Paul listened and answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with Paul, the Spirit was also in Paul. Paul let the Spirit move him and great things happened.

1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What is your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. If you had been Ananias, what would you have thought about Paul? What would you have done? Why?
3. How do you think Paul felt when he knew he had been wrong to imprison the Christians? Pretend you are Paul. What would you say to the Christians? What would you say to the people in Jerusalem who sent you to capture the Christians?

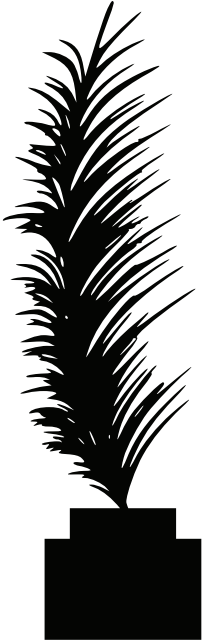
2

Read aloud the directions on the next page to get your child started on their activity. Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: Each of us sometimes does wrong and must ask for forgiveness.

If Paul can change from an angry persecutor to a powerful preacher, think how much can happen through the power of the Spirit! We all get second chances; we all get to begin again. This is a wonderful and liberating truth of our faith. God will always forgive us our sins because God is always ready to love us. Sin blinds us, just as Paul was blind, but forgiveness makes us well. It is not without good reason that we recognize Reconciliation as a Sacrament of Healing.



Paul Says He Is Sorry

We know that there are three things we need to say when we tell God we are sorry for the things we have done that are hurtful. These three things need to be a part of every Sorry Prayer:

1. Tell God what we are sorry for.
2. Tell God we will do our best not to do this hurtful thing again.
3. Ask God to help us to do the right thing from now on.

Pretend that you are Saint Paul. He must have felt very sorry for having caused so much trouble for Jesus' friends. He must have been sorry for hurting them and putting them in jail. In the space below write a Sorry Prayer for Saint Paul. Remember to include all three parts of the Sorry Prayer that you find above.

A large, rectangular piece of parchment paper with a torn, irregular edge. It is light brown in color and contains ten horizontal black lines for writing, spaced evenly across the page.

Saying 'I'm Sorry' and Being Forgiveness

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to the next step.

2

Just for you: If we never have the experience of being forgiven, how will we be able to forgive others? Answer the reflection questions below.

Reflection Questions

To prepare for the closing prayer service, look back at the circles of hurt from the last session. Using these "sins" as your guide, finish these sentences:

"I'm sorry _____."

"We need you God, to _____."

"I will never again _____."



My Sorry Prayer

Think about something you may have done either in your family or outside of your family that could hurt someone. In the space below write down your own Sorry Prayer. Remember to include the three important parts of the prayer.



Tell God what you are sorry for.



Tell God you will do your best not to do it again.



Ask God to help you not to do the same thing again.

Forgiveness and Second Chances

1

Visit whatever space is used for Reconciliation at your church, if it is accessible. Explain to your child how the process works and share your own experience of what it is like to be forgiven.

2

Talk about some of the programs in your community that offer people a second chance (such as halfway houses, hospitals, Twelve Step programs, soup kitchens). Visit one if possible, and talk to a volunteer there about forgiveness and second chances.

Closing Ritual

3

Be open to the reality that we can *all* experience forgiveness because our loving God is waiting for us to come home. Come together with your young person to share this prayer service.

Prayer of Reconciliation

Opening Prayer:

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

Reading:

Mark 2:5-12

Response:

There are many stories of Jesus forgiving people when others don't think he should. But Jesus never hesitates to forgive people. Take a minute of silence to ask Jesus in your heart for forgiveness for something you did (or didn't do) that hurt someone.

Prayer of Sorrow:

(*Adult leads; young person responds “Amen.”*)

“God of loving mercy,
we are not perfect people,
but we are trying to be your followers.

Help us to admit when we do wrong.
Lead us to reconcile with others.
Guide us to healing the world
with your justice and peace.

We ask all this through, with,
and in Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.”

Sign of Peace:

Close by exchanging a sign of Christ's peace.



The Soldier Who Had No Enemies



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe was martyred during World War II. This terrible war revealed much about how cruel humans can be. But Maximilian's life was a testament to the best humanity can be in spite of evil. His acceptance of others, his relentless faith and his courageous actions were all clear signs of the Spirit of Christ in his life. Maximilian's special devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, led him to value fidelity and forgiveness. His ability to forgive others challenges us today!

3

Getting started. Discuss together: Did you ever have a very hard time forgiving someone else? How did it turn out? How do you feel about it now?

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.



Not so very long ago, there lived a very brave man named Maximilian Kolbe. Maximilian grew up in Poland during World War II. It was a very dangerous time to live. The Nazis were in power. They arrested people and had them killed just because they were different.

Maximilian loved Jesus very much and he had a special place in his heart for Jesus' mother, Mary. When he was a youngster, Maximilian thought about becoming a soldier. But when he grew up he did not join the regular army, he became a Franciscan priest and instead he became a soldier for Mary. He wanted to help Mary win the hearts of everyone. His weapon was love.

Maximilian started a magazine. In the magazine he wrote stories about the goodness of Jesus and the gentle love of Mary. He wanted everyone to know the Good News. Maximilian's magazine became very popular.

When the Nazis gained power in his country, Maximilian watched as people were beaten in the streets. He watched as all sorts of people were taken from their homes, arrested, and sent away.

The Nazis especially hated the Jewish people. They arrested men, women, and children and sent them to prisons where they got very little food or water. They had to work very hard. Those who became too weak to work anymore were killed. Almost all of the Jewish people who were sent to the prisons died.

Maximilian knew evil when he saw it. What was happening was totally against the Plan of God. And so he began to write against what the Nazis were doing.

Twice he was arrested and the second time he was sent to Auschwitz, one of the worst prisons. Now Maximilian had a new way of being a soldier for Mary. His courage and love touched many people.

When people were afraid, he sat with them. He spoke gentle, encouraging words about God's love. Maximilian saved the small pieces of bread he received



for his supper, hid the wine that had been smuggled into the camp, and secretly celebrated Mass with the other Catholics. He turned the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus and shared them. Even in this dark, dingy, scary place the Church gathered and prayed together.

Often prisoners came to Maximilian and asked if they could receive the Sacrament of Penance. Maximilian heard their confessions. Then he asked a question: “Will you forgive those who have trespassed against you?” He was asking them to forgive even the cruel guards who hurt them. “Remember,” he would say, “how Jesus forgave the people who put him to death on the cross.” Maximilian never judged and his example helped others to forgive.

One day all of the prisoners were called out into the yard. They were not allowed to speak. “A prisoner has escaped,” the commander said. “Ten of you will have to die to pay for his mistake.”

When ten men had been chosen, one of the men began to weep. “Please,” he said, “I have a wife and children. Please do not kill me. My family needs me.” The soldier laughed at the crying man. Maximilian left his place in line and walked to the front. He stood in front of the commander. “I would like to make a request,” he said. “I would like to take this man’s place. I have no wife or children. I am weak. This man is healthier. He is a stronger worker.” The soldier looked at Maximilian. “Who are you?” he asked. “I am a Catholic priest,” Maximilian said. “Request granted,” the commander replied. And he ordered the guards to march Maximilian and the other nine men away.

They were taken to a small hut and locked in and were left there to starve to death. After two weeks the other nine men were dead, but Maximilian was still alive. The commander ordered that he be given a poisonous shot and that is how Maximilian died. He gave up his life for another.

After the war was over, the people who had been with Maximilian in prison told stories of his bravery. They also remembered how loving and forgiving a person he was.

God called to Maximilian. Maximilian listened and answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with Maximilian, the Spirit was also in him. Maximilian let the Spirit move him and great things happened. In that dark and ugly prison, Maximilian was able to bring the joy and hope of God’s Good News. He was even able to forgive those who were hurting him.



1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What is your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. Maximilian Kolbe was very brave. When have you acted bravely, even if you were scared?
3. When is it hard for you to forgive? How do you feel after you have forgiven someone?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The missing words are Mary, Jesus, Mother, and Amen.) Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: We are called by the Spirit of God to forgive others.

It is not easy to forgive. We are much more likely to try to strike back or hold grudges. Forgiveness requires that we let go of our hurt. Such Christian forgiveness is a gift of the Holy Spirit. This type of love is heroic indeed.

Maximilian's Mary

Maximilian Kolbe had a special love for Mary, Jesus' mother. Below is a picture of Mary for you to color. Next to the picture is a special prayer to Mary. Unscramble the words and fill in the blank spaces. Then read the prayer together with your grown up.

The Hail Mary

Hail, _____, full of grace, the Lord is with you.
(YARM)

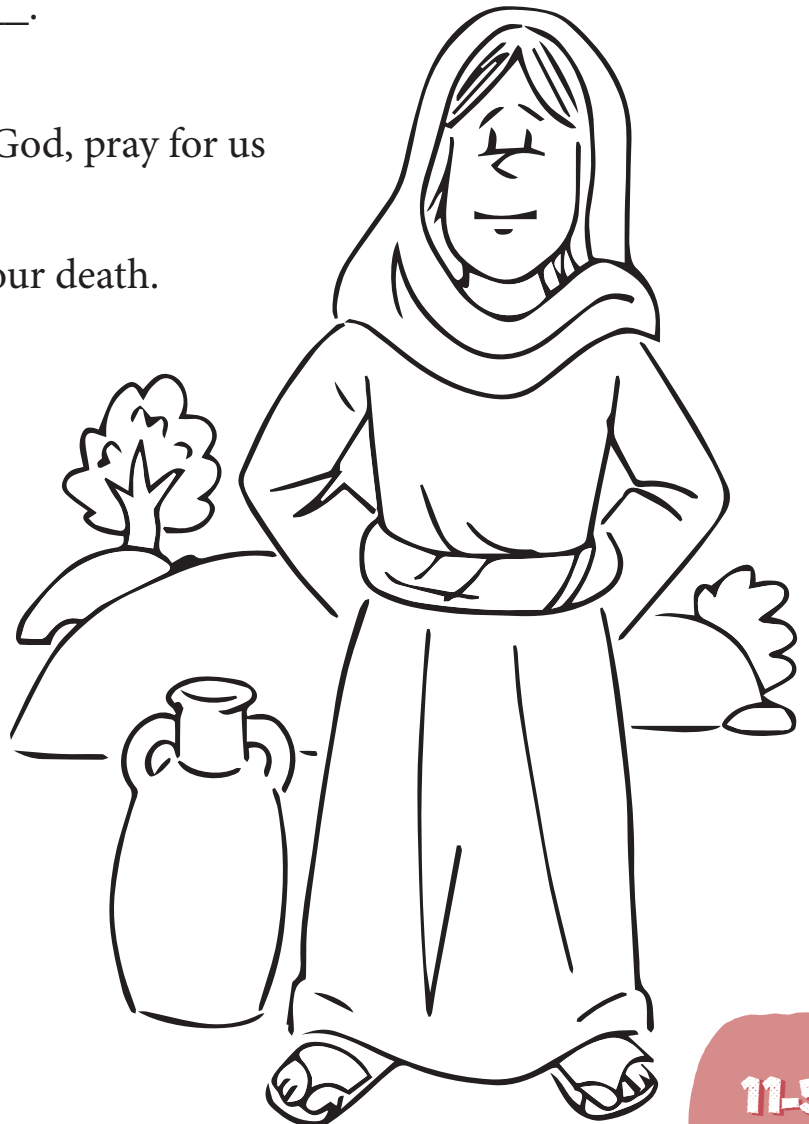
Blessed are you among women and blessed is the

fruit of your womb, _____.
(SEJUS)

Holy Mary, _____ of God, pray for us
(EMTHRO)

sinner, now and at the hour of our death.

_____.
(MANE)



The Freedom and Courage to Forgive

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to step 2.

2

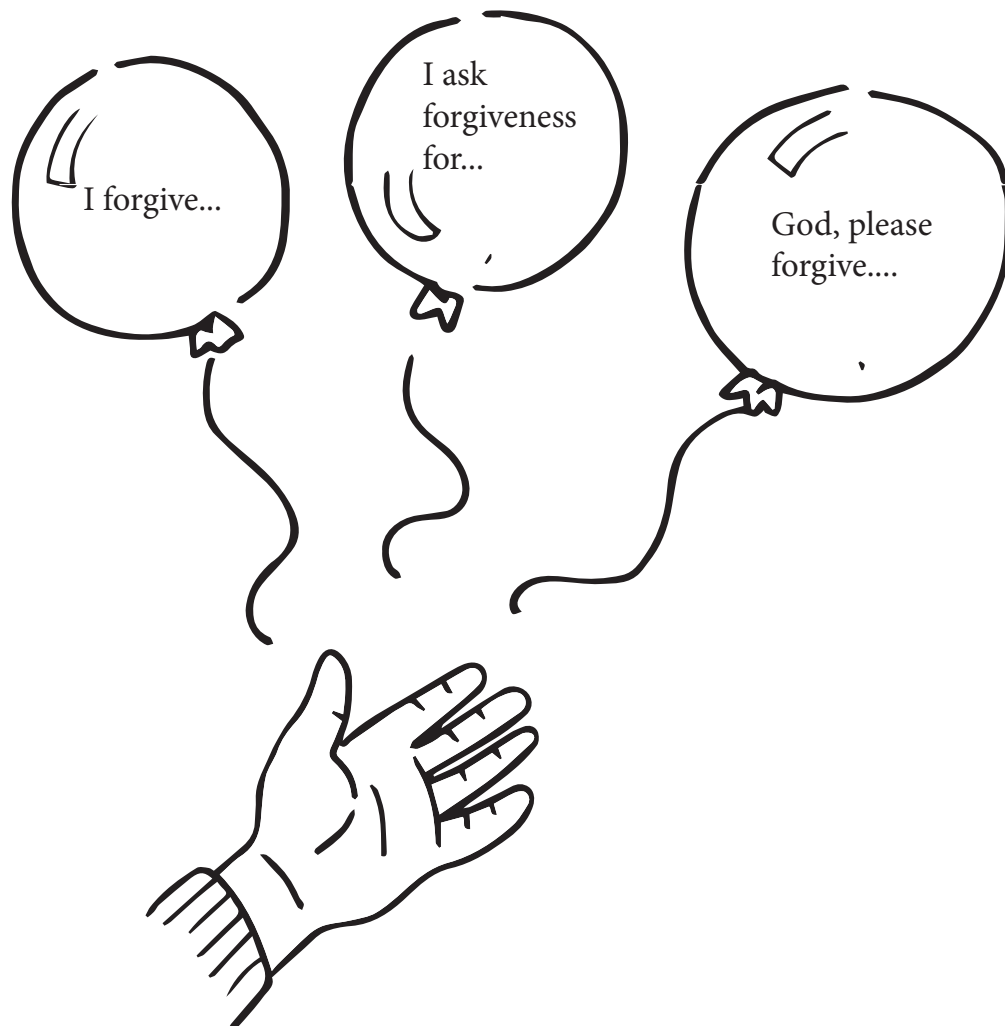
Just for you: Go back to your circles of hurt from Session 9 one last time. Are there hurts or sins in one of those circles that are especially hard for you to forgive in yourself? In others? What are they? Why are these hard for you to forgive? Is it harder for you to forgive sin in yourself or in others? Why?

3

Follow the instructions below.

Just as the balloons in the drawing below are being released into the sky, so we, too, can ask God to help us release our anger, hurt or disappointment so we may truly forgive ourselves and others.

Take a separate piece of paper (you'll be ripping it up during the Closing Ritual) and write a letter to God. Ask God for the strength or gifts you need to be forgiving. It may also be helpful to tell God exactly what hurts you about this sin and how you feel about the one who hurt you. (God can take hearing our anger and pain. Remember Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane!) This letter will not be read by anyone else.

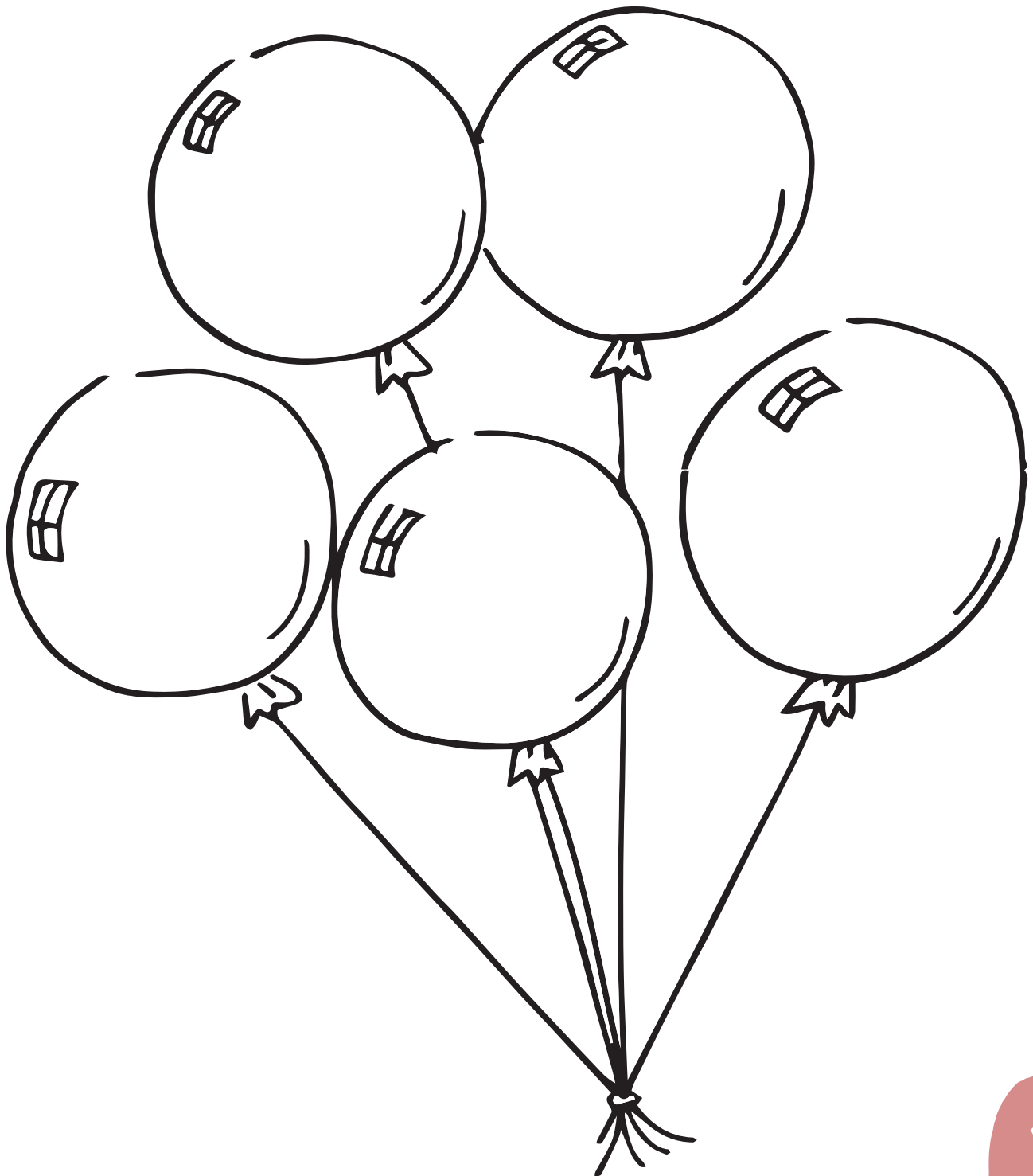


Letting it Go

It is important for us to ask God and others to forgive us for the hurtful things we do. It is also important for us to forgive others who have hurt us.

Think about the different times when someone has hurt you. Write the names of any people you are ready to forgive in the balloons below.

When we are really ready to forgive someone, we are ready to let go of our anger. When we let go of our anger, it will be carried away just like helium-filled balloons. Sometimes we need to pray before we can let go of our anger.



Forgiveness in Conflict



1

Look up the history of some troubled spot in today's world (any country at war within itself or with another country).

What brought the two sides to this conflict? What could genuine forgiveness do?

Closing Ritual

2

Forgiveness means letting go. Take the initials, names, and events you wrote down during your activity time and rip them up into little pieces. Ask God to help you let them go.



Spirit of Action



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

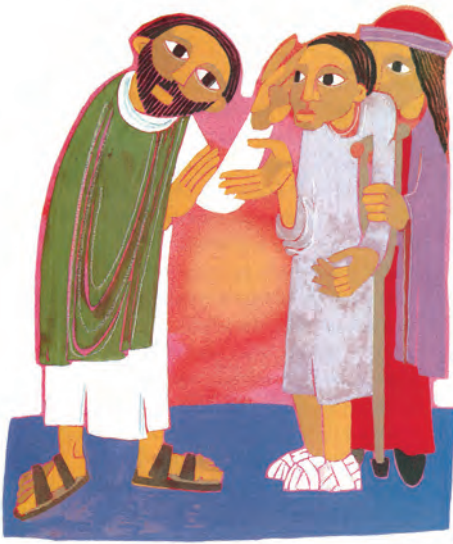
With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: When have you surprised yourself by acting with unexpected patience, courage, kindness, or self-control? That was probably the Holy Spirit at work in you!

Confirmation is a sacrament in which we are “sealed” with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was poured out upon us at baptism, and at confirmation that Spirit is further strengthened within us. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be with his followers after he ascended into heaven. Several places in Scripture list gifts that come to us through the Spirit. This session will focus on some of those gifts.



1

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

Jesus came to tell the world the Good News. Do you remember the Good News? It is that God loves everyone. And it is that God will always be with us. With the help of the Spirit it is now our job to tell the Good News.

Jesus also came to tell the world that it was time for the Plan of God to happen. Do you remember what the Plan of God is? It is that everyone will love God more than anything else and love others as they love themselves. With the help of the Spirit, it is now our job to help make the Plan of God happen.

It is not enough just to tell people the Good News. We also have to work to make the Plan of God come true. This means we feed the hungry and take care of the sick. It means we give water to the thirsty and clothes to people who need them. It means we will visit people who are sick or in prison.

This is the job of every Christian, but it is also the job of our whole Church. When someone is working alone, it is easy to get worn out and discouraged. It is much easier when we work with each other and with the Holy Spirit. We can encourage each other. We can help each other. This is where we find the Holy Spirit, where the Church is acting together. When we let the Holy Spirit move us, great things happen.

We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized. The gifts of the Spirit are increased when we receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Through this special sign, the whole Church celebrates that God is with us and we are with God. We celebrate God as a Spirit of action.



2

Now discuss the reading with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. Do you try to say what you mean and do what you say? Give an example.
2. Are there times when you think people are telling you one thing but doing another? How does this make you feel?

1

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. This is a challenging activity, so tell them to try their best and then help once you finish step 2. (The answers are 1. peace, 2. self-control, 3. kindness, 4. joy, 5. goodness, 6. faithfulness, 7. patience, 8. gentleness, 9. love.) Then continue to read below.

2

Just for you: The Sacrament of Confirmation reaffirms our baptismal call to *act* to help establish the Reign of God.

Being a Christian is work—sometimes hard work indeed. But the Spirit's message of hope is two fold: We are never alone in our efforts; we are never without God. Confirmation is yet another chance for the Spirit to enter our lives, bringing God's grace. And once we have received the Spirit, we can no longer sit quiet and still. We must speak and we must act.

Fruit of the Holy Spirit

Paul the Apostle lists nine fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. When we let the Holy Spirit work in our lives, these are the results that other people can see (just like a good tree gives us fruit!). Draw a line between the fruit on the left and its description on the right. We've drawn in a couple to get you started.

 Love	 Joy	1 Having a sense of calm. The opposite of being nervous, worried, or anxious.
 Peace	 Patience	2 Behaving or choosing what is best for yourself and others, even when you want to act differently.
 Kindness	 Goodness	3 The opposite of meanness.
 Faithfulness	 Gentleness	4 A feeling deeper than happiness.
 Self-control		5 The ability and strength to do the right thing. Having strong character.
		6 Being loyal to Jesus's teachings.
		7 Trusting something will happen when the timing is right, even if it's not when we want it to happen.
		8 Not rough or violent. Balanced and considerate.
		9 Always wanting the very best for others. Giving freely without asking for anything in return.

Acting Out the Plan of God

1

Work on this activity together with your child. Begin by reading the paragraph below together.

2

List some ways you have been the Body of Christ to others (even if you didn't think about it at the time). Write your answers below, and have your child write theirs on the next page.

3

When you are done, share what you wrote with each other and discuss. Talk about which ones were more difficult to answer.

We are all gifted, just gifted differently. And that is good, because that means we all have something to contribute to the Reign of God. Jesus counts on us! Together, we are the Body of Christ!

How have I been the eyes of Jesus (how I see the world):

How have I been the lips of Jesus (what I say to others):

How have I been the hands of Jesus (what I give or do):

How have I been the feet of Jesus (how far and where am I willing to go):

How have I been the heart of Jesus (how I show love):





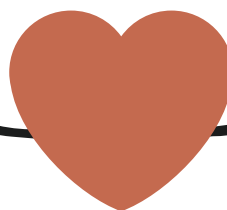
How have I
been the eyes
of Jesus (how I see the world):



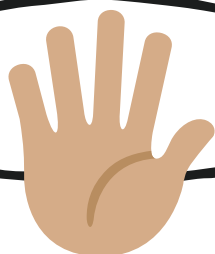
How I have
been the feet
of Jesus (how far and where am I willing to go):



How have I
been the lips of
Jesus (what I say to others):



How I have
been the heart
of Jesus (how do I show love):



How I have
been the hands
of Jesus (what I give or do):

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1

Go over the list of the Holy Spirit's gifts on the right. Decide which of these gifts are important to you for their ability to give you the strength to act. Which gifts do you still need to work on more?

2

Make a mobile of the words to hang in your meeting space. As the wind moves the mobile, notice how strong something you can't see (like an air current) can be. What does this mobile say to you about the Spirit?

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

- **Wisdom** helps us make the best decisions, for ourselves and others.
- **Understanding** gives us insight into people or situations.
- **Counsel** allows us to help others see and understand the best choices.
- **Fortitude** gives us courage to follow through when we are confident how to proceed.
- **Knowledge** is an awareness of facts and information that will help us make good decisions.
- **Piety and fear of the Lord** means honoring and respecting God and feeling wonder and awe at God's works (fear of the Lord is not the same as being "afraid" of the Lord).

Closing Ritual

3

Make the Sign of the Cross on each other's hands, eyes, and lips. As you make these three signs of blessing, say the closing prayer on the right.

Through Jesus [hands],
with Jesus [eyes]
and in Jesus [lips],
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father,
forever and ever. Amen.



A Letter of Good News



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: When has someone done a small act of kindness or said a comforting word that made a big difference to you? Share your story.

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.



A long, long time ago, there lived a man named James. James was the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. It was an exciting time to be a Christian. Peter and Paul and some of the other disciples were traveling all over the world telling people about Jesus. James, who was not one of the twelve apostles, got to stay home and help take care of all of the Jewish Christians.

James's job was to make sure that the followers of Jesus did not forget what Jesus taught. James knew that Jesus had come to tell people the Good News. James wanted the people to remember that they were also supposed to share the Good News.

This is the Good News: God loves everyone very much, and it is time to make the Plan of God happen. Everyone and everything in the world was supposed to live in peace and harmony. People were supposed to love God with their whole hearts and love their neighbors as themselves. James had a very important job.

Sometimes when James walked through the city, he saw things that he did not like. He saw people with gold rings on their fingers and people who wore shabby clothes being treated differently. "You should treat everyone the same," he said. "You should not give rich people the best places to sit and make poor people sit on the floor."

Sometimes he saw the followers of Jesus not behaving as they should. "Why are you fighting with each other?" he asked. "Maybe it is because you want something that you do not even need. Do not let the world tell you what you must have. Remember, if you pray, God will give you everything that you really need."

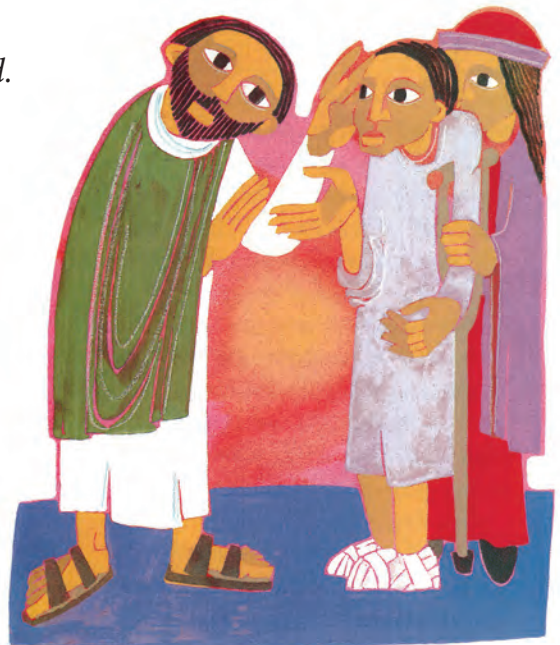
One day James was talking to one of his helpers. “I am very concerned,” James said. “Some people say they believe in Jesus, but they do not act like they believe in the Good News. They have forgotten about the Plan of God. They have forgotten that God wants peace and harmony for the world. They have forgotten that they have to help make the Plan of God happen.”

“I think I will write them a letter,” he said. “I will remind them that they cannot say they love God with their whole hearts if they do not love their neighbors as themselves. They must help out the widows and the orphans. They must make sure that everyone has enough clothes to wear and food to eat. I will write them a letter to remind them what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.” And so James wrote an epistle, or letter, to all the believers.

James was a good leader. He reminded the people that it was not enough to just say, “I believe in Jesus.” James told the people, “You will know the real followers of Jesus not just by what they say but also by the way they act.”

James was a great disciple of Jesus. He shared the Good News. He worked hard to make the Plan of God happen. James’ letter is still reminding people that if the Plan of God is to happen, they will have to get busy.

God called James. James listened and answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with James; the Spirit was also in James. James let the Spirit move him and great things happened.



1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What is your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. Can you name some of the evils or sins that James was observing? Why did these make him so sad?
3. Have you ever felt like James? That is, do you ever wonder why people do mean or evil things to each other? What would you like to say to them if you had the chance?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The answer is “Do your best to make the Plan of God happen.”) Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: Each of us can work individually toward justice and compassion in many ways.

The evils of the world can seem overwhelming, but James reminds us that we can and must start right where we are! The people closest to us, our family and our friends, are where we first need to live the Gospel message of love, forgiveness, and peace. No one is too young, too weak, or too slow to answer this call of the Spirit.

A Message From James

If James were to write a letter to you today this is what it might say. Use the code below to fill in the blank spaces.

6 1 14 1 20 4

17 7 10 2 2 1 12 5 19 7

2 9 7 3 16 5 8 1 18

15 1 6 9 5 3 3 7 8

THE CODE

1 = O	6 = D	11 = J	16 = L
2 = T	7 = E	12 = M	17 = B
3 = P	8 = N	13 = Z	18 = F
4 = R	9 = H	14 = Y	19 = K
5 = A	10 = S	15 = G	20 = U

Responding to James's Letter of Good News

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to step 2.

2

Just for you: In the last session, you and your young person listed some ways you have been the eyes, lips, hands, feet, and heart of Jesus. As James writes, it is only when we put these commitments into action that we are truly living as Christians!

Now commit yourself to a course of action by filling in the blanks below for this coming week.

3

Next, share your responses with your child and listen to theirs.

Remember that just as evil can start small and ripple out to many, so can peace and compassion start in our own hearts and families and extend to all we meet!

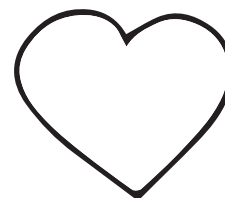
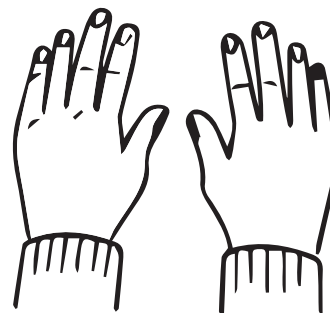
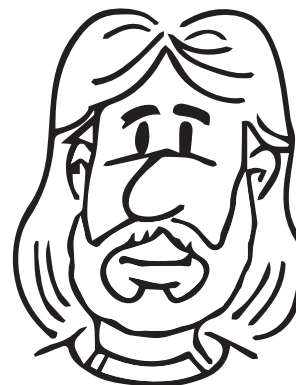
___ I will be the eyes of Jesus because
I will _____.

___ I will be the lips of Jesus because
I will _____.

___ I will be the hands of Jesus because
I will _____.

___ I will be the feet of Jesus because
I will _____.

___ I will be the heart of Jesus because
I will _____.



And we will do all this through the gifts of the Spirit with us.

Jesus and Me

Remember that you are the eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, and heart of Jesus. In the spaces below write down some ways you can be Jesus at home, at school, and in the bigger world, too.



I will be Jesus' eyes by

_____.



I will be Jesus' ears when I

_____.



I will be Jesus' mouth when I

_____.



I will be Jesus' hands when I

_____.



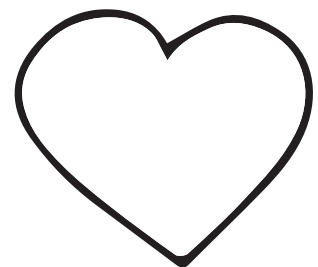
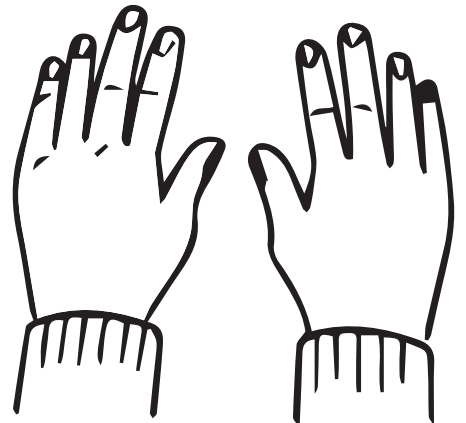
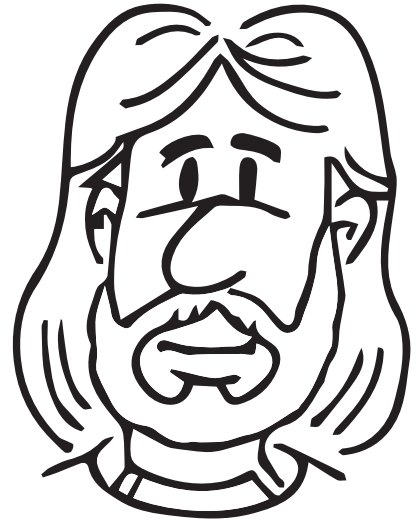
I will be Jesus' heart when I

_____.



I will be Jesus' feet when I

_____.



Simple Acts of Holiness

1

Many saints of our tradition felt that the day-to-day events of our lives were the ground of holiness. The lives of Saint Therese (the Little Flower), Saint Francis of Assisi, Pope John XXIII, Mother Teresa, and others were filled with appreciation for the details of our lives.

Find a simple activity you and your young person can do together: pick up litter, take cans to a recycling center, drop off clothes at a thrift shop, and so on.



Closing Ritual



2

Read James 2:14-17 together.

Close by asking the Holy Spirit to help you be Christ in the world this coming week.



The Bishop for the Poor



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

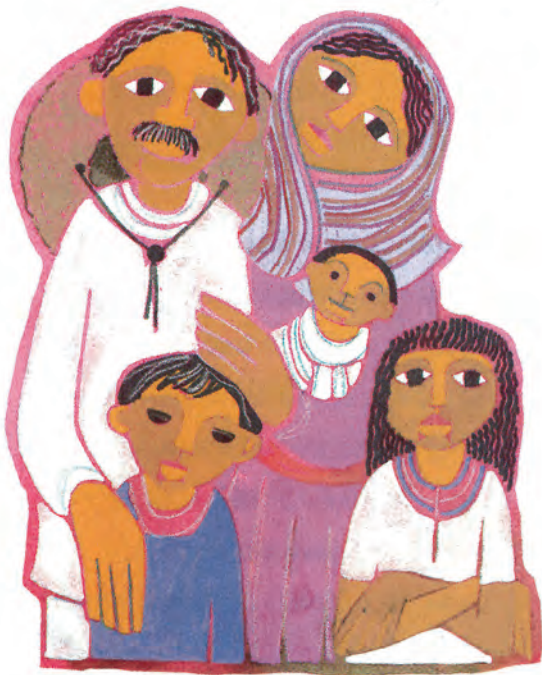
Then begin with a prayer.

The Catholic churches of Central and South America have given much to their northern neighbors. Small faith-sharing communities, liberation theology, and many examples of courageous martyrdom have profoundly affected the universal Church.

Archbishop Oscar Romero, his life and his example, certainly fit into this list of shared graces. His real-life story has more drama than many fictional works and more to teach us than this short treatment can reveal. His commitment to the poor and powerless, despite putting him in danger, was inspirational.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: Who do you know who works or volunteers to help poor or marginalized people in our society?



Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

Not so very long ago, there lived a holy man who was not only kind but also very brave. This man was one of the leaders of our Church. He was an archbishop. This brave, holy man's name was Oscar Romero. Oscar Romero was archbishop of a country called El Salvador.

El Salvador is in Central America. It is a beautiful land, but it has many problems. For many years, all of the land was owned by a few rich families. Almost all of the people who lived in El Salvador worked for these families. Even though people worked very hard, they were paid very little. They were very poor and were treated badly. The government and the police were on the side of the rich families. Sometimes people were even murdered if they caused trouble for these families.

When Oscar Romero became the archbishop, the rich people were happy. "He will stay out of our way," they said. "He will not cause us any trouble. He will stay busy with his learning and his reading." And they were right. During Oscar's first years as archbishop he decided he would not take sides. He would just pay attention to Church business. He would leave the government alone. Then one day his good friend, Father Rutilio Grande, was murdered.

Father Grande had been working with the poor people of El Salvador. He saw how much they suffered. He saw how mean the soldiers were. He saw how people were tortured and murdered if they spoke against the unfair way they were treated. Father Grande said, "This is not right. God wants freedom and justice for all people. God wants peace and harmony, but God does not want rich people to make poor people suffer." Father Grande spoke against the rich families and the government for the way they were acting.

One day when Father Grande was riding in a jeep, some soldiers stopped him. The soldiers shot and killed Father Grande. They shot and killed the old man who was with him. They shot and killed the teenager who was with him, too. Father Grande, the old man and the teenager joined the list of thousands

who had been murdered because they spoke up for freedom and justice in El Salvador.

Father Grande's body was carried to the cathedral. (A cathedral is the main church in a city. It is where the bishop or archbishop preaches and says Mass.) Archbishop Romero was very sad. He knew his friend was a good man. "This should not have happened," he thought. "Father Grande wanted only what God wanted for all people: freedom and justice." For a very long time, the archbishop thought and prayed. He thought and prayed and then prayed even more. The archbishop spent hours and hours praying.

At that time, God was calling Oscar Romero. Oscar Romero listened and he answered. The Spirit was not only with the archbishop, the Spirit was also in him. Oscar Romero let the Spirit move him, and the lives of thousands of people were changed forever. Oscar Romero became a hero. He took up his cross just as Jesus had done. And, like Jesus, Oscar carried the cross to his death. Oscar Romero's cross was the unjust treatment of the people of El Salvador.

From that day on, Archbishop Romero began to speak up for the poor. He told his priests to protect the poor. He began programs to help fix the problems in his country. He knew that if the Plan of God was going to happen in El Salvador, he could no longer be silent. He even told the soldiers, "These are your brothers and sisters you are killing. In the name of God, you must stop."

The rich people who used to have supper with Oscar no longer spoke to him. The government leaders told him they could not promise him safety. The archbishop was very smart. He knew that the people in power were going to try to quiet him. He knew that if he did not stop speaking out against the evil of injustice, he would probably be killed like his friend Father Grande. The archbishop was ready to die for what he believed. He was ready to die just like Jesus, the Lord he loved so much.

And that is what happened. On March 24, 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero was murdered. He was shot to death while he was celebrating Mass. He died because he wanted to make the Plan of God happen. He wanted peace and justice for the people of his land. Oscar Romero was a martyr.



Christian martyrs are people who are killed because of their belief in Jesus and the teachings of the Church. Archbishop Oscar Romero believed in the Good News for all people. He was a holy, kind and very brave man.

God called the archbishop. The archbishop listened and answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with the archbishop; the Holy Spirit was in him. Archbishop Oscar Romero let the Spirit move him and great things happened. The world is a better place because of Oscar Romero. He stood up for his beliefs. He helped the poor. He comforted the sorrowful. He took care of the sick. He helped make the Plan of God happen.

The Spirit has great gifts to give us: patience, courage, joy, wisdom. All we need to do is be open to the Spirit. If we let the Spirit move, we will have the Spirit's power. We can help to make the Plan of God happen in our own homes, in our schools and in our communities.

1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What is your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. Do you agree with what Archbishop Romero decided? Why or why not?
3. Is there anything you would be willing to die for? What?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. (The answer to the puzzle is "A world at peace and in harmony.") Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: As a community, as a Church, we are involved in bringing about the Reign of God in our world.

Not only as individuals but also as members of an institution, we are called to act for the Reign of God. In fact, there is a power in "us" that "I" alone cannot capture. Archbishop Romero never stopped loving his community and its tradition. It was on this firm foundation that he accomplished his ministry. This is how the Spirit works for us as well, within the structure of our community and our Church.

Oscar Romero and the Plan of God

Archbishop Romero lived and died to make the Plan of God happen. Fill in the blanks below using the code, and you will discover what the Plan of God is.

3 14 1 39 16 2 3 10

15 8 3 11 8 3 6 2

4 6 5 3 9 12 1 6 7

THE CODE

1 = O	5 = H	9 = R	13 = J
2 = D	6 = N	10 = T	14 = W
3 = A	7 = Y	11 = C	15 = P
4 = I	8 = E	12 = M	16 = L

Bad News, Good News

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to step 2.

2

Just for you: Look through a news app, website, newspaper, or magazine. First you will probably notice the bad news—and most of it on the front page. But if you look deeper, you may find good news as well.

3

Use these pieces of good news (heroic people, happy events, moments of compassion, and so on) to fill in the newspaper below with your young person.



Working Together

We each need to work alone to help make the Plan of God happen. But we also have to work together with other people. Think about a time when you worked with other people to help make something good happen. It may have been a fund drive or cookie sale. Maybe you and some of your friends helped clean someone's yard or stopped other people from picking on someone else. In the space below write about what you did with the help of other people. Finish your story with a picture.

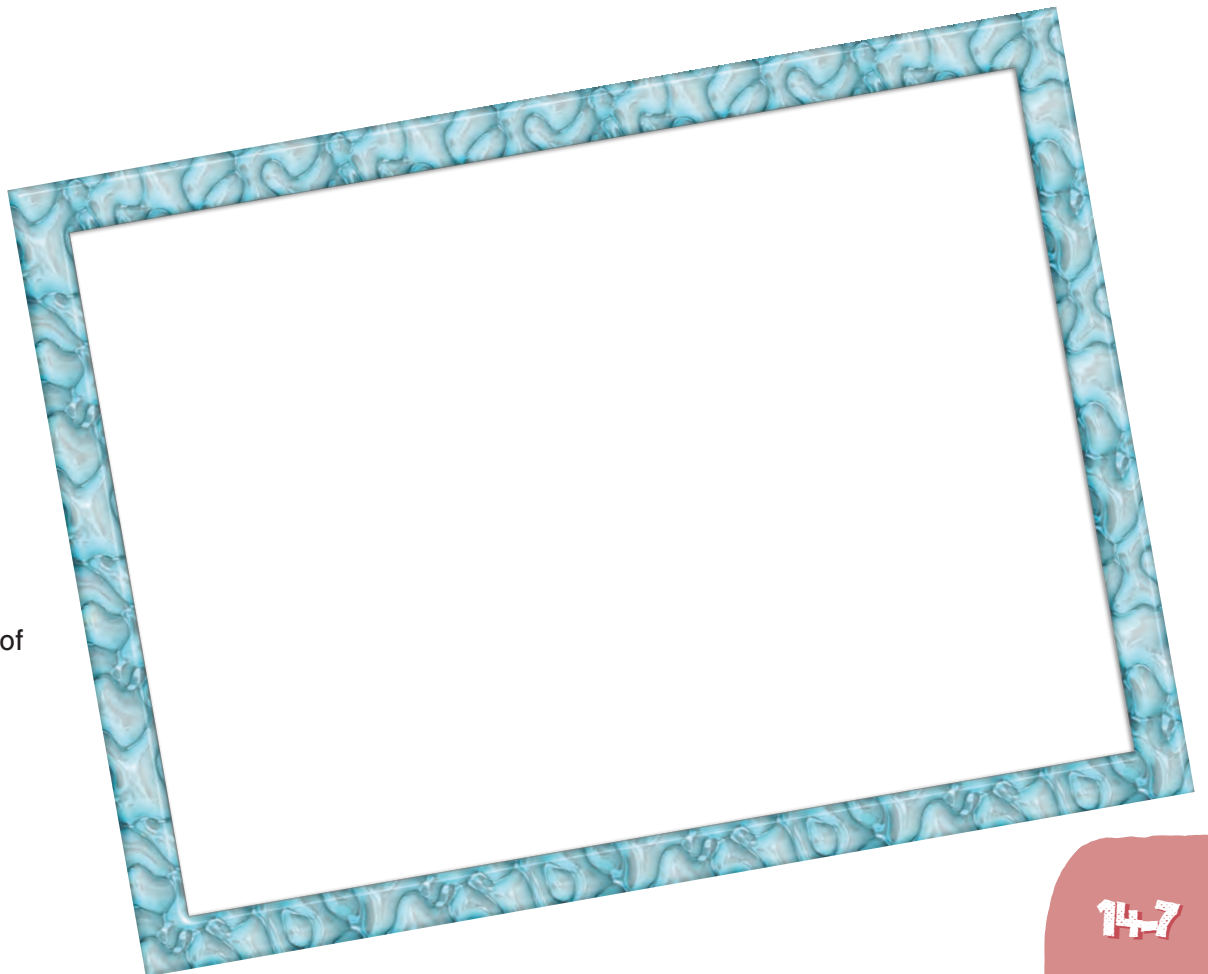
This is what we did:

This is who I worked with:

This is when we did it:

This is how I felt when we finished:

This is a picture of
me and my friends
working together to
help make the Plan of
God happen:



Social Action

1

Investigate what your parish offers in the way of social action. Many parishes have food pantries, outreach programs, or cooperative events with social agencies.



Closing Ritual

2

Share your “Daily Good News” papers. Ask God to bless and bring peace to people who are at war in the world, in their families and in themselves.



The Not-the-End



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

Then begin with a prayer.

The title of this series is *Spirit With Us*. If the stories you have shared with your young person do anything, they should show you that the Spirit is still active, still needed, still loving. Nothing is finished; all is still in process. We are continuing on our journey to God and to the Reign of God no matter what our age.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: Who is the best storyteller in your family or among friends? Why?

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.

Stories, stories, stories—we have read a lot of stories. We have heard about all sorts of people who lived at different times and grew up in different lands. They all had their own stories. But they were each a part of a much larger story.

It is a story that began when the earth was brand new. It is a story that began when God first called out to Adam and Eve, and Adam and Eve responded. From before there was time God has called out. And people have answered.

Now God is calling you. God is calling you by name. There is no one else in the whole world like you. There has never been anyone like you since before time began. No one else can do what God is calling you to do. You are a part of God's story.

Your story is just beginning. There are all sorts of wonderful surprises ahead. Just remember, the great and Holy Spirit is with you and in you. If you let the spirit move you, great things will happen.





1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. Do you believe that your story is as important as anyone's in the book? Why or why not?
2. What was your favorite story in "Spirit With Us"? Why?

2

Get your child started on the activity on the next page, making sure they understand the instructions. Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: We are sacraments, individually and in community, because we continue to show the Spirit of God in our actions and our lives.

While we learn much from our study of Scripture and our examination of the lives of other committed Christians, we must also reflect on our own lives, our own stories. Help your young person finish the blank pages in this book. Help your children see the value of their own stories of faith. Help them see the action of the Spirit, who is indeed with us, in their lives.

My Story

On the following pages, you will write and draw the story of the Spirit at work in your life.

To begin, on the cover below draw a picture of you helping to make the Plan of God happen in the world.



Your Story of the Spirit

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to step 2.

2

Just for you: A story—or many stories—makes up the fabric of our lives. Remember the weaving activity at the beginning of this series? That was to remind you that your story is just as important as any other story in this book.

3

Take a few minutes now to think of your story. You may wish to share your thoughts with your young person afterward.

I see the Spirit of belonging in my life in...

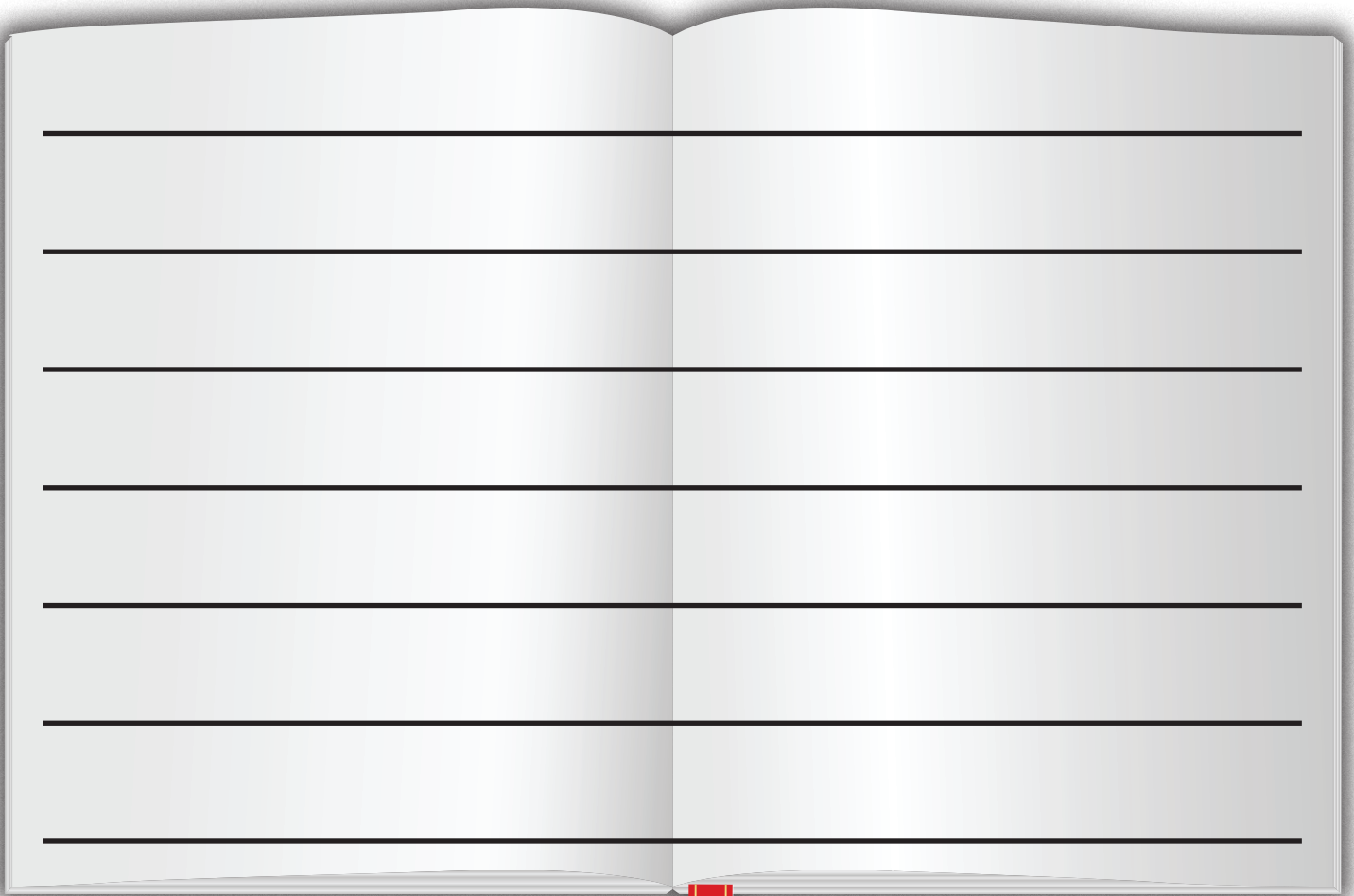


I see the Spirit of prayer in my life in...

I see the Spirit of forgiveness in my life in...

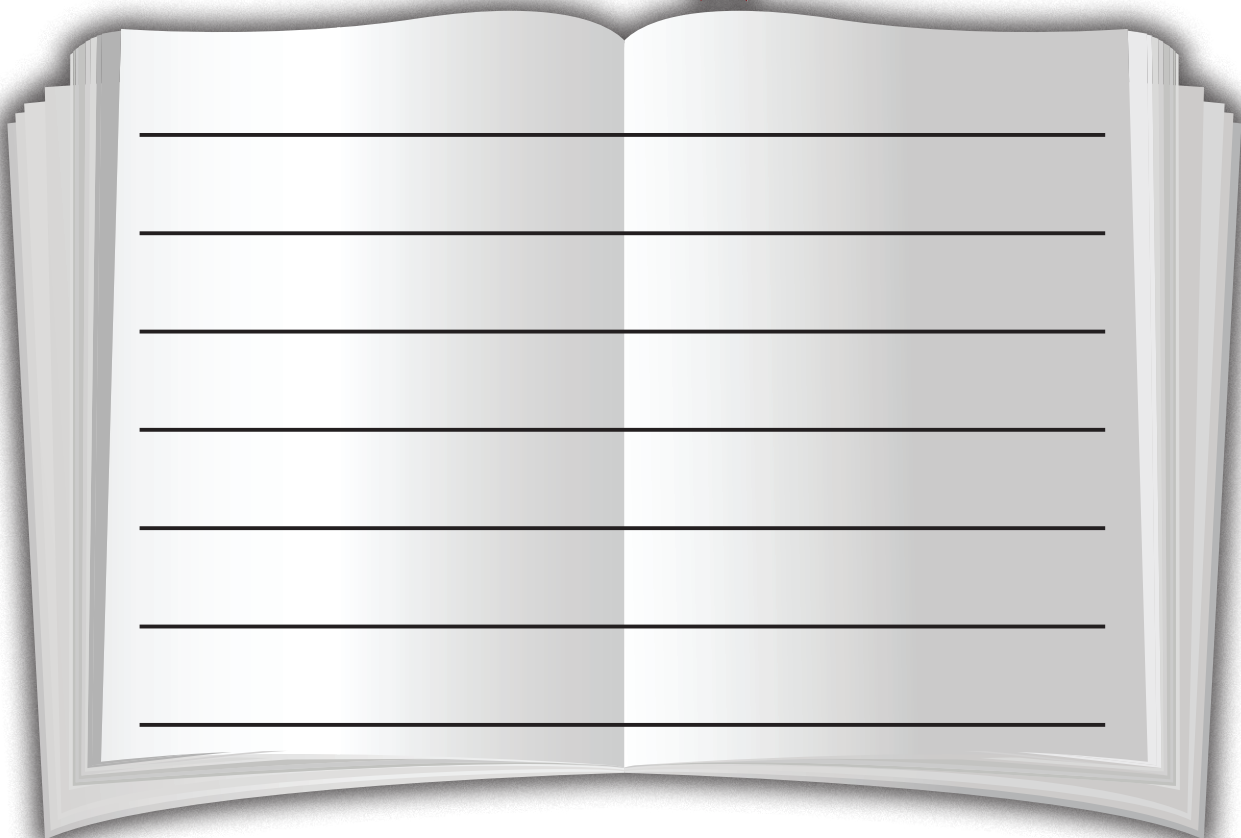
I see the Spirit of action in my life in...

On the lines below write about a time you forgave someone.

An open notebook with two pages visible. Each page has seven horizontal lines for writing. The notebook is light gray with a white center fold.

Write a prayer that tells God how you are feeling today.

Tell God what you are thankful for.

An open notebook with two pages visible. Each page has seven horizontal lines for writing. The notebook is light gray with a white center fold. A red bookmark is visible at the top center, between the two pages.

Seeing God in Your Life



1

The best way to help your young persons value their own stories is for you to share your story of faith with them.

Take time to reflect on where you have seen God and the Spirit act in your life.

Closing Ritual

2

Since this is your last session, close by sharing a meal or a special snack. As you eat, tell each other your “Not-the-End” stories. At the end of your time together, pray the doxology one more time.

Remember to pray for each other whenever you hear those words at Sunday Mass.

The Doxology

“Through Jesus, in Jesus, and with Jesus,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father,
forever and ever. Amen.”

