

saint mary's press

Discover!
Finding Faith in Life

Online Director's Manual



Contents

Welcome	3
Program Highlights	4
Program Components	6
Understanding the Components for Kindergarten	12
Understanding the Components for Grades 1–5	17
Key Elements of the Program	28
The Benefits of Digital eLearning	32
About the <i>Discover!</i> eLearning Platform	33
How to Involve Families in Faith Formation	36
Catechist Orientation Session	38
Parent Orientation Session	47
Handouts:	
• Characteristics of Kindergarten and Elementary Children	55
• Overview of Catholic Social Teaching	62
• Faith and Fun in the Family	65
Biblical Literacy and the Teaching of Scripture	67
Helping Children Navigate <i>The Catholic Children’s Bible</i>	73
The Dark Passages of Scripture	75
People of Faith Index	77
Catholic Social Teaching Indexes	82
Acknowledgments	84

Welcome

Welcome to *Discover! Finding Faith in Life*. This exciting program is designed to help children fully engage in the process of discovering and growing in the richness of their Catholic faith, making deep faith a central part of their everyday lives.

The lessons within the *Discover! Finding Faith in Life* program are designed to foster a clear understanding of the concepts presented through an active-learning approach. This method brings lessons to life in a fun and memorable way through experiential and interactive processes. Core principles of faith are introduced in a way that allows children to discover meaning and develop understanding while being immersed in solid Catholic teaching and in the prayers and practices that build Catholic identity.

The Catholic Children's Bible (and the Bible story booklet for kindergarten) are the core texts of this program, rooting the key concepts of each chapter in important Scripture passages. This serves to promote biblical literacy and an in-depth familiarity with and knowledge of key Scripture stories throughout the Old and New Testaments, including their meaning for us today.

Discover! Finding Faith in Life is a program like no other. This online director's manual offers many useful articles that will help you discover, explain, and clarify the riches of this program for catechists and parents. We are confident that by using this program, you will experience faith coming to life for children in a truly exciting way. May we all continue to discover more deeply the riches of our Catholic faith and so help others find the message of the Good News at the center of their lives.

With hopes and prayers for every blessing,

The Publishing Team at Saint Mary's Press

Program Highlights

The Bible Is the Primary Text

Discover! Finding Faith in Life immerses the children in Scripture by anchoring each chapter in a particular Scripture story. The children use *The Catholic Children's Bible* (grades 1–5) and the Bible story booklet (kindergarten) for each chapter. This focus on Scripture promotes biblical literacy and an in-depth familiarity with and knowledge of key Scripture stories throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Based on Principles of Engaged, Active Learning

The lessons are designed to foster a deep understanding of the concepts presented through an active-learning approach. Experiential and interactive processes create energy and excitement for both the catechist and the children, and activities and activity options throughout the program help the catechist build a meaningful lesson in a creative and engaging way.

Child-Centered Design

Information and activities are presented using the language and experiences of the child to create an ideal environment for real, engaged learning. The program relays core information through activities and discussions that will make sense to the learners in their everyday lives, thus conveying deep meaning and touching their hearts and minds in a significant way.

Rooted in a “Discover” Approach

The name of this program speaks to an energy and an excitement that are infused in the learning process. The content helps the children make connections with previous experiences and knowledge, and it invites them to deepen both as they discover new concepts and practices in the Catholic Tradition. Core concepts are structured in such a way that the children can discover meaning for themselves while being immersed in solid Catholic teaching and exposed to the prayers and practices that build Catholic identity.

Clear and Practical Structure

Each grade level is structured in the same manner: four units with five chapters in each unit. In addition to the twenty core chapters, there are eight liturgical season chapters, which can be incorporated into the flow of the catechetical year according to each particular program's schedule and needs.

Each grade level has a generalized area of focus (Kindergarten: Getting to Know Jesus; Grade 1: God; Grade 2: Jesus; Grade 3: Church; Grade 4: Covenant; Grade 5: Sacraments), while also spiraling core concepts and foundational understandings to introduce and deepen meaning for the children at age-appropriate levels.

Of the five chapters in each unit, four of them focus on the four pillars of the *Catechism*. A fifth chapter introduces children to a foundational concept related to one of the seven Catholic social teaching principles.

The unit structure for all grades is as follows:

First chapter	Believe (First <i>Catechism</i> pillar)
Second chapter	Celebrate (Second <i>Catechism</i> pillar)
Third chapter	Live (Third <i>Catechism</i> pillar)
Fourth chapter	Live: Catholic Social Teaching (Third <i>Catechism</i> pillar / Catholic social teaching)
Fifth chapter	Pray (Fourth <i>Catechism</i> pillar)

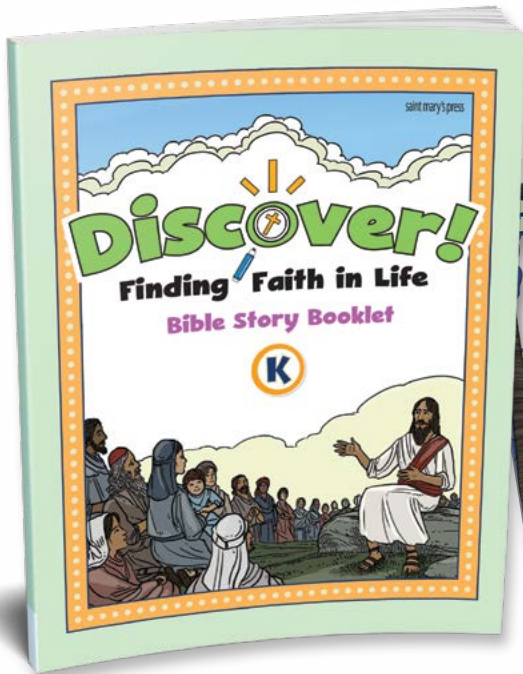
Family Support

This program is designed to extend beyond the classroom and into the home. Each chapter across the program includes a family page that helps families follow along with the Scripture story and the core concepts presented in the current chapter.* For those parishes in which parents or guardians are responsible for a portion of the direct teaching of content, this program offers home guides for grades 1–5. These easy-to-use guides are structured to ensure success in relaying key concepts of faith.

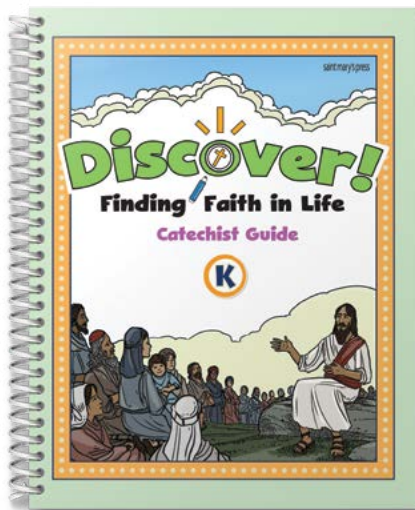
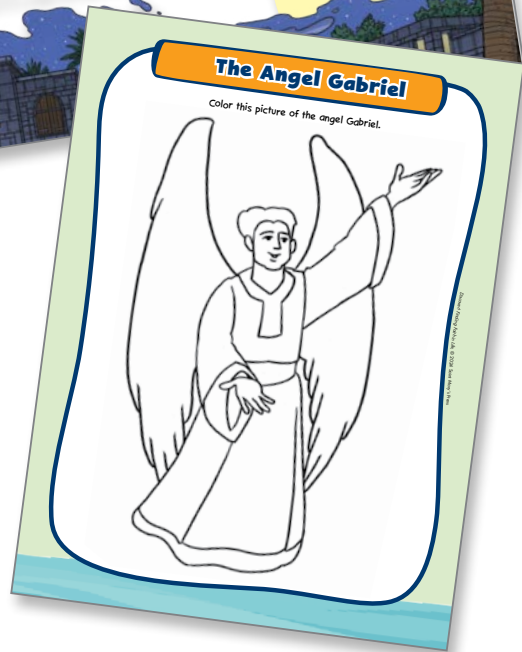
**Spanish family pages are available in full color as part of the online resources for this program.*

Program Components

Kindergarten



Bible Story Booklet with Child's Bible Story and Activity Pages

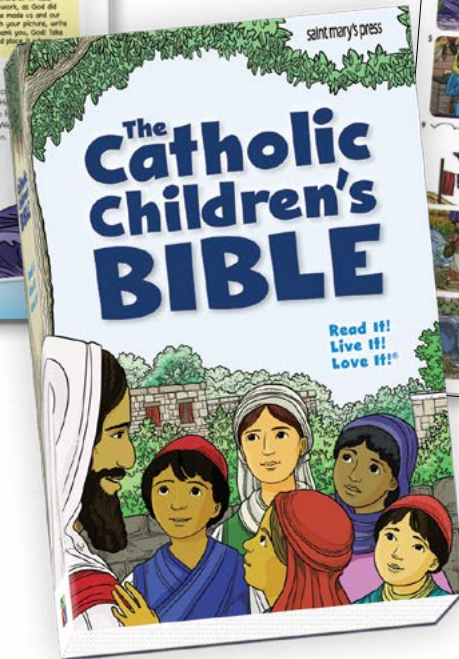


Catechist Guide

Grade 1



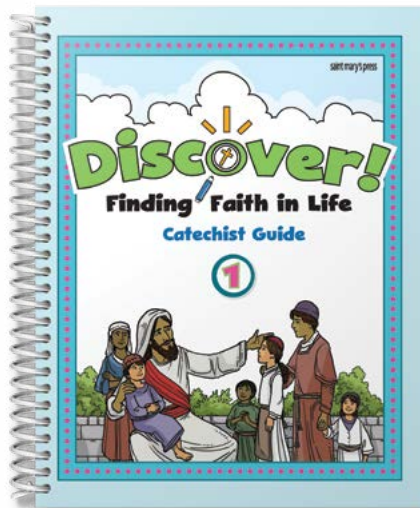
Activity Booklets



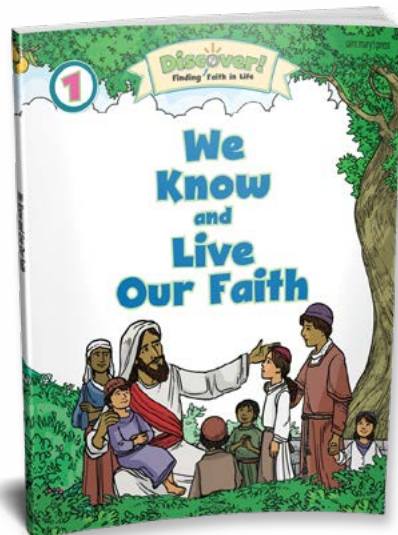
The Catholic Children's Bible



Special Feature

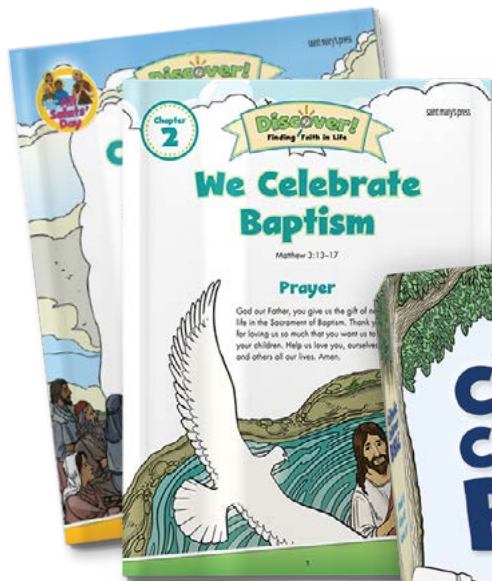


Catechist Guide

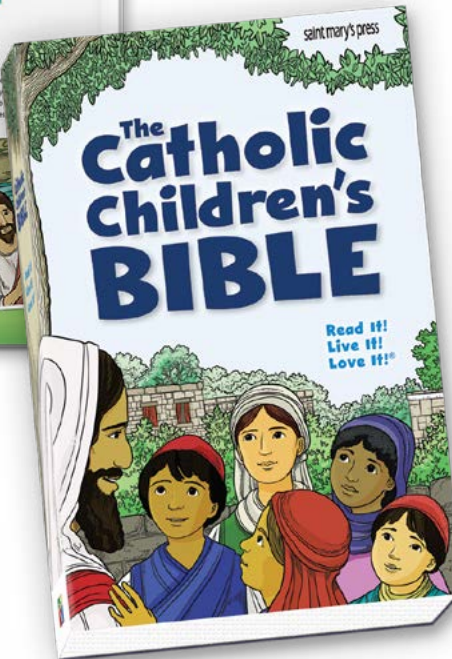


We Know and Live Our Faith Resource

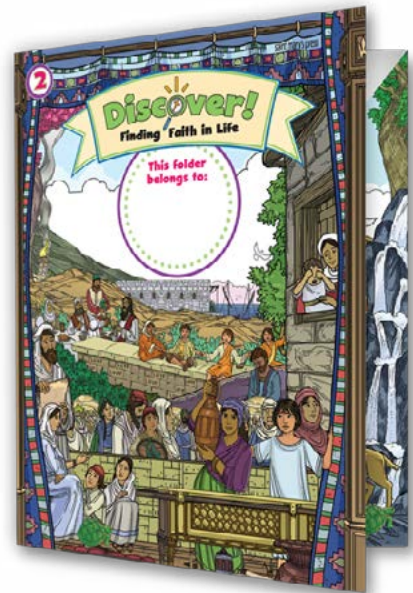
Grade 2



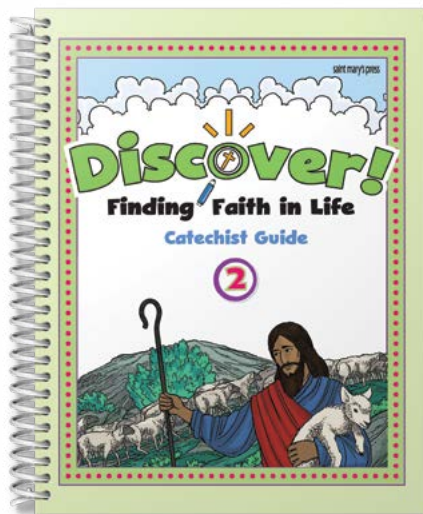
Activity Booklets



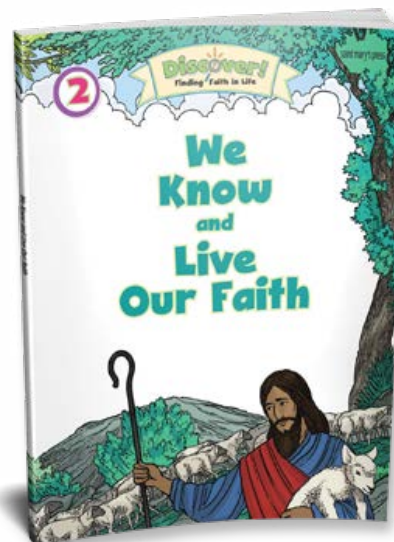
The Catholic Children's Bible



Special Feature

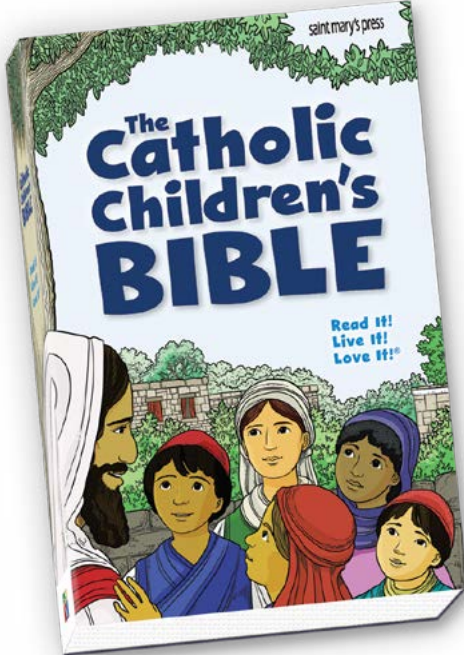


Catechist Guide

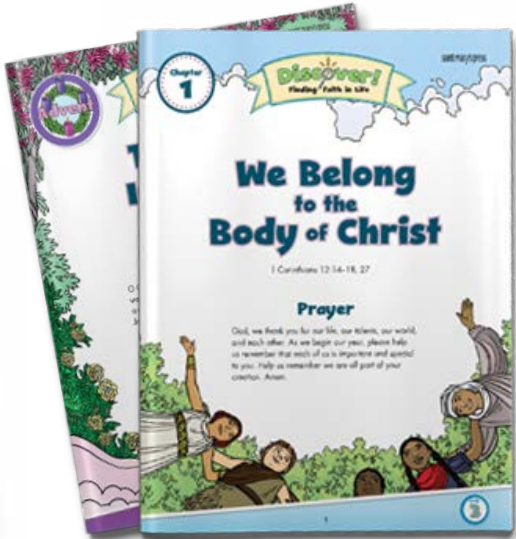


We Know and Live Our Faith Resource

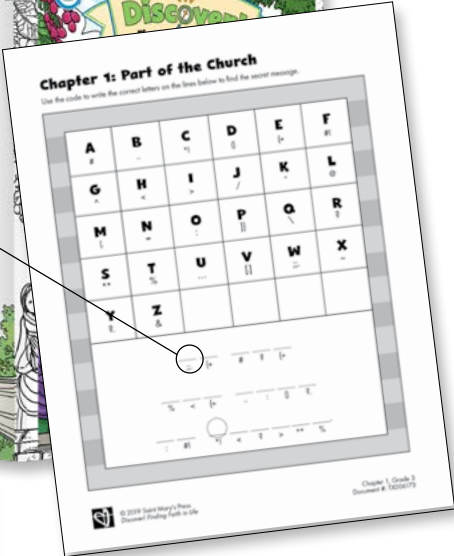
Grade 3



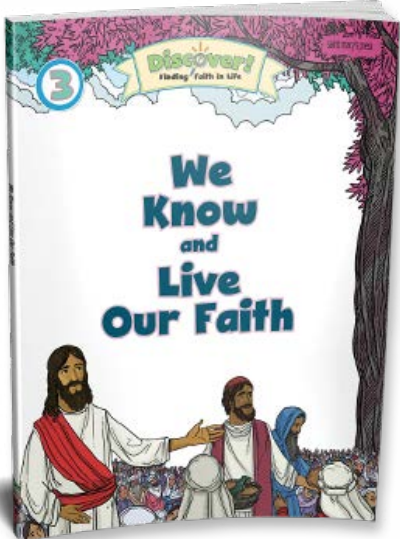
The Catholic Children's Bible



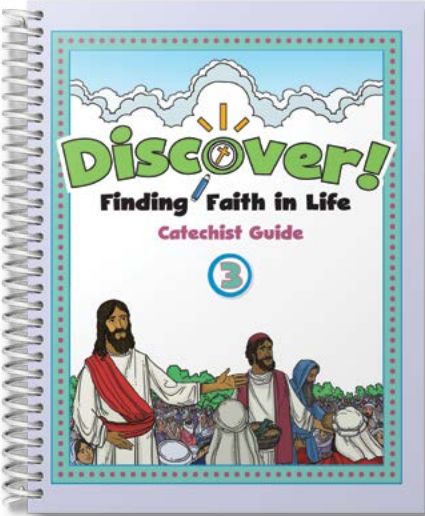
Activity Booklets



Special Feature

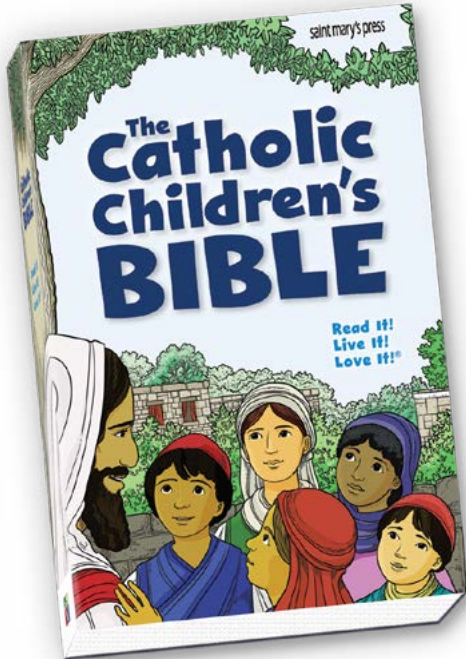


We Know and Live Our Faith Resource

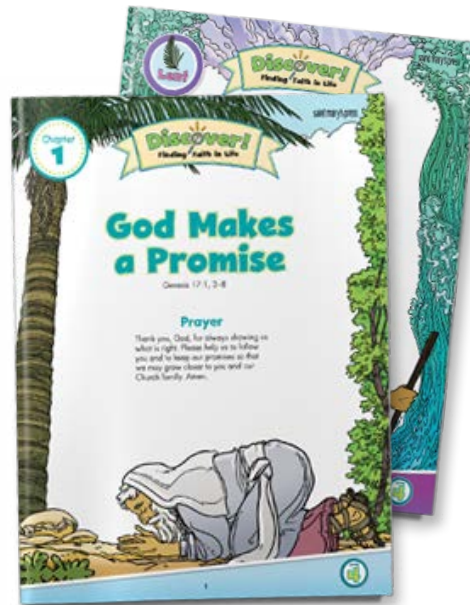


Catechist Guide

Grade 4



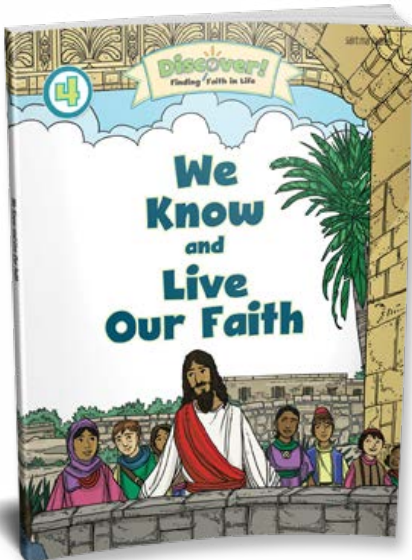
The Catholic Children's Bible



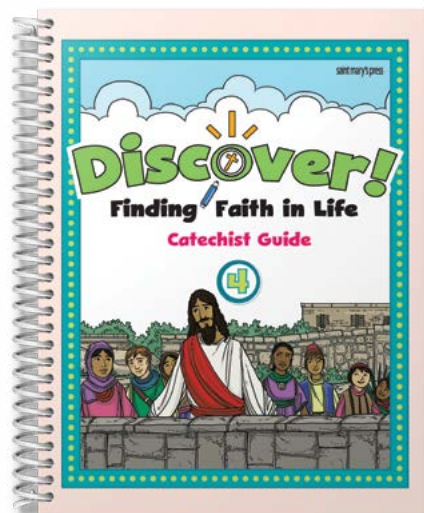
Activity Booklets



Special Feature



We Know and Live Our Faith Resource

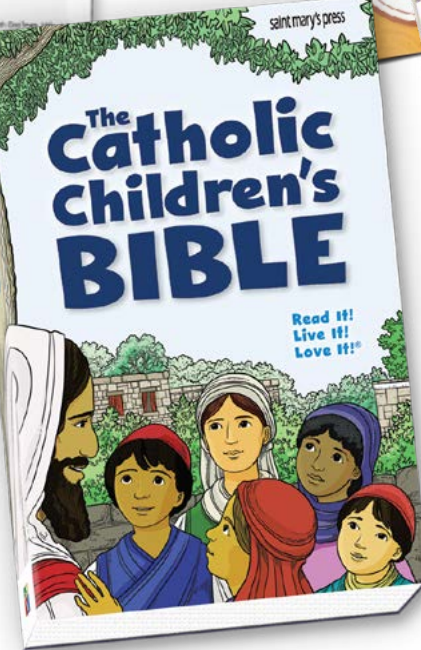


Catechist Guide

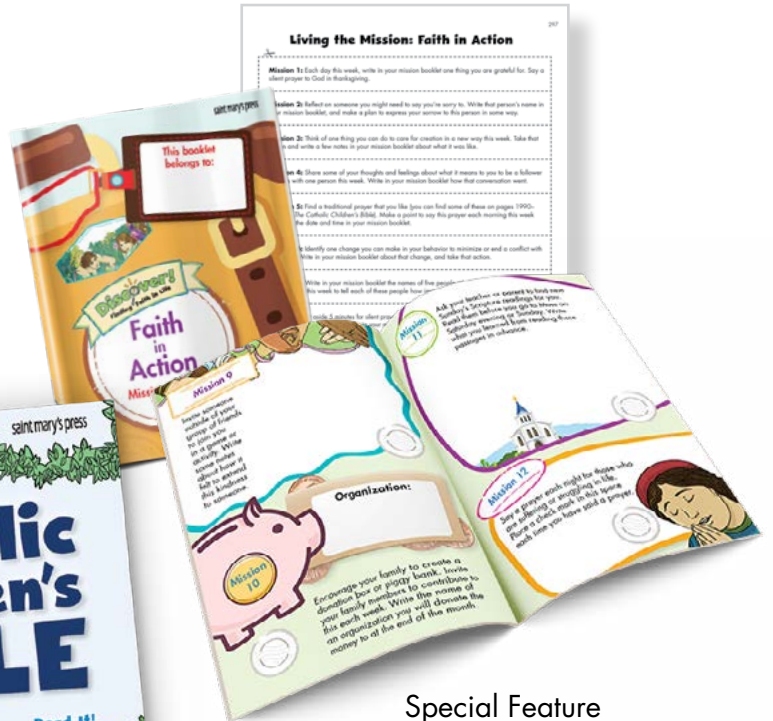
Grade 5



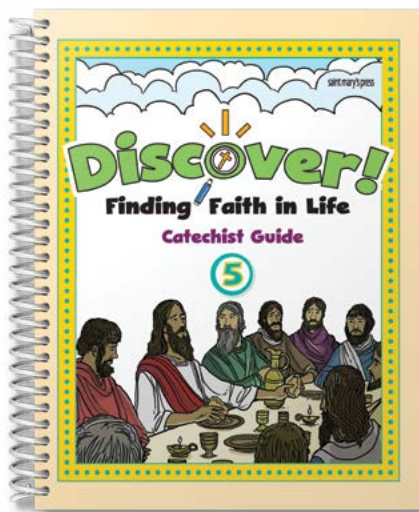
Activity Booklets



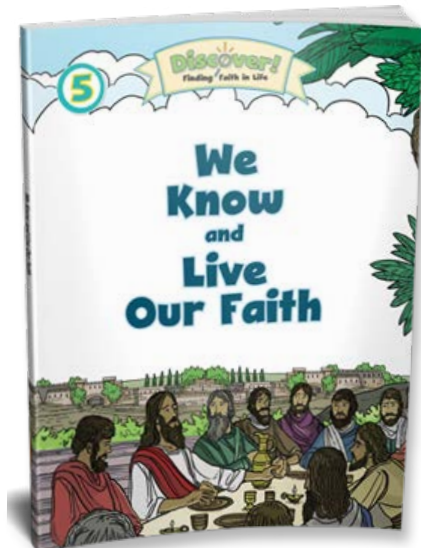
The Catholic Children's Bible



Special Feature



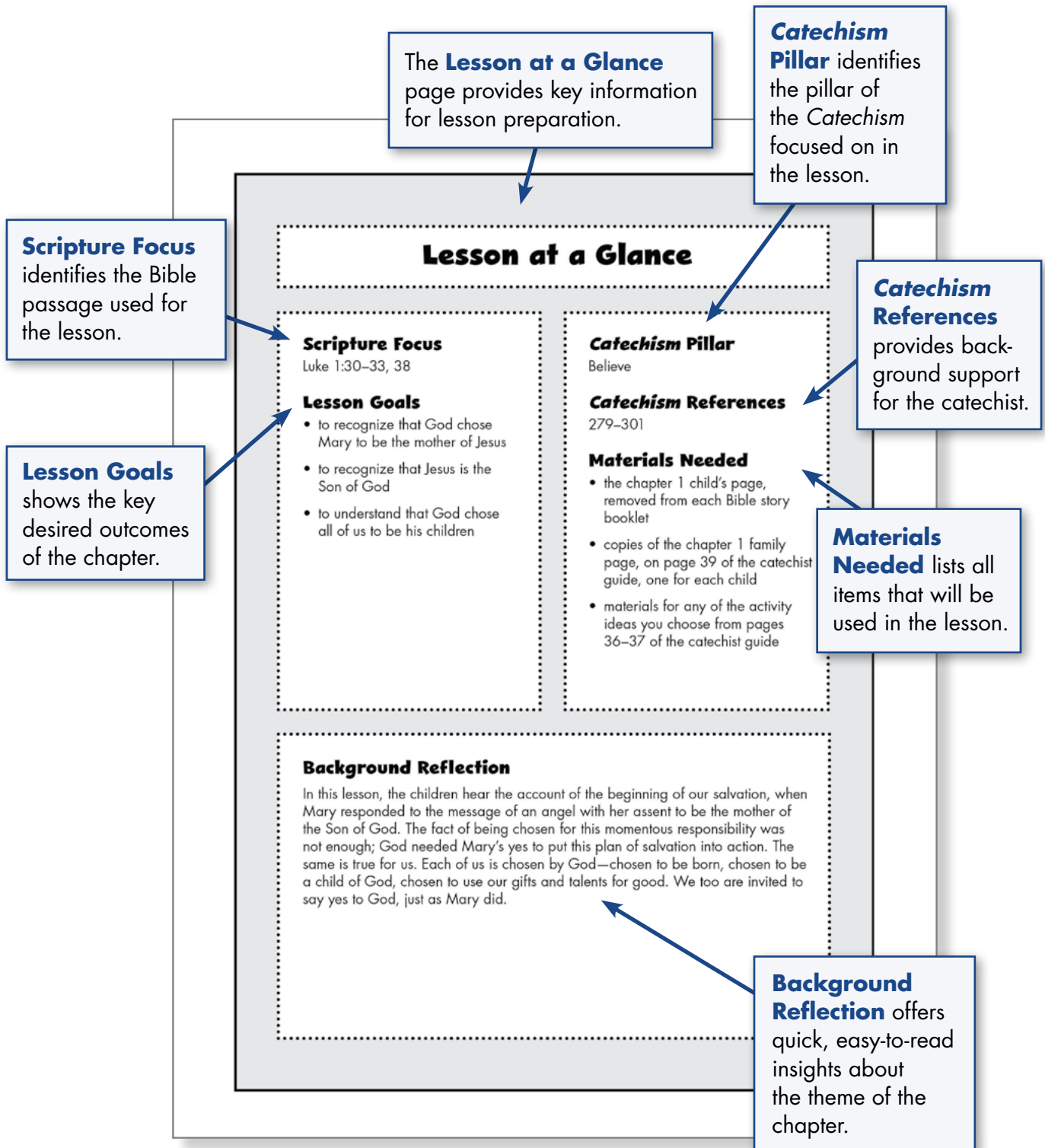
Catechist Guide



We Know and Live Our Faith Resource

Understanding the Components for Kindergarten

Catechist Guide



32 Unit 1

Chapter 1

Get Ready! (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer


- Take time to review how to make the Sign of the Cross.
- Ask the children to repeat each phrase after you, and then demonstrate the hand gesture that goes with each phrase.
- Accept their efforts at this point. Refinements will come later, after you reinforce this during each session.

Engage

- Introduce the Bible story by asking if anyone in the group has ever been chosen to do something special or received a special invitation. Perhaps someone has been asked to join a team, attend a party, or be part of a wedding.
- Explain that today the children will hear a Bible story about something special Mary was chosen to do.

Dive In! (15 minutes)

Bible Story



- Distribute the child's page, and ask the children to look at the main picture above the Bible story. Briefly discuss the picture by asking the following questions:
 - In the picture, we can see someone's hands and someone with a white robe. Who do you think this might be? (The angel and the angel's hands.)
 - We also see a young woman in the picture. How do you think she is feeling? Happy? (No, questioning?) (Yes.)
 - Can you look like you're wondering something? (Yes.) "Hmm?" and put your finger on your chin.
 - Let's look at the bottom of the picture. What do you see? (The windows.) What do you think is happening? (Responses.)
 - Mary and the angel are having a conversation. What do you think is important to talk about? (Responses.)
- Explain that you will read the Bible story to the children. Ask them to listen out what the angel said to Mary and how she responded. (Responses.)

The **Get Ready!** part of the lesson begins with an opening prayer and a question or two that will spark interest and curiosity in the children.

The **Dive In!** part of the lesson invites the children to learn important concepts by engaging with the Bible story for the lesson.

Today's Bible Story

Mary Says Yes to God

A long time ago, in a town called Nazareth, lived a young woman named Mary. She was very good and very holy. She loved God very much. One day, God sent an angel to visit her. The angel had an important message for her. The angel said,

"God has chosen you to be the mother of his Son. You will give birth to a baby and name him Jesus. He will be called the Son of God. He will be the king of a kingdom that will never end!"

Mary said, "Yes! I am the servant of the Lord. May this happen to me, just as you have told me."

And the angel left.

(Based on Luke 1:30–33, 38)

Discover! (25 minutes)

Core Teaching

- Begin the discussion by reminding the children that the angel and Mary were having a conversation. Ask the children to share what it means to have a conversation with someone. (*We talk and we listen to another or others.*)
- Invite the children to recall what the angel said to Mary in the conversation in today's Bible story. Emphasize that the angel told Mary that God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus.
- Ask the children to recall what Mary said in the conversation with the angel. Point out that she said yes and said she was a servant of the Lord. Explain that this means she wanted to do what God wanted her to do.

Today's Bible Story repeats the Scripture passage that appears on the child's page.


The **Discover!** part of the lesson presents key content through core teaching points and learning activities.

The **Go!** part of the lesson invites the children to recall everything they have learned, and ends with a closing prayer.

Mary Says Yes to God 35

Chapter 1

Go! (10 minutes)



Lesson Wrap-Up

- Recall the lesson goals by asking the following questions:
 - > Who did God choose to be the mother of Jesus? (*Mary*)
 - > Who is the Son of God? (*Jesus*)
 - > Who chose us to be God's children? (*God chose us to be his children.*)
- Remind the children to take the child's page home.
- Distribute the family page, and encourage the children to share it at home. You may want to staple the child's page and the family page together as the children are getting ready to leave.

Closing Prayer

- Begin by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross.
- Invite them to fold their hands, close their eyes, and open their ears and their hearts. Then pray this short prayer:
 - > Dear God, we know you chose Mary to be the mother of your Son, Jesus. We know you chose us to be your children. Help us say yes to you, like Mary did. Amen.
- Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Also available in full color in both English and Spanish at www.smp.org/discover_kindergarten_p

36 Unit 1

Chapter 1

Activity Ideas

Materials Needed

- none

Conversation: Talking and Listening

- Introduce this activity as a game of talking and listening.
- Explain that you will call on several children and ask them a question.
- Encourage the group to listen carefully to the answers.
- Announce a simple question to the group, like, "What will you do after our session today?"
- Call on someone to answer the question. Remind the group to listen carefully to their answer.
- Try this format:
 - > Johnny, what will you do after our session today? (*My mom is taking me to the park.*)
 - > Johnny is going to the park after our session today!
 - > Sally, what will you do after our session today? (*I will go home and eat lunch.*)
 - > Did everyone listen to Johnny and Sally? What will Johnny do after our session today? (*He will go to the park.*) What will Sally do after our session today? (*She will go home and eat lunch.*)
- Continue in this way until several children have answered a question.
- Repeat as time permits, announcing another simple question. Here are a few sample questions:
 - What do you do after you get up in the morning?
 - What is your favorite thing to do on Saturdays?
 - What is your favorite food?
- Review each question and answer briefly to help the children remember the answers.
- Congratulate the children on being good talkers and good listeners!

The **Activity Ideas** are options for the learning activity that is part of the lesson. These may also be used to extend or supplement the lessons as needed.

The **Family Page** for each lesson in the program offers ideas for bringing the lesson to life at home. Full-color versions and Spanish versions of all family pages are available online at www.smp.org/discover_kindergarten_p.

55

Family Page

saint mary's press

Understanding the Scripture

In this Bible story, Mary was just a teenager when the angel Gabriel appeared to her. He told her that God chose her to be the mother of Jesus, his Son. He told her that Jesus would be a great king. His Kingdom would last forever.

This was a great responsibility for Mary to accept. She did not understand how it could even happen. But Mary knew that God was good and loving. Calling herself God's servant, Mary put herself in his hands and said, "Yes." Because Mary trusted God, Jesus came to Earth and saved us all. When we say yes to God like Mary did, we can also expect good things to happen. We celebrate Mary's yes to God on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25.

Your Growing Child

In conversations, both talking and listening are important. It is important to talk with your child to share information and ideas with them. It is also important to listen to your child, to help them share their own thoughts and ideas.

Sometimes you may feel that your child is not listening. It is important for your child to know when they must take special care to listen. Use a statement like, "This is really important and you need to listen." Then have them repeat back what you just said. Thank your child for listening, and underline your request by repeating, "This is really important."

Family Activities

- Read together the Bible story from today's lesson, "Mary Says Yes to God." Ask your child to retell the story in their own words.
- The next time you are in church, take extra time to visit the Mary altar. You may want to pray a "Hail Mary" aloud and take a minute of quiet time together. You may also want to make a quick tour of the church to find other images of Mary in the windows or in other statues.
- Search online for images of "Mary, Mother of Jesus." Enjoy looking at the results with your child. Find one or two pictures that are appealing. If possible, print them and hang them in your child's room.

Prayer

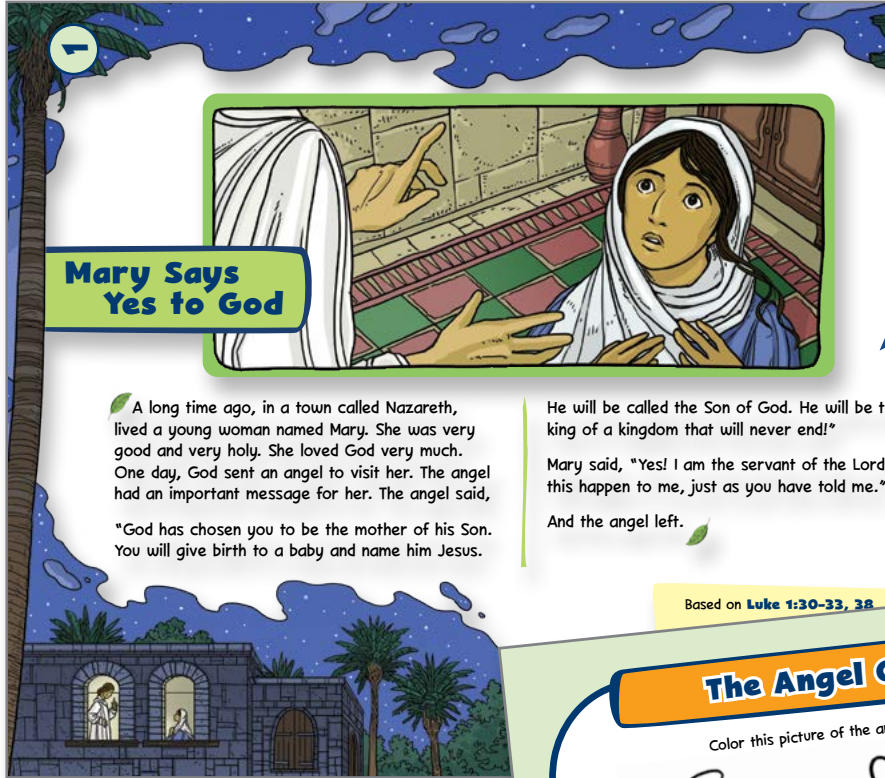
Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross:

Loving God, you chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus. Help us become who you want us to be as we say yes to you in faith and love. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Your Growing Child provides information and support for families regarding typical growth, abilities, and activities for kindergarten-aged children.

Bible Story Booklet

On one side of the child's page is the **Bible story** focused on in the lesson. It includes beautiful imagery to create interest and a paraphrase of the Bible story that can be read to children.



Mary Says Yes to God

A long time ago, in a town called Nazareth, lived a young woman named Mary. She was very good and very holy. She loved God very much. One day, God sent an angel to visit her. The angel had an important message for her. The angel said, "God has chosen you to be the mother of his Son. You will give birth to a baby and name him Jesus.

He will be called the Son of God. He will be the king of a kingdom that will never end!"

Mary said, "Yes! I am the servant of the Lord. May this happen to me, just as you have told me."

And the angel left.

Based on **Luke 1:20-33, 38**

The Angel Gabriel

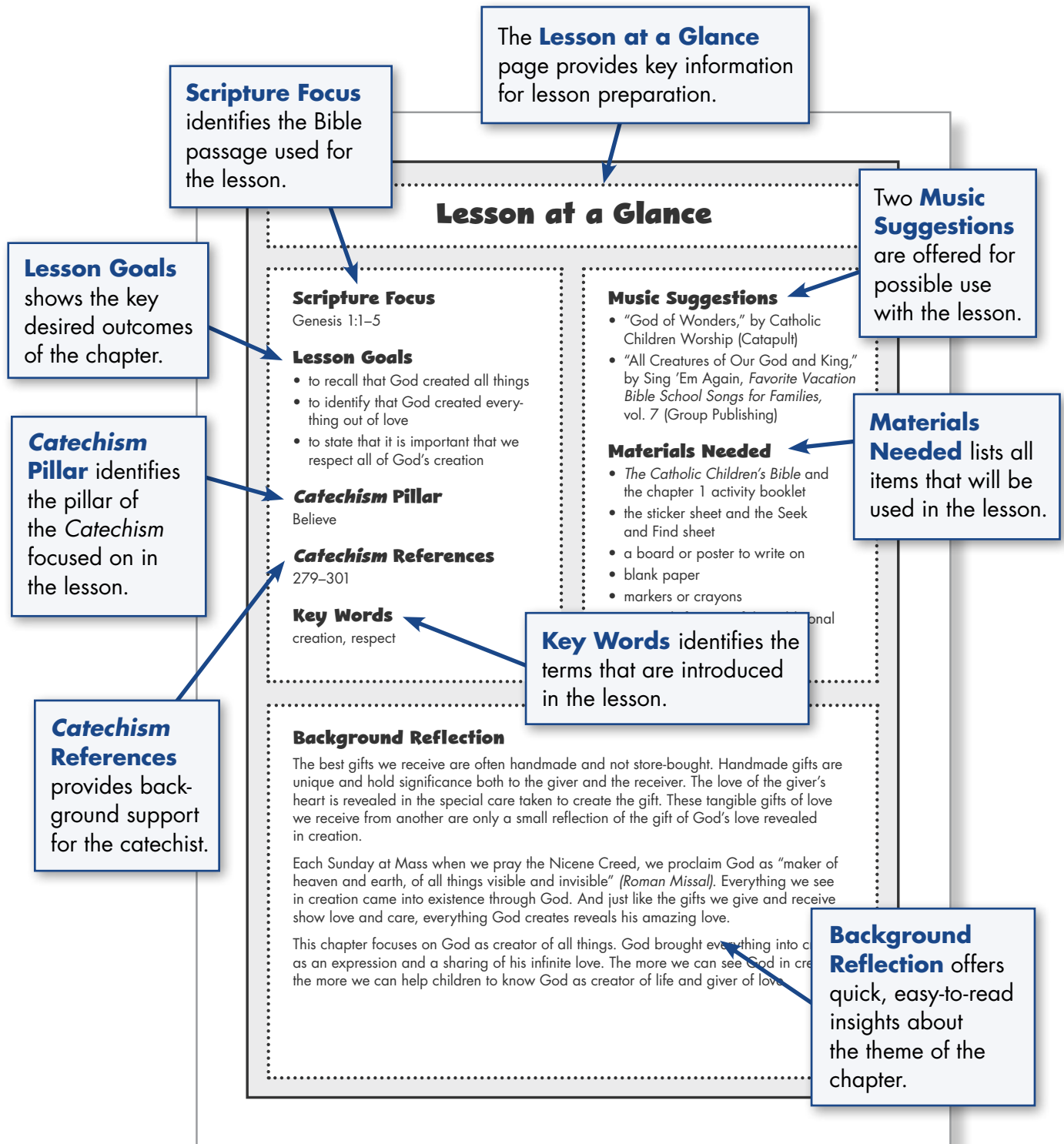
Color this picture of the angel Gabriel.



The other side of the child's page is an **activity** related to the Bible story and lesson. This activity can be completed in class or at home.

Understanding the Components for Grades 1-5

Catechist Guide



44 Unit 1: God Loves Us

Chapter 1

† Get Ready! (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer

- Invite the children to turn to page 1 of the chapter 1 activity booklet.
- Take time to review how to make the Sign of the Cross.
- Begin prayer by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross. Then say, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." Allow about 10 seconds of silence.
- Read the prayer on page 1 of the activity booklet to the group. Invite the children to say "Amen," and then close with another Sign of the Cross.

Engage Activity

- Invite the children to share some of their favorite things in nature. You may need to give them examples, such as flowers, animals, water, and trees.
- Encourage the children to share their favorite things, and write them (or draw a quick picture of them) on the board or in another place where the children can see.
- Ask the children if they know who created all of these wonderful things. (God)
- Explain that today's lesson is about God's creation. Tell them that when we speak of creation, we are talking about all of the things that God has made.

📖 Dive In! (15 minutes)

Scripture Focus

- Invite the children to find Genesis 1:1–5 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (page 21). Point out the title at the top of the page, and read it to the children. Explain that the first few pages of the Bible tell a story about God creating the world. Tell the children that you will just read part of this story for now.
- Read the Scripture passage to the children. Then ask the children several questions to check for comprehension, such as the following:
 - What did God create on this first day? (*light*)
 - What did God call the light? (*day*)
 - What did God call the darkness? (*night*)
- Summarize the other days of Creation briefly for the children by mentioning what was created (Genesis 1:6–2:4): day 2—sky and water, day 3—land and plants, day 4—sun and moon, day 5—birds and sea creatures, day 6—people and animals, day 7—God rested. Remind the children that after God created these things, he looked at them and was pleased with what he saw.

The **Get Ready!** part of the lesson begins with an opening prayer and an activity that will spark interest and create excitement in the children.

The **Dive In!** part of the lesson invites the children to interact directly with *The Catholic Children's Bible* and learn important concepts through key Bible stories.

God Created the World (Believe) 45

Chapter 1

the artwork on page 22 of *The Catholic Children's Bible* (page 22). Explain that the first few pages of the Bible tell a story about God creating the world. Tell the children that you will just read part of this story for now.

Read the Scripture passage to the children. Then ask the children several questions to check for comprehension, such as the following:

- What did God create on this first day? (*light*)
- What did God call the light? (*day*)
- What did God call the darkness? (*night*)

Summarize the other days of Creation briefly for the children by mentioning what was created (Genesis 1:6–2:4): day 2—sky and water, day 3—land and plants, day 4—sun and moon, day 5—birds and sea creatures, day 6—people and animals, day 7—God rested. Remind the children that after God created these things, he looked at them and was pleased with what he saw.

The **Discover!** part of the lesson presents key content through an engaging learning activity and a core teaching section.

read it.

- Provide the children with paper, and invite them to draw a picture of something God has made. If they don't finish their drawing in the allotted time, encourage them to finish it at home.

Tell It!

- Ask the children to share what they recall about the story of Creation.
- Invite them to use the activity on page 2 of the activity booklet to help them remember some basic points.

🏠 Discover! (25 minutes)

Core Learning Activity

Imagine If . . .

- Create a space where the children can sit together on the floor for this activity.
- Invite the children to close their eyes. Ask them to imagine if God had not created light. Explain that there would be no sun to see during the day and no moon to see at night, and everything would be dark. Tell them to open their eyes now.
- Have the children cup their hands around their eyes to create pretend binoculars to look through. Ask them to imagine what it might be like if God had not created the water for us to drink or bathe or play in. Ask them to imagine what it might be like if God had not created the sky to see clouds, stars, and the sun. Invite them to share how that might look.

The **Core Teaching** part of the lesson relays key information that supports the lesson goals.

Core Teaching

- Explain how God created everything out of love, using the following as suggested points:
 - Love is about providing for and caring for another person. We know that God's creation gives us many wonderful things, and we know that this is one way God shows his love and care for us.
 - When we create something, like a drawing or a card, we create out of love. We want to share something special from us with another person. Creation is God's gift of love to us.
 - The more we can see all that God has created around us as gifts, the more we can grow in our ability to know God's love.
- Tell the children that when we love all that God has created, we are showing our love to God since he created it all.
- Explain to the children that because every part of God's creation shows us God's love, we must **respect** all of creation. Tell them that *respect* means "caring for," so we must care for animals, plants, and one another.
- Tell the children that it is important that we care for and don't hurt or damage what God has made. Remind them that we wouldn't like it if someone damaged the art or gift we made, so we want to show how important God's creation is to us by using great care with all that he created.
- Ask the children some questions to check for comprehension, such as the following:
 - Who created the water, land, animals, and people? *(God)*
 - When we care for God's creation, we are showing our love and respect for whom? *(God)*
- Invite the children to turn to the activity on page 3 of their activity booklet and complete it. When they have finished, tell them that *all* of the pictures show ways we can care for God's creation.
- Have the children turn to page 4 of the activity booklet. Read the "People of Faith" section to the group, and add any other information you know about Blessed Julian of Norwich. Encourage the children to say, "Blessed Julian, pray for us," during the next week.

The **We Know and Live Our Faith** resource provides additional content that can be used to support the lesson.



We Know and Live Our Faith

The following article and activity in the *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource correspond to concepts introduced in this lesson:

- "God Made You and Loves You" + activity, pages 6–7

Read the selections aloud, or invite a volunteer to read, as time allows. Check for understanding by asking several questions. Then invite the children to begin the activity, or have them complete it with their families at home.

Additional Activity Options is a reminder that each lesson offers three alternative possibilities for the core learning activity.

- Invite the children to repeat the following statements after you, to show thankfulness for creation:
 - Thank you, God, for creating light.
 - Thank you, God, for sky and the sea.
 - Thank you, God, for land.
 - Thank you, God, for all the plants.
 - Thank you, God, for creating birds, fish, and all the animals.
 - Thank you, God, for creating people, especially me.
 - Thank you, God, for reminding us to rest.

Additional Activity Options

If the core activity would not work for your group for any reason, you may choose to use any of the additional activities on page 49 in its place.

The **Go!** part of the lesson invites the children to recall everything they have learned and ends with a closing prayer.


48 Unit 1: God Loves Us

Chapter 1

Go! (10 minutes)

Lesson Wrap-Up

- Invite the children to think back over all the different things they did in this lesson, and invite volunteers to share some of the key things they learned.
- Ensure that the following points are made:
 - God created all things.
 - God created everything out of love.
 - It is important that we respect all of God's creation.
- Ask the children to place the chapter 1 sticker in the correct location on their Bible covers.



Closing Prayer

- Begin prayer by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross and saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God," followed by a few seconds of silence.
- Invite each child to name one thing she or he is thankful for.
- Play one of the suggested songs, if you have time, to further support the lesson.
- Read aloud the prayer on page 1 of the activity booklet, pausing at various points so the children can repeat after you. Close with the Sign of the Cross.

The **Additional Activities** are alternative options for the core learning activity. They may also be used to extend or supplement the lesson as needed.

God Created the World (Believe) 49

Chapter 1

Additional Activities

Materials Needed

- pipe cleaners, three or four for each child

What Can We Make? (15 minutes)

- Give each child three or four pipe cleaners, and tell them they have 3 minutes to create something.
- Allow a few minutes so that volunteers can share some of the things they created. Then collect the children's creations, and tell them you will give them back at the end of the class. Clear the space of all extra pipe cleaners.
- Tell the children that they are now going to make something else, but give them no supplies. Wait for a few minutes to see their reactions.
- Remind them that God made things from nothing, but that is because he is God. Explain to them that people cannot make art, cook, or build anything with nothing. Only God can create the world from nothing.
- Explain that we should be thankful that God loves us so much that he created us and the whole world around us.

Materials Needed

- multiple pieces of paper, each with a simple picture of an item from nature

Creation Charades (15 minutes)

- Prepare ahead of time multiple pieces of paper with simple pictures of items from nature, such as a dog, a bird, a tree, a plant, water, the sun.
- Explain to the children how to play the game of charades. Tell them that they have to act out something without using words, only using their bodies. Give the children an example by acting out one of the pictures and inviting them to guess what you are acting out.
- Invite volunteers to come up to the front of the room, and give them a piece of paper with a picture on it. Have the rest of the class try to guess what the volunteer is acting out.
- Play several times, and remind the children that all these things were created by God. Explain that we can thank God for all of the wonderful things he created, including ourselves.

Materials Needed

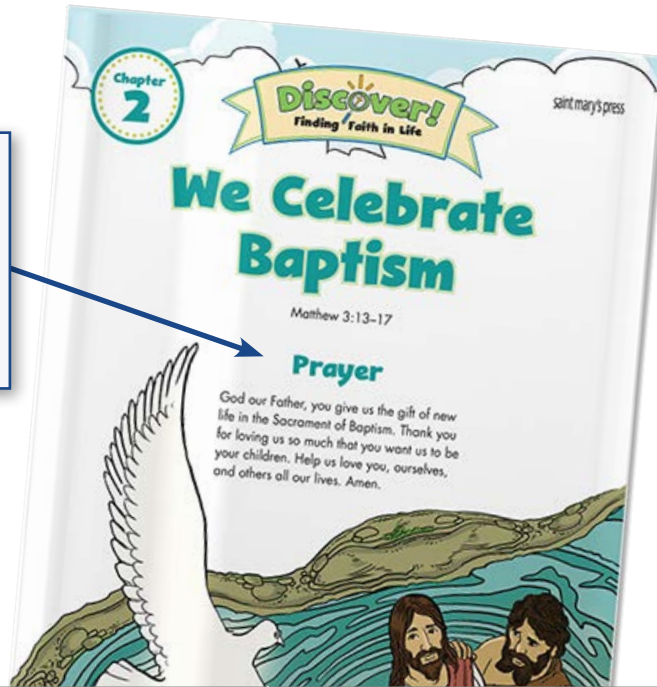
- a computer with internet access
- a computer projector
- paper and crayons or markers

Creation! (15 minutes)

- Show the video "Creation (Genesis 1-2)" [YouTube, 3:49]. Tell the children that this cartoon retells the story of Creation that is in the Bible.
- Invite the children to share their reaction to the video and their favorite part.
- Have the children choose one of the days of Creation (they can look at page 2 of the activity booklet to see what was created on what day) and draw a picture of God creating the things that were created on that day.
- Invite volunteers to share and explain their drawings with the large group.
- Say a quick prayer of thanksgiving to God for all of creation.

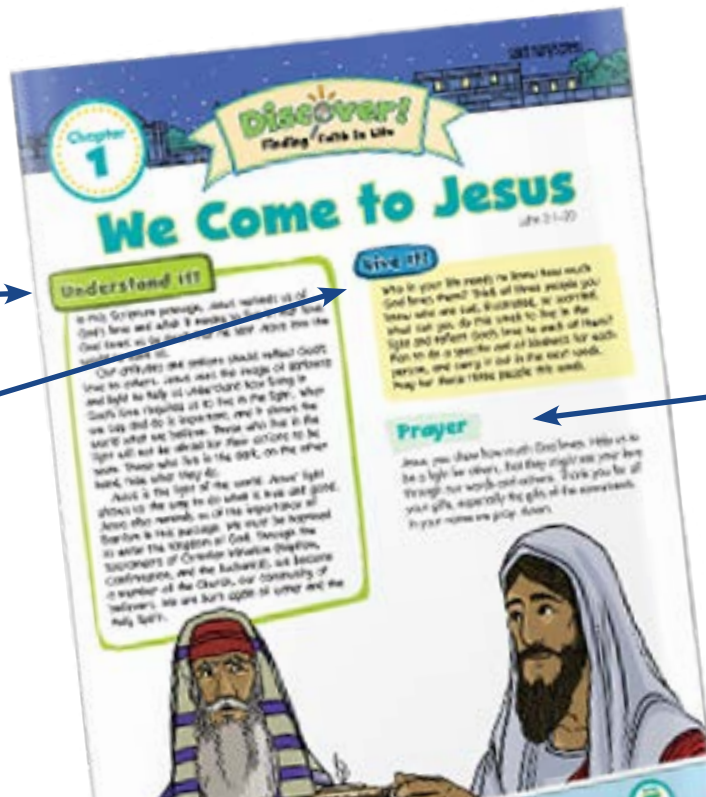
Activity Booklets

For Grades 1–4, each activity booklet begins with a **Prayer** that is used as the opening prayer for the lesson.



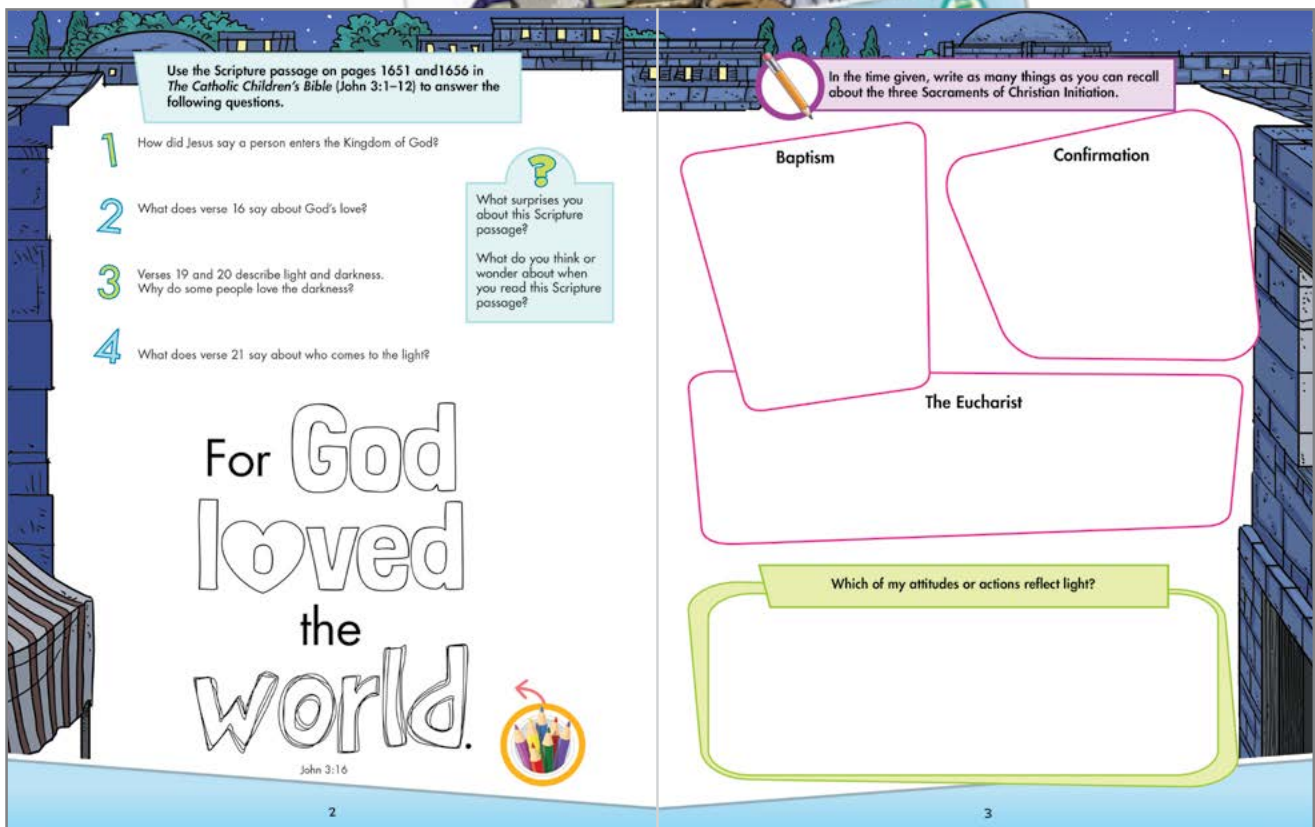
Page 2 (on left) features an activity that relates to content introduced in the Bible.

Page 3 (on right) features an activity that relates to the core teaching content for the chapter. In the liturgical season chapters, this page is a prayer.



For Grade 5, the **Understand It!** and **Live It!** content appears on the opening page to deepen the understanding of the Scripture passage.

Each activity booklet begins with a **Prayer** that is used as the opening prayer for the lesson.



Pages 2 and 3 offer **additional activity options.**

The **Family Page** provides families with helpful information about the chapter and ideas to bring the lesson to life at home.

Family Page

Background Reflection

God's love is perfect, never changing or swayed by anything we do. God created us from his love and desires us to remain in his love for all time. In the New Testament, we learn that God loved us so much that he sent his only Son to be with us and to teach us how to live. We celebrate God's love as the Church, a gathered community of faith.

This chapter offers a deeper understanding of what love is through seeing the everlasting love of our God. The true, eternal love of God is not something we can earn but is a gift freely given.

Take some time to reflect on how you celebrate God's love through the way you worship, pray, and serve. Share your own experience of the depth of God's love as you help your child understand God's love for him or her as God's beloved child.

People of Faith introduces the children to saints and other holy people who are models of faith.

Family Activities

- Discuss some of your favorite family religious celebrations. This discussion might include the reception of sacraments by family members, the parish community's liturgical seasons, or preparing for Sunday Mass. Share what makes these celebrations special to your family and explain that by taking the time to celebrate we grow in our love for God.
- Watch the video "VeggieTales — My Day" (YouTube, 2:42) together. Invite your child to share some things that he or she is thankful for that happened throughout the day. Discuss how God's love might be visible in some of these things.
- Read together the Featured Story on page 1780 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (Romans 8:35, 37–39). Invite your child to tell you what he or she remembers about the meaning of this Scripture passage.

People of Faith

Saint Paul the Apostle (first century)

Paul was changed after meeting the Risen Jesus on a journey. He went from being against Christians to getting baptized and teaching and writing letters about Jesus to others. The feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul is January 25.

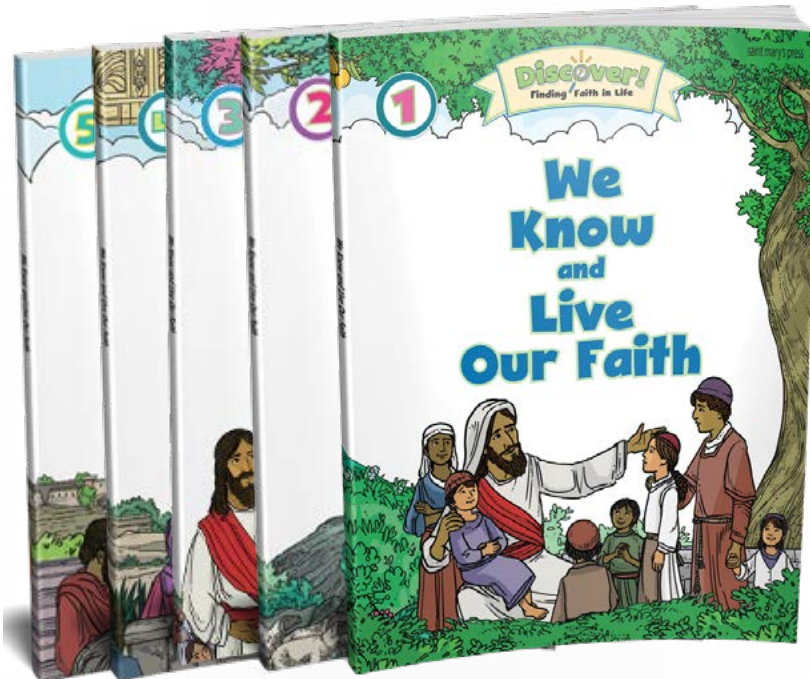
Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.

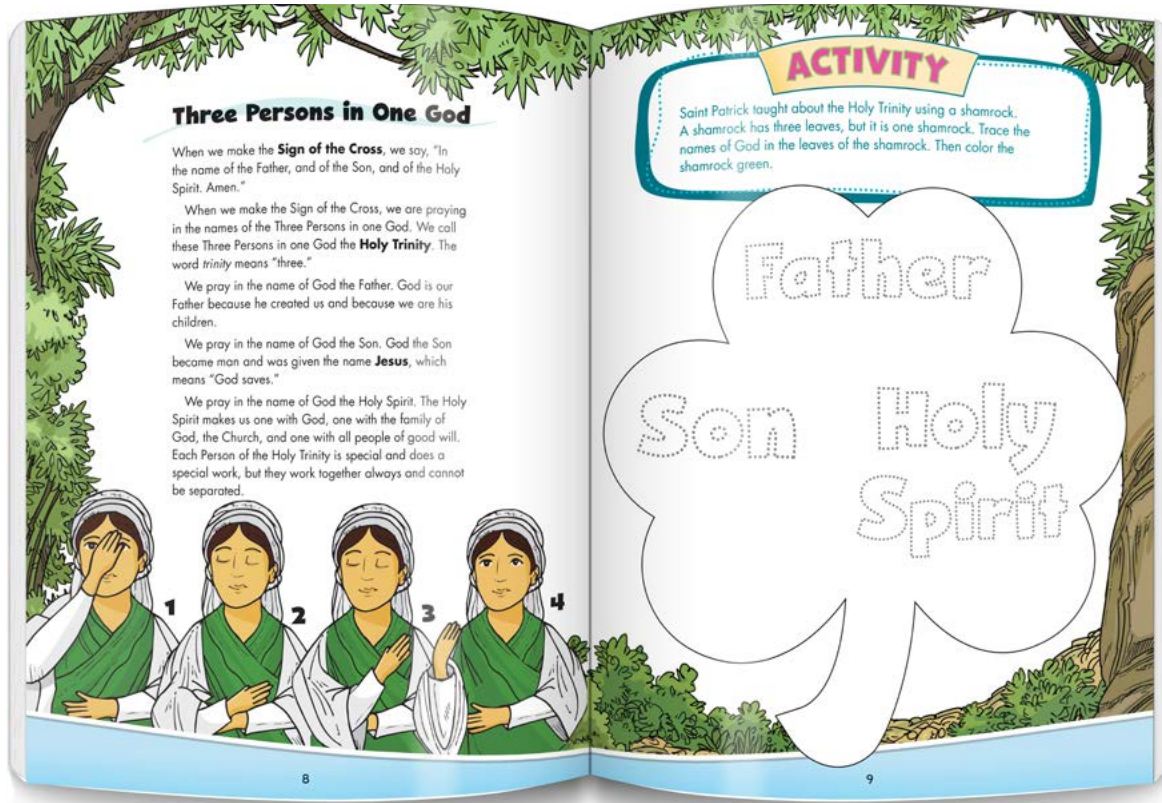
God, you love us so much that you want to share all of creation with us. Thank you for making the world and everything we see! Amen.



We Know and Live Our Faith



We Know and Live Our Faith provides an additional opportunity for the children to learn about their faith. It can be used as part of the session or at home with the family.



Three Persons in One God

When we make the **Sign of the Cross**, we say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

When we make the Sign of the Cross, we are praying in the names of the Three Persons in one God. We call these Three Persons in one God the **Holy Trinity**. The word *trinity* means "three."

We pray in the name of God the Father. God is our Father because he created us and because we are his children.

We pray in the name of God the Son. God the Son became man and was given the name **Jesus**, which means "God saves."

We pray in the name of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes us one with God, one with the family of God, the Church, and one with all people of good will. Each Person of the Holy Trinity is special and does a special work, but they work together always and cannot be separated.



ACTIVITY

Saint Patrick taught about the Holy Trinity using a shamrock. A shamrock has three leaves, but it is one shamrock. Trace the names of God in the leaves of the shamrock. Then color the shamrock green.



Special Features



Seek and Find Sheet

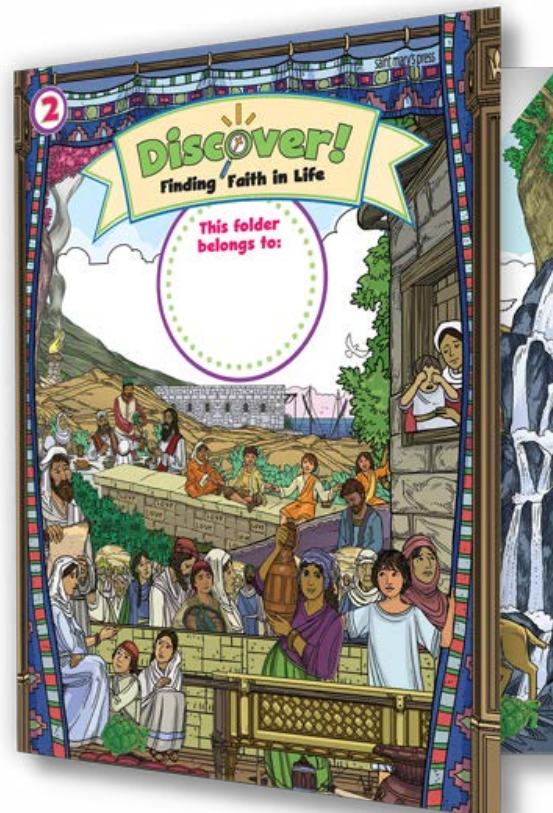
Seek and Find Stickers

Grade 1

At the end of each of the twenty core lessons, the children will be encouraged to take a sticker and find where it belongs on the Seek and Find sheet in their folders. Each week they will complete a different scene from Scripture.

Grade 2

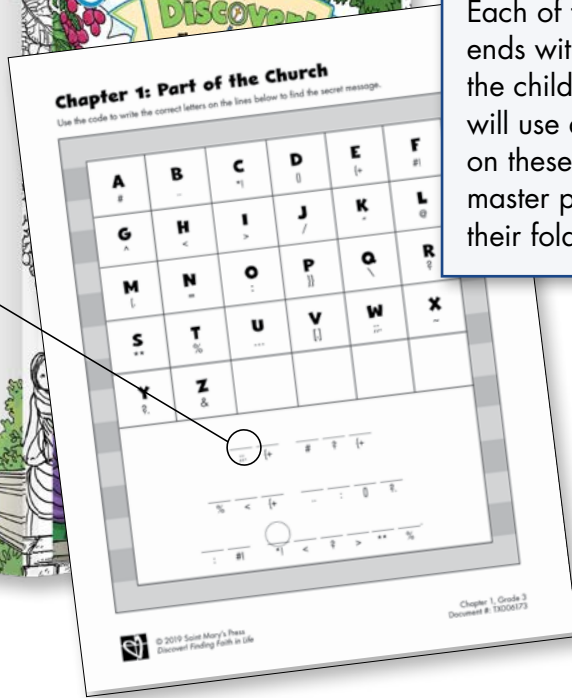
At the end of each of the twenty core chapters, the children will be given a specific image to look for on their folders. It will be hidden among many other images, so they will have to look carefully!



Folder



Folder



Puzzle Handout

Grade 3
 Each of twenty core lessons ends with a puzzle handout for the children to complete. They will use a part of their answers on these handouts to reveal the master puzzle on the back of their folders.

Grade 4
 At the end of each of the twenty core lessons, the children will be encouraged to take a sticker and find where it belongs on the back of their folders. At the end of the twenty core lessons, their grid of stickers will complete one main image.



Folder



Sticker Sheet

Grade 5

Each of the twenty core chapters ends with a randomly selected mission that will challenge the young people to actively live out their faith during the week. Then the young people are encouraged to write a reflection in their mission booklets about the mission they were challenged to live.



Mission Booklet

297

Living the Mission: Faith in Action

Mission 1: Each day this week, write in your mission booklet one thing you are grateful for. Say a silent prayer to God in thanksgiving.

Mission 2: Reflect on someone you might need to say you're sorry to. Write that person's name in your mission booklet, and make a plan to express your sorrow to this person in some way.

Mission 3: Think of one thing you can do to care for creation in a new way this week. Take that action and write a few notes in your mission booklet about what it was like.

Mission 4: Share some of your thoughts and feelings about what it means to you to be a follower of Jesus with one person this week. Write in your mission booklet how that conversation went.

Mission 5: Find a traditional prayer that you like (you can find some of these on pages 1990–1997 of *The Catholic Children's Bible*). Make a point to say this prayer each morning this week and note the date and time in your mission booklet.


Mission 6: Identify one change you can make in your behavior to minimize or end a conflict with someone. Write in your mission booklet about that change, and take that action.

Mission 7: Write in your mission booklet the names of five people who are important to you. Make a plan this week to tell each of these people how important they are to.

Mission 8: Set aside 5 minutes for silent prayer time each day this week. Ask God for those things you need in your life. Write these times in your mission booklet, and make some notes about what you asked God for.

Mission 9: Invite someone outside of your group of friends to join you in a game or activity. Write some notes in your mission booklet about how it felt to extend this kindness to someone.

Mission 10: Encourage your family to create a donation box or piggy bank. Invite your family members to contribute to this each week. Write in your mission booklet the name of an organization you will donate this money to at the end of the month.

 © 2019 Saint Mary's Press
 Discover! Finding Faith in Life

Chapter 1, Grade 5
Document #: TX006200

Mission Challenges Handout





Key Elements of the Program

Catechist Guide





The Lesson at a Glance feature offers the catechist an overview of the lesson goals and the core information needed to plan a lesson. A background reflection for catechists is offered, as well as *Catechism* references that are related to the concepts covered in the lesson. These references can be used by the catechist for deeper research and understanding.

Each lesson follows the same overall structure and timing. It will be important for the catechist to assess the time frames according to their unique group makeup and time parameters. Some activities may take longer for some groups than others. Reading through each lesson prior to the session will guide the catechist in making necessary adjustments to ensure success in their particular setting. The 60-minute timing structure is presented as follows:

Kindergarten

	Get Ready! (10 minutes) Opening Prayer Engage
	Dive In! (15 minutes) Bible Story
	Discover! (25 minutes) Core Teaching Learning Activities
	Go! (10 minutes) Lesson Wrap-Up Closing Prayer

Grades 1-5

	Get Ready! (10 minutes) Opening Prayer Engage Activity
	Dive In! (15 minutes) Scripture Focus
	Discover! (25 minutes) Core Learning Activity Core Teaching
	Go! (10 minutes) Lesson Wrap-Up Closing Prayer

Get Ready!

This first part of the lesson starts with an opening prayer and an engaging question(s) or activity that lays the foundation for the lesson by assessing the children's prior knowledge and experience. This engages the children, providing them an early opportunity for success by prompting discussion or activity around concepts they are familiar with and then connecting those concepts with content they will be learning in the lesson.

Dive In!

For kindergarten, this part of the lesson immerses the children in a Bible story, using the child's page from the Bible story booklet. It encourages the children to look at images related to the Bible story to predict what the story might be about. Then it involves reading the Bible story to the children. All Bible stories have been paraphrased using language that is friendly to kindergarten-aged children.

For grades 1–5, this part of the lesson immerses the children in the Bible through a key Scripture passage. It focuses on helping the children understand the Scripture story and involves processing the content presented in the Understand It!, Live It!, and Tell It! features of *The Catholic Children's Bible*.

Discover!

For kindergarten, this part of the lesson begins with some core teaching points to relay to the children regarding the Bible story. Then the children are invited to participate in a learning activity, chosen by the catechist from several options. These activities provide creative ways to reinforce concepts with the children. If additional time is available, the children will begin the activity that appears on the child's page. They can always complete this at home if there is not enough time in the session.

For grades 1–5, this part of the lesson involves a core learning activity (a craft in the liturgical season lessons) that brings to life one of the themes of the lesson in an interactive way. Frequently, this involves an out-of-the-seat activity that creates energy and excitement while helping the children further explore a concept related to the lesson. The core teaching part of the lesson is presented after this learning activity, giving the catechist essential catechetical information to share and questions to ask to assess comprehension.

Go!

For kindergarten, this part of the lesson wraps up the session with a final check and recall of the core lesson goals and preparation for taking materials home. The lesson then ends with a closing prayer.

For grades 1–5, this part of the lesson wraps up the session with a final check and recall of the core lesson goals. The children participate in one additional fun activity (in the twenty core lessons) that rewards them for completing the lesson and builds excitement for the lessons to come. The session ends with a closing prayer.

Music Suggestions

For kindergarten, music suggestions such as songs, chants, and dances are incorporated into the lessons.

For grades 1–5, each chapter includes two song suggestions that correspond to the chapter theme. For a complete list of songs for the program, please see the online resources for each grade. Of course, the catechist may also wish to add their own favorite hymns or songs, such as those popular in the parish community.

Videos

For kindergarten, video suggestions are given throughout the program as appropriate, in both the lessons and on the family pages.

For grades 1–5, options for activities that incorporate fun and engaging videos are provided throughout the program. Settings that have access to the necessary technology can utilize this additional media to further enliven learning. Video suggestions are also included on the family pages in the children's activity booklets, so even if they are not used within the formal learning environment, they can be enjoyed at home with the family. Links to the video resources that are referenced throughout this program are available as part of the online resources for each grade.

Handouts

Some chapters include additional handouts for the lesson. These handouts can be accessed in two different ways:

- They can be found at the end of the chapter in the catechist guide for each grade.
- They can be accessed as part of the online resources for each grade.

Bible Story Booklets: Kindergarten

The Bible story booklets contain the child's pages for each of the twenty-eight lessons. One side of the page presents the Bible story for the lesson with inviting illustrations. The Bible story text is included on the page so that it can be read by catechists, caregivers, and children who can read. The other side of the page includes an activity related to the Bible story and the lesson. This activity can be completed together during the session or at home, depending on time availability. Each page is perforated for easy removal and use in the session or at home.

Activity Booklets: Grades 1–5

A fun and colorful activity booklet accompanies each chapter in grades 1–5. The activities in these booklets may be used in the group lesson or may be completed at home with the family, depending on time parameters. Each activity booklet includes the opening prayer used for each lesson; two activity pages that reinforce the content of the chapter; and a family page that offers families background information on the chapter topic, suggested activities that can be done together, some information about a person of faith, and a family prayer. *Note:* In the liturgical season lessons, the activity on page 3 is replaced with a prayer service that can be used at the end of the lesson.

We Know and Live Our Faith: Grades 1–5

This resource, a supplemental piece that follows the pillars of the *Catechism*, is filled with articles that present additional doctrinal content that can expand the core concepts covered in the program. Directions in the catechist guide pinpoint which articles and activities from this resource relate to which chapters in the program. Some articles are referred to multiple times, as they relate to several chapters. Other content in this resource is not referred to directly in the lessons, as it introduces concepts that are not focused on in the core program. *We Know and Live Our Faith* can be used either directly in class as time allows or as a family-centered piece that deepens family understanding through reading and discussing faith content together.

Special Features: Grades 1–5

Each grade ends the lesson with an engaging activity to reinforce the chapter focus, to celebrate the completion of another chapter, and to track the progress the group has made through the year. From stickers to puzzles, each age-specific special feature will create excitement at the end of the lesson, and the children will look forward to discovering something new each week.

The Benefits of Digital eLearning

The *Discover!* eLearning platform is a valuable resource, providing an easy-to-use online lesson for each chapter in grades 1–5. Accessible from any device with an internet connection, each 20-minute lesson includes prayer, a friendly guide to assist children through the lesson, the featured Bible story, and engaging content and activities. These self-directed lessons are tailored to each grade level, with audio support for early readers.

Flexible to Expand Possibilities for Use

Parishes can use this tool in multiple ways to enhance learning, choosing the scenario that best fits their current program model:

- The most common application of this resource is as a supplemental tool for at-home learning. Children can complete the eLearning lessons at home, either before or after their gathered session, to prepare for or reinforce what they have learned.
- For religious education programs that incorporate home-based learning, these lessons provide a structured way for families to engage with each chapter without the need for extra resources or parent training. The content is comprehensive, covering all key learning goals and making it easy for parents to support their children's learning journey. When completed together, these online lessons create fun, faith-building, and sharing moments.

Ability to Track Progress

As the director, you will have access to a feature that allows you to monitor each child's or family's progress within the eLearning program. You will also be able to see how children interact with the activities and answer questions. This access can be extended to catechists, enabling them to track the progress of the children in their care.

Getting Started

To begin, click [here](#). Complete the form and email it to mlearn@smp.org. Our team will set you up with easy access. Once this is done, you can upload students by following the instructions [here](#).

Another key resource is a [letter template](#) to let parents know how the *Discover!* digital eLearning lessons work and how to log in.

We Are Here to Help

Of course, if you have questions along the way, you can find answers in our [FAQs](#), email us at mlearn@smp.org, or call us at 1-800-533-8095. We are here to assist you every step of the way so that your program can take advantage of the incredible benefits of eLearning!

About the *Discover!* eLearning Platform

Each chapter begins with a prayer. An audio option is given so that the children can follow along as the prayer is read to them.

Get Ready!



Listen to the prayer and follow along below.

▶ 0:22 / 0:45

*We begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.*

God, we thank you for our life, our talents, our world, and each other. As we begin our year, please help us remember that each of us is important and special to you. Help us remember we are all part of your creation. Amen.

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

[Continue >](#)

Each grade has a different “guide” who relays important content in an enthusiastic and engaging way.

Get Ready!




◀ Previous

Next >

The featured Bible story for each chapter is always presented.

Dive In!



Find this passage on page 1305 of The Catholic Children's Bible.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 12: 14-18, 27 and follow along below.

▶ 0:00 / 0:51

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians


For the body itself is not made up of only one part, but of many parts. If the foot were to say, "Because I am not a hand, I don't belong to the body," that would not keep it from being a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, "Because I am not an eye, I don't belong to the body," that would not keep it from being a part of the body. If the whole body were just an eye, how could it hear? And if it were only an ear, how could it smell? As it is, however, God put every different part in the body just as he wanted it to be.

All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it.

[Continue >](#)

Opportunities to apply learning are provided through multiple age-appropriate and fun interactions.

Dive In!



Our Scripture verse from Corinthians tells us that every one of us is important. We all bring different gifts and talents to the life of the Church.

What is one gift or talent you bring as a member of the **Body of Christ**?


- I'm kind.
- I'm helpful.
- I make people laugh.
- I like listening to people.
- Other

[← Previous](#) [Submit](#)

[Skip](#)

Feedback from the guide reinforces the main lesson goals and key points to be learned.

Go!



Thanks for being here for our first lesson!

You have learned that another name for the Church is the Body of Christ. You have also learned that we become members of the Body of Christ through Baptism. Isn't it great to know that our Church is made up of different people with different gifts? The Church benefits from all our gifts!

Before we go to our closing prayer, share one thing that you will remember from this lesson.

Type your answer below and click "Submit."



Type your answer here

Submit

Skip

English and Spanish family pages can be accessed directly through the eLearning site, so families can easily be involved in learning.

Go!

You just completed your first lesson! Way to go!

If you have your activity booklet for this chapter, take some time to complete the activities inside. And don't forget about the Family Page, which is on the back of the activity booklet or can be found here in [English](#) or in [Spanish](#)! Get your whole family involved!

Now click "Continue" and we'll pray our closing prayer.

< Previous **Continue >**

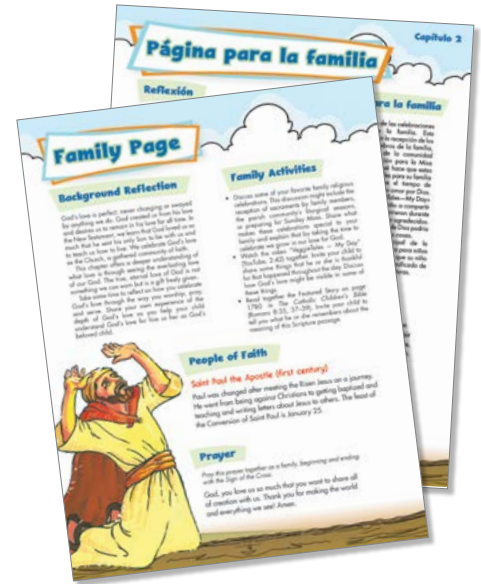
How to Involve Families in Faith Formation

Understanding that families have a unique role and responsibility in forming the faith lives of their children, *Discover!* includes multiple resources for parishes looking to expand how families can become involved in their children's religious education.

Family Pages

Each chapter of the *Discover!* program, from kindergarten through grade 5, includes a corresponding family page in English and Spanish. These pages were created so that families can follow along and support the learning that is happening in the gathered sessions. This helps families feel included in the religious education of their children and understand the core concepts that are being covered. These pages include background information about the chapter, written for adults, and activities that families can do together to reinforce learning.

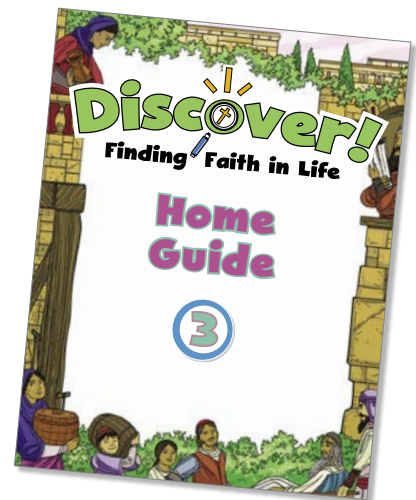
The family pages are included in the catechist guide for kindergarten and in the activity booklets for grades 1–5. They are also part of the online resources for all grades and can be accessed [here](#).



Home Guides

For programs that incorporate home-based learning as part of the religious education model, *Discover!* includes home guides for grades 1–5. These two-page resources are included for every chapter of the program and provide an easy, step-by-step plan that families can follow when helping their children learn the key content of the chapter at home. All of the content is covered fully in these simple guides.

Home guide resources are included with the online resources for grades 1–5 and can be accessed [here](#).



Digital eLearning Lessons

The digital eLearning lessons are a unique feature of the *Discover!* program and offer an invaluable resource to expand learning in the home. Families with children in grades 1–5 can complete these fun and engaging 20-minute lessons together and benefit from talking and learning about faith. This tool can provide a crucial link between families and faith formation. Whether a parish uses these as supplemental to the gathered sessions or as a resource parents can use with their children to complete chapter learning at home, this feature of *Discover!* connects families directly to the religious education of their children.

See “The Benefits of Digital eLearning” on page 32 and “About the *Discover!* eLearning Platform” on pages 33–35 to learn more about this resource.

Gathered Family Sessions

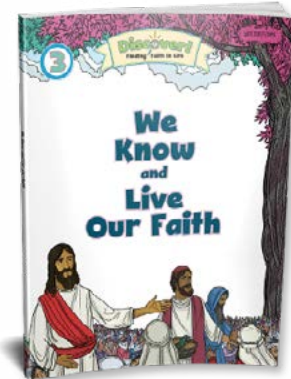
Many parishes that focus on home-based learning continue to gather families together on an occasional basis. *Discover!* includes a quick guide to help structure these gathered intergenerational family sessions throughout the year, using content already provided in the program. Suggestions for areas of focus for each month and follow-up options for families include the basic structure that can guide each of these sessions.

Click [here](#) to access the how-to guide for the gathered family sessions.

**New gathered family sessions
coming in 2025!**

We Know and Live Our Faith

Discover! includes a supplemental resource for grades 1–5 that is designed for easy use at home. This resource is essentially a mini-catechism that can help families learn about the basics of faith together. Engaging text and fun activities help reinforce key Catholic content. Families can use this as a reference resource, or they can be given a plan to complete different portions of reading throughout the year.



Support the Primary Educators of Faith





Discover! was created with whole families in mind, so you will find multiple resources for connecting families to the faith formation of their children. By using one, several, or all of these resources in combination, you have tools to create a program that empowers and supports families as the center of deep and meaningful faith formation.

Catechist Orientation Session

Overview

This 105-minute session is for catechists who will be using the *Discover! Finding Faith in Life* program in a parish setting.

Session at a Glance

	Get Ready!
	A. Welcome and Gathering Prayer (5 minutes) B. Reflecting on Goals (15 minutes)
	Dive In!
	C. Bible Story (20 minutes) D. Scavenger Hunt (20 minutes) E. Break (10 minutes)
	Discover!
	F. Program Overview (30 minutes)
	Go!
	G. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

Materials Needed

The Catholic Children's Bible, a candle and matches or a battery-powered candle, and other items to create a prayer space
name tags, one for each catechist
markers for filling out name tags
kindergarten *Discover!* resources: the kindergarten catechist guide and the Bible story booklet
grades 1–5 *Discover!* resources: *The Catholic Children's Bible*, the folder and contents for each grade, and the catechist guide for each grade

index cards for reflecting on goals, one for each catechist
pens for group use
manila envelopes for handouts
copies of the handouts for each catechist: "Characteristics of Kindergarten and Elementary Children," "Overview of Catholic Social Teaching," "Faith and Fun in the Family"
a ring, a robe, a pair of sandals, a tablecloth, and prepackaged treats for a scavenger hunt
refreshments for break time

Preparation Tasks

Print each handout on different colored paper for easy identification during the session. *Note:* The handouts can be found on pages 55–66 in this manual.

Place a copy of each handout in a manila envelope for each catechist. Write each catechist's name on an individual envelope. Arrange the envelopes on a table near the entrance, in alphabetical order, for the catechists to pick up as they enter.

Set up a table with the *Discover!* resources (see Materials Needed above).

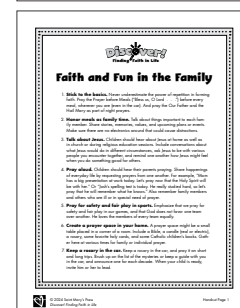
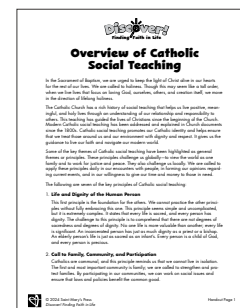
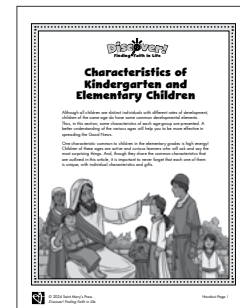
Have blank name tags and markers available for the catechists as they arrive.

Bookmark Matthew 19:13–15 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Prior to the session, ask a catechist volunteer to prepare to read this passage at the closing prayer. On an index card or slip of paper, write "A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew" and "The Gospel of the Lord," and place the card or paper in the Bible. Explain to the reader that they should begin the passage with the first phrase and end with the second one.

Hide the items for the scavenger hunt (see Materials Needed above) in the room.

Provide a light snack and beverages for the participants.

Handouts



Session Steps



Get Ready!

A. Welcome and Gathering Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the catechists and thank them for coming. Introduce yourself and your pastor, if present. Ask the catechists to take a minute to introduce themselves to those at their table or sitting nearby.
2. **Invite** the group to recall that they are in the holy presence of God, and allow for a few moments of silence.
3. **Lead** or choose another appropriate person to lead the following prayer:
 - Lord Jesus Christ, you have said, "Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). As we begin another year of religious education together, help us lead the children to you. May we always come to you for strength and guidance. Help us discover your love, and a glimpse of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the ministry we undertake. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. *(All say, "Amen.")*
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

B. Reflecting on Goals (15 minutes)

1. **Ask** the catechists to form grade-level groups, even if only two or three catechists per group, including aides if you have invited them to this orientation. If your program has only one catechist per grade, then keep the catechists together in one group.
2. **Distribute** an index card and a pen to each catechist.
3. **Ask** the catechists to take a moment to consider the coming year. Invite them to reflect on three goals they would most like to have accomplished with the children in their group by the end of the year. Explain that these might be educational goals or spiritual goals.
4. **Direct** the catechists to write down their goals on their index card and then share them with other members of their small group. Choose volunteers from each small group to share their goals with the larger group.
5. **Remind** the larger group that if these goals are to be met, the catechists must address them each week in some way. Ask the catechists to turn their cards over and write a statement indicating how they will work toward these goals in small steps each week. For example: "I will pray a Hail Mary each week with the children so that they will know this prayer by heart by the end of the year." Or, "I will remind the children, at some point in the lesson, that Jesus wants us to love one another." Give the catechists a few moments to write down their plans to meet their goals.

6. **Encourage** the catechists to use one another as resources in meeting these goals, and, during the year, as sources of support and encouragement. Remind them that they are here for the children, but they are also here for one another as a community of catechists. Remind them that you, as the director, are here for them also. Encourage them to approach you with any challenges or concerns.



Dive In!

C. Bible Story (20 minutes)

1. **Distribute** the *Discover!* resources to the catechists according to grade level. Direct the kindergarten catechists to turn to chapter 12 in the Bible story booklet, titled "Jesus Teaches Us That God Forgives." Explain that the title is different because they will be reading a paraphrased version of the featured Bible story that appears in *The Catholic Children's Bible*.
2. **Direct** the grade 1–5 catechists to turn to the featured Bible story "The Forgiving Father," on page 1620 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Tell them that the text between the leaves on page 1620 is a shortened version of the Scripture verses on pages 1619 and 1622. Alert them to the citations under the picture on page 1620. Tell them that the first citation notes the abbreviated story on page 1620, and that the "full story" citation notes the Scripture verses on pages 1619 and 1622. Point out that the full story is also marked on these pages with a green leaf at the beginning and at the end.
3. **Explain** to all of the catechists that you will go through the story with them, modeling how they might use it in the catechetical setting. Remind the kindergarten catechists that the language in the Bible story booklet is simplified and easier for young children to understand.
4. **Encourage** the catechists to take a moment to look at the artwork on the pages. Remind them that artwork often helps convey the meaning of a story. Invite a grade 1–5 catechist to read aloud the featured Bible story "The Forgiving Father," on page 1620 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*.
5. **Ask** all the catechists several questions to illustrate the kind of questions that might be asked of the children in the lesson:
 - In this picture, the older man is the father. He has his arms wide open. When someone has their arms wide open, what does that usually mean? (*Hello! Welcome! I'm so glad to see you!*)
 - How did the father feel when he saw the son on his way? (*His heart was filled with pity. This means he had a feeling of sadness for his son.*)
 - Why do you think the father felt this way? (*Allow responses.*)
 - The younger man has his hands almost folded. When someone has their hands folded, what does that usually mean? (*Please forgive me! I'm sorry!*)

6. **Summarize** the meaning of the story for the group. Explain that the father represents God's merciful and persistent love, despite our many failures to return or even acknowledge that love. Share that being sorry and being forgiven should be part of every child's experience. Emphasize that welcoming one another back into a loving relationship after conflict is one way we share God's love!

Understand It!

1. **Explain** to the kindergarten catechists that you will now walk through some features of the Bible that the grade 1–5 catechists will use. Assure the kindergarten catechists that although the Bible story booklet doesn't have the same features, the catechist guide gives them everything they need to teach the Bible story in an age-appropriate way.
2. **Summarize** the first paragraph of the Understand It! on page 1621 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Note these points:
 - The son in this story asked his dad for a lot of money and then left home.
 - He wasted every penny.
 - When he was starving because he had no money left, he wanted to go home.
 - The father loved his son so much that he ran to meet him.
 - The father was so happy to have his son back that he threw him a celebration.

Live It!

Invite the catechists to reflect on the scenario and the questions posed in the Live It! on page 1621. Explain that this feature reinforces some of the key meanings of the featured Bible story and challenges the children to consider these for their own lives.

Tell It!

Point out the images in the Tell It! on page 1621. Explain that these images recall the featured Bible story and can help the children remember and retell it.

D. Forgiving Father Scavenger Hunt (20 minutes)

1. **Ensure** that the following items have been hidden around the room in advance: a ring, a robe, a pair of sandals, a tablecloth, and a variety of prepackaged treats.
2. **Explain** that the group will be participating in a scavenger hunt for items related to the featured Bible story "The Forgiving Father." Share with them what items they will be searching for.
3. **Tell** the group that when you say "Go!" everyone will begin looking around the room for the hidden items. Share that when they find an item, they should bring it to you at the front of the room.
4. **Ask** for a volunteer to retell the story of "The Forgiving Father" once all the items have been found, using each item as a prop. Encourage the volunteer to retell the story with energy and detail. Model supportive and encouraging behavior for the group by actively listening, sharing words of support, and thanking the volunteer when they have finished.

5. **Process** the activity by explaining that just as the father loved and forgave the son, God loves and forgives us. Though we may act in ways that pull us away from God and our faith, God's love is unconditional. He loves us even if we sin, and he is willing to forgive us and welcome us with open arms if we repent.
6. **Explain** to the group that they have just been led through several of the key components in the *Discover!* program, with the focus on a Bible story and a core learning activity. Add that after learning about a Bible story related to the topic of a particular chapter, the children will learn more about that topic in greater detail.

Note: If you have enough prepackaged treats for the group, you may want to distribute them at the end of the activity to be enjoyed as part of the break.

E. Break (10 minutes)



F. Program Overview (30 minutes)

1. **Explain** that you will now take a few minutes to help the catechists understand the structure and format of the *Discover!* program in more detail.
2. **Direct** the catechists to open their catechist guides to the scope-and-sequence chart. Explain that they might like to look over this information in detail as they begin to plan each lesson. Tell them that this is a road map of the goals, concepts, Scripture stories, and other items that will be covered for their grade level.
3. **Ask** them to turn to the table of contents next. Explain that the program's core chapters are presented in four units of five chapters each. Note that each chapter follows a pillar of the *Catechism* in that unit. The first chapter is Believe (doctrine), the second is Celebrate (liturgy and sacraments), the third is Live (morality), the fourth is Live: Catholic Social Teaching (social teaching principles), and the fifth is Pray (prayer).
4. **Note** that an additional eight liturgical season lessons are offered following the core chapters. Explain that these are listed in order of presentation for the year and can be used as time or your parish's particular program allows. Ask the catechists to note the lesson on Mary for their own grade. Explain that in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2, the Mary lesson can be used for any feast day of Our Lady or during the month of May. Note that in grades 3–5, the Mary lesson is focused on a specific feast.
5. **Ask** the catechists to turn to chapter 3 in their catechist guides. Encourage them to page through the chapter for a few moments to get familiar with the presentation and the layout of the pages.
6. **Direct** them to find the first page of the chapter, the Lesson at a Glance page. Point out the Scripture focus connected to this lesson. Ask the grade 1–5 catechists to open their Bibles to this Scripture passage and its featured Bible story. Invite the

kindergarten catechists to turn to the chapter 3 Bible story in the Bible story booklet. Explain that even though they may be looking at different lessons, you will be walking through the lesson's main features together.

7. **Note** that grade 5 is special because it uses no featured Bible stories. Explain the following:
 - In grade 5, all the Bible stories are located in the standard Bible text and do not use the condensed featured Bible stories. This is because the children are at a more advanced reading and comprehension level and can navigate the Bible more easily.
 - The features that would ordinarily be part of the featured Bible story pages (Understand It! and Live It!) are given on the first page of the grade 5 activity booklets. The Tell It! directions are given in the catechist guide.
 - This is occasionally the case for some of the lessons in grades 1–4 as well. If there is no featured Bible story, page 1 of the activity booklet presents the Understand It! and Live It! paragraphs.
8. **Continue** explaining the Lesson at a Glance page by sharing the following:
 - The lesson goals are given in three clear statements and are repeated at the end of the lesson as a summary for the children.
 - The *Catechism* pillar reminds you which pillar the chapter is focused on.
 - The *Catechism* references are paragraph numbers in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that go deeper into some of the concepts introduced to the children. These references are for your background and are not meant to be used directly with the children.
 - For grades 1–5, you will notice the key words. The words in italic are introduced in the featured Bible story in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. The words in regular type are introduced in the catechist guide lesson. For kindergarten, there are no separate key words; new words are explained at the time they are used in the lesson.
 - For grades 1–5, the music suggestions are optional songs that can be incorporated into the lesson and relate to the concepts being presented. Music suggestions for kindergarten are integrated into the lesson or into the suggested activities.
 - The materials needed list identifies items needed for the chapter lesson, activities, and crafts.
 - The background reflection is offered as a personal reflection to help you make connections with the chapter content and your own faith. It also provides some additional background for you as you prepare to teach each lesson.
9. **Ask** the catechists to turn to the next page of the lesson and locate the Get Ready! section. Explain that this is the first of the four movements of the chapter. Note that the other three are Dive In!, Discover!, and Go!

10. **Explain** that you will go through each movement in turn. Make the following brief comments:
- Get Ready! includes the opening prayer and an engaging question(s) or activity to create interest in the lesson.
 - Dive In! is where the Bible story is read and explored.
 - Discover! involves some core teaching points and an activity. This activity is central to the lesson, as the children are encouraged to use their bodies and minds to grasp meaning that springs from and leads to a central concept discovered in this lesson.
 - The *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource, highlighted in the box, references a supplemental book that is part of the resources for grades 1–5, and can be incorporated into the Discover! movement if time permits. It covers some additional Catholic teachings and activities and can be a good resource for use in the home.
 - Go! completes the lesson and includes the lesson wrap-up and closing prayer. The lesson wrap-up engages the children in articulating what they have learned, and it summarizes the lesson by presenting the three goals, in an abbreviated form, that shaped the lesson from the beginning. The closing prayer directs the children’s hearts and minds to God in a simple but meaningful way.
11. **Direct** the attention of the kindergarten catechists back to the Bible story booklet for chapter 3. Ask the grade 1–5 catechists to look through their folders to find the activity booklet for chapter 3. Comment as follows:
- For kindergarten, one side of the Bible story booklet contains the paraphrased Bible story, and the other side presents an activity that helps to reinforce a particular aspect of the Bible story and lesson.
 - For grades 1–5, page 1 of the activity booklet contains the opening prayer. For chapters that use Scripture apart from a featured Bible story, the Understand It! and Live It! can also be found there.
 - Page 2 of the activity booklet for grades 1–5 relates to the Scripture used in the lesson. It is often planned as an open-Bible activity for the children to further familiarize themselves with the Bible story and feel a sense of competence and accomplishment through the activity.
 - Page 3 of the activity booklet for grades 1–5 is a review of some of the concepts presented in the core teaching. This page helps the children recall and reinforce the main concepts of the teaching.
 - The last page of the activity booklet for grades 1–5 is the family page. It includes a background reflection for adults, family activities that can be done at home, a People of Faith paragraph that features a saint or holy person, and a prayer that the whole family can pray together.
 - The family page for kindergarten is a separate reproducible handout found in the catechist guide and as part of the online resources. It includes a background reflection, a paragraph focused on child development, family activities, and a prayer that the whole family can pray together.

12. **Summarize** your remarks by asking the catechists to find the article "Understanding the Components" at the front of the catechist guide. Explain that these pages provide brief explanations of the different parts of the catechist guide and the additional components for their grade.
13. **Refer** briefly to the manila envelopes the catechists picked up as they came in. Explain that these envelopes contain the informative handouts the parents will receive at their orientation as well as an article on Catholic social teaching, which is an important part of this program. Remind the catechists that there are other important and helpful articles in the front of each catechist guide. Explain that these articles will not be discussed today but that the catechists should read them for their own information.
14. **Point out** the article on the characteristics of children, and invite the catechists to read it carefully. Note that the characteristics of the children at their own grade level are given in the front of the corresponding catechist guide. Remind the catechists that growth is on a spectrum, and for that reason it is helpful to know what can be expected at ages both younger and older than the grade they are currently teaching.
15. **Invite** the catechists to take some time to look over their catechist guide and to raise any questions they might have. *(After a few minutes, ask the group if anyone has questions. If someone has a question requiring a lengthy response, give a short response and then ask that catechist to see you after the session for a more detailed explanation.)*



Go!

G. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)





1. **Direct** the catechists to take a few moments to quiet themselves and to recall that they are in the holy presence of God.
2. **Ask** the designated reader to read the prepared passage from Matthew (19:13–15).
3. **Offer** the following prayer:
 - Thank you, Lord Jesus, for sharing your life and your love with children. Help us to share that love with the children as they learn more about you and about our faith this year. And be with us through our planning, our activities, our teaching, and our joyful participation in the faith life of the children you call to yourself. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.
 - Let us now pray together in the words that Jesus taught us: Our Father . . .
 - Let us go in peace to share the Good News with the children, our parish, and our world. *(Encourage the catechists to respond, "Amen!")*

Parent Orientation Session

Overview

This 90–120-minute session is for parents whose children will be using the *Discover! Finding Faith in Life* program in a parish setting.

Session at a Glance

	Get Ready!
	A. Welcome and Gathering Prayer (5 minutes)
	B. Reflecting on Goals (15 minutes)
	Dive In!
	C. Bible Story (20 minutes)
	D. Scavenger Hunt (20 minutes)
	E. Break (10 minutes)
	Discover!
	F. Program Overview (15 minutes)
	G. Optional Activity (30 additional minutes)
	Go!
	H. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

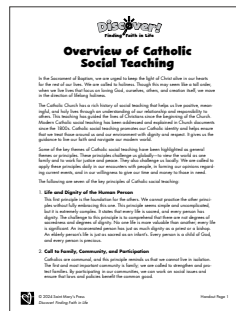
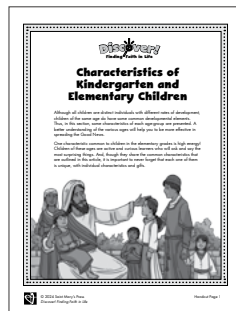
Materials Needed

- The Catholic Children's Bible*, a candle and matches or a battery-powered candle, and other items to create a prayer space
- name tags for all parents
- markers for filling out name tags
- kindergarten *Discover!* resources: the kindergarten catechist guide and the Bible story booklet
- grades 1–5 *Discover!* resources: *The Catholic Children's Bible*, the folder and contents for each grade, and the catechist guide for each grade
- index cards for reflecting on goals, one for each family
- pens for group use
- manila envelopes for handouts
- copies of the handouts for each family: "Characteristics of Kindergarten and Elementary Children," "Overview of Catholic Social Teaching," "Faith and Fun in the Family"
- a ring, a robe, a pair of sandals, a tablecloth, and prepackaged treats for a scavenger hunt
- sticky notes, one for each family
- stationery, envelopes, and pens (optional activity)
- refreshments for break time

Preparation Tasks

- Print each handout on different colored paper for easy identification during the session. *Note:* The handouts can be found on pages 55–66 in this manual.
- Place a copy of each handout in a manila envelope for each child. Write each child's name on an individual envelope. Arrange the envelopes and other *Discover!* resources by grade level on a table (see Materials Needed at left).
- Have blank name tags and markers available for parents as they arrive.
- Bookmark Matthew 19:13–15 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Prior to the session, ask a volunteer to prepare to read this passage at the closing prayer.
- On an index card or slip of paper, write "A reading from the Gospel of Matthew" and "The Gospel of the Lord," and place it in the Bible. Suggest that the reader begin the passage with the first phrase and end with the second one.
- Hide the items for the scavenger hunt (see Materials Needed at left) in the room.
- Provide a light snack and beverages for the participants.

Handouts



Session Steps



Get Ready!

A. Welcome and Gathering Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the parents and thank them for coming. Introduce yourself and your pastor, if present. Ask the parents to take a minute to introduce themselves to those at their table or sitting nearby.
2. **Invite** the group to recall that they are in the holy presence of God, and allow for a few moments of silence.
3. **Lead** or choose another appropriate person to lead the following prayer:
 - Lord Jesus Christ, you have said, "Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). As we begin another year of religious education together, help us lead our children to you. Help us always to come to you for strength and guidance. Help us discover your love, and a glimpse of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the midst of our own families. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. *(All say, "Amen.")*
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

B. Reflecting on Goals (15 minutes)

1. **Distribute** an index card and a pen to each parent.
2. **Ask** the parents to take a moment to consider the coming year. Invite them to consider what three hopes they have for their children for this year of religious education. Explain that these might be educational hopes or spiritual hopes.
3. **Direct** the parents to write down their hopes on their index card. Invite them to share their hopes with the other parents at their table, if they wish. Invite volunteers to share their hopes with the larger group.
4. **Remind** the group that these hopes can be supported and nurtured at home. Ask the parents to turn cards over and write a statement indicating how they can approach these hopes at home in small steps each week. For example, "I will pray a decade of the Rosary in the car each week with our family so that my children will know this prayer by heart by the end of the year." Or, "I will remind my children often that Jesus wants us to love one another." Give the parents a few moments to write down their plans to meet their goals.
5. **Remind** the parents that you, as the director, are here for them. Encourage them to approach you with any challenges or concerns. Assure them that you and the catechists are here to help.



Dive In!

C. Bible Story (20 minutes)

1. **Draw** attention to a sample *Discover!* resource set that you have on display, or distribute a set of resources to each family, according to grade level.
2. **Explain** that not every child will have a Bible. Some children may already have one, and *The Catholic Children's Bible* is not required at the kindergarten level as the children will be given a special Bible story booklet.
3. **Direct** the kindergarten parents to turn to chapter 12 in the Bible story booklet, titled "Jesus Teaches Us That God Forgives." Explain that although they will notice the title is different, they will be reading a paraphrased version of the same featured Bible story that appears in *The Catholic Children's Bible*.
4. **Direct** the grade 1–5 parents to turn to the featured Bible story "The Forgiving Father," on page 1620 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Tell them that the text between the leaves on page 1620 is a shortened version of the Scripture verses on pages 1619 and 1622. Alert them to the citations under the pictures on page 1620. Tell them that the first citation notes the abbreviated story on page 1620, and that the "full story" citation notes the Scripture verses on pages 1619 and 1622. Point out that the full story is also marked on these pages with a green leaf at the beginning and at the end.
5. **Explain** that you will go through the story with the parents, modeling how catechists might use it in the catechetical setting with the children. Remind the kindergarten parents that the language in the Bible story booklet is simplified and easier for young children to understand.
6. **Encourage** the parents to take a moment to look at the artwork on the pages. Remind them that artwork often helps convey the meaning of a story. Invite a volunteer to read aloud the featured Bible story "The Forgiving Father," on page 1620 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*.
7. **Ask** the parents several questions to illustrate the kind of questions that might be asked of the children in the lesson:
 - In this picture, the older man is the father. He has his arms wide open. When someone has their arms wide open, what does that usually mean? (*Hello! Welcome! I'm so glad to see you!*)
 - How did the father feel when he saw the son on his way? (*His heart was filled with pity. This means he had a feeling of sadness for his son.*)
 - Why do you think the father felt this way? (*Allow responses.*)
 - The younger man has his hands almost folded. When someone has their hands folded, what does that usually mean? (*Please forgive me! I'm sorry!*)
8. **Summarize** the meaning of the story for the group. Explain that the father represents God's merciful and persistent love, despite our many failures to return or even acknowledge that love. Share that being sorry and being forgiven should be part of every child's experience. Emphasize that welcoming one another back into a loving relationship after conflict is one way we share God's love.

Understand It!

1. **Explain** to the kindergarten parents that you will now walk the grade 1–5 parents through some features of the Bible. Assure the kindergarten parents that although the Bible story booklet doesn't have the same features, the catechist guide gives the catechist everything they need to teach the Bible story in an age-appropriate way.
2. **Summarize** the first paragraph of the Understand It! on page 1621 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Note these points:
 - The son in this story asked his dad for a lot of money and then left home.
 - He wasted every penny.
 - When he was starving because he had no money left, he wanted to go home.
 - The father loved his son so much that he ran to meet him.
 - The father was so happy to have his son back that he threw him a celebration.

Live It!

Invite the parents to reflect on the scenario and the questions posed in the Live It! on page 1621. Explain that this feature reinforces some of the key meanings of the featured Bible story and challenges the children to consider these for their own lives.

Tell It!

Point out the images in the Tell It! on page 1621. Explain that these images recall the featured Bible story and can help the children remember and retell it.

D. Forgiving Father Scavenger Hunt (20 minutes)

1. **Ensure** that the following items have been hidden around the room in advance: a ring, a robe, a pair of sandals, a tablecloth, and a variety of prepackaged treats.
2. **Explain** that the group will be participating in a scavenger hunt for items related to the featured Bible story "The Forgiving Father." Share with them what items they will be searching for.
3. **Tell** the group that when you say "Go!" everyone will begin looking around the room for the hidden items. Share that when they find an item, they should bring it to you at the front of the room.
4. **Ask** for a volunteer to retell the story of "The Forgiving Father" once all items have been found, using each item as a prop. Encourage the volunteer to retell the story with energy and detail. Model supportive and encouraging behavior for the group by actively listening, sharing words of support, and thanking the volunteer when they have finished.
5. **Process** the activity by explaining that just as the father loved and forgave the son, God loves and forgives us. Though we may act in ways that pull us away from God and our faith, God's love is unconditional. He loves us even if we sin, and he is willing to forgive us and welcome us with open arms if we repent.

6. **Explain** to the group that they have just been led through several of the key components in the *Discover!* program, with the focus on a Bible story and a core learning activity. Add that after learning about a Bible story related to the topic of a particular chapter, the children will learn more about that topic in greater detail.

Note: If you have enough prepackaged treats for the group, you may want to distribute them at the end of the activity to be enjoyed as part of the break.

E. Break (10 minutes)



F. Program Overview (15 minutes)

1. **Explain** that you will now take a few minutes to go over the program as a whole. Tell the parents that the entire structure of the *Discover!* program is based on active learning, and that each lesson consists of four movements: Get Ready!, Dive In!, Discover!, and Go! Continue with the following points:
 - Get Ready! includes the opening prayer and an engaging question(s) or activity to create interest in the lesson.
 - Dive In! is where the Bible story is read and explored.
 - Discover! involves some core teaching points and an activity.
 - Go! completes the lesson and includes a review of key points and a closing prayer.
2. **Share** that the learning activities and teaching in the session are supported by the activities presented in the activity booklets for grades 1–5 and through handouts and the Bible story booklet for kindergarten.
3. **Direct** the kindergarten parents' attention back to the Bible story booklet and invite them to find chapter 3. Ask the grade 1–5 parents to look through their folders to find the activity booklet for chapter 3. Comments on these pages as follows:
 - For kindergarten, one side of the Bible story booklet page contains the paraphrased Bible story, and the other side presents an activity that helps reinforce a particular aspect of the Bible story and lesson.
 - For grades 1–5, page 1 of the activity booklet contains an opening prayer, page 2 includes a Bible story activity, page 3 presents another activity related to the lesson, and the family page is on the back. The family page provides a background reflection for adults, family activities, a People of Faith paragraph that features a saint or holy person, and a prayer that the whole family can pray together.
 - The family page for kindergarten is a separate page that the catechist will send home. It includes a background reflection, a paragraph focused on child development, family activities, and a prayer that the whole family can pray together.

4. **Tell** the parents that these activities are meant to support the learning that is taking place in the lesson. Explain that sometimes the activities will be completed in the session, and sometimes they might be left to be completed at home.
5. **Ask** the grade 1–5 parents to open the *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource, or show them your copy. Explain that this is a supplemental resource that can be used in the session or in the home and that it covers some basic Catholic teachings.
6. **Encourage** the parents to keep the *Discover!* materials a surprise so that their child will experience the joy of discovery when the materials are distributed in the session.
7. **Distribute** the handouts to the parents. Explain that these articles will not be discussed today but that the parents should read them for their own information and for possible discussion with catechists as needs arise.
8. **Point out** the article on the characteristics of children, and invite the parents to read it carefully. Remind the parents that growth is on a spectrum, and for that reason it is helpful to know what can be expected at ages both younger and older than the grade their child is in this year.
9. **Explain** that the article on faith and family life is meant to be a reminder of all the ways we can live from the strong roots of our faith, no matter what else may be going on in our families.
10. **Invite** the parents to look through the handouts or any of the components of the *Discover!* program available to them for a few minutes. *(After a few minutes, ask the group if anyone has questions. If someone has a question requiring a lengthy response, give a short response and then ask that parent to see you after the session for a more detailed explanation.)*

G. Optional Activity (additional 30 minutes)

1. **Distribute** sheets of stationery, envelopes, and pens.
2. **Ask** the parents to write a letter that will be given to their child on the first day of the session.
3. **Offer** the following suggestions to get the parents started:
 - how I feel about your new year of learning about God and our faith
 - how this year will help you grow closer to Jesus, Mary, and the saints
 - how this year will help you understand why we are Catholic
 - how our family will support you and help you learn and live our faith this year
 - prayers, affirmations of support, and love
4. **Tell** the parents that kindergartners and first graders will need only a few lines that can be read to them, either during the session or at home, and fifth graders can read something with significant content and meaning. Urge them to adjust for their child as needed.
5. **Collect** the letters and distribute them later to the appropriate catechist to be delivered to the children on their first day.

**Go!**

H. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the parents to take a few moments to quiet themselves and to recall that they are in the holy presence of God.
2. **Ask** the designated reader to read the prepared passage from the Gospel of Matthew (19:13–15).
3. **Offer** the following prayer:
 - Thank you, Lord Jesus, for sharing your life and your love with our children. Help us share that love with our children as they learn more about you and about our faith this year. Help us discover glimpses of the Kingdom of Heaven in our own children and in our own families. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.
 - Let us now pray together in the words that Jesus taught us: Our Father . . .
 - Let us go in peace to share the Good News with our children, our families, our parish, and our world. *(Encourage the parents to respond, "Amen!")*

Characteristics of Kindergarten and Elementary Children

Although all children are distinct individuals and have different rates of development, children of the same age do have some common developmental elements. Thus, in this section, some characteristics of each age-group are presented. A better understanding of the various ages will help you to be more effective in spreading the Good News.

One characteristic common to children in the elementary grades is high energy! Children of these ages are active and curious learners who will ask and say the most surprising things. And, though they share the common characteristics outlined in this article, it is important to never forget that each one of them is unique, with individual characteristics and gifts.



Kindergartners

Kindergartners are energetic, curious, and eager to learn about the world around them. With typical ages ranging from 5 to 6 years old, kindergartners exhibit a wide range of developmental levels. Children who have attended a preschool program may be more accustomed to group interactions and routines than children without that experience. However, every kindergartner will look to their teachers for guidance and approval, often needing positive reinforcement, especially when asked to work independently. All kindergartners thrive with hands-on experiences, nurturing guidance, and opportunities to explore their interests and creativity.

Physical Characteristics

Kindergartners grow at different rates and can exhibit a wide range of heights, weights, and body proportions. They are constantly in motion and have difficulty remaining sedentary for long periods. Their gross motor skills are quite developed, but fine motor skills like cutting, writing, and coloring are still emerging. Kindergartners may appear physically clumsy, bumping into objects or people as they move about. They require frequent breaks and opportunities to expend energy through movement and physical play. Kindergartners are also highly sensory, using all five senses to explore their environment.

Intellectual Characteristics

Kindergartners are in a period of rapid cognitive development, which they demonstrate through curiosity, creativity, and imagination. They frequently ask “why” about everything they encounter. They are concrete thinkers who learn best through direct sensory experiences and hands-on manipulation. While their attention spans are gradually increasing, kindergartners still need varied, interactive learning approaches to remain engaged. They enjoy repetition and familiarity, but they also thrive when offered new, imaginative experiences. A balance of experiences will provide kindergartners with the security of knowing something that has become familiar, as well as the excitement of learning something new. An advance alert often helps them prepare to put things away and get ready for the next activity. Kindergartners’ language skills are developing, so short and clear directions and explanations are best.

Social-Emotional Characteristics

Kindergartners have a strong desire to please their teachers and follow rules and routines. However, they are still learning to manage big emotions, which can sometimes lead to impulsive outbursts. While learning to cooperate with peers, kindergartners may struggle with sharing, taking turns, and resolving conflicts. They benefit from clear expectations, positive reinforcement, and nurturing classroom environments.



First Graders

First graders are enthusiastic, social, and eager to learn. Many are already reading and writing at a basic level, having developed these skills in kindergarten. Yet, 6–7-year-olds still need a lot of movement and activity. Though they are quite inquisitive, their attention spans are rather short. Making sessions varied and dynamic will ensure that your first graders are engaged and content.

Physical Characteristics

Much is happening in first grade in terms of physical characteristics. Many children are losing teeth and growing new ones. Their fine motor skills are fairly well developed, which means that they can use scissors as well as draw and write. However, cutting around curves and writing with precision can still take quite a bit of effort. And, for some children, these are still challenging tasks. First graders' desire to move and play points to the importance of varying learning activities for this age-group. To address this, it is best to keep them moving, by doing such things as starting the class in a prayer circle in one corner of the room, singing a song with several simple motions, moving to a table activity, sitting on the floor to listen to a dramatic Bible story, playing a game in the middle of the room, or better yet, going outside or to the gym to play. This variety will satisfy their need to move while keeping them engaged and focused.

Intellectual Characteristics

Thinking and learning are literal and concrete at this age. First graders will most likely think of God as a human person with human characteristics rather than use abstract or symbolic images. Nonetheless, first graders are thinkers. They ask a lot of questions, and they have creative imaginations. They will think about questions you ask, as long as the questions are not too complicated. Their attention spans are long enough that they like to listen to a good Bible story.

Social-Emotional Characteristics

Most first graders like playing with others, but they often prefer small groups. They are willing to cooperate, but they often want to “win” or have things go their way. Young children need continual affirmation, thriving on praise. Many first graders want to be the center of attention, so they like telling stories about themselves.



Second Graders

Second graders are lively, yet more grown-up and serious compared to the less confident first graders they were just a year ago. Now that they have a few years of elementary school experience, 7–8-year-olds are more settled and comfortable in their learning environment. They typically appreciate the order and structure of a classroom or catechetical setting. Thus, being organized and well prepared will help second graders to feel relaxed, content, and ready to learn.

Physical Characteristics

Most second graders have good hand-eye coordination and therefore are fairly adept at writing, painting, drawing, cutting, and pasting. Because they are still growing rapidly, they may be somewhat awkward at some of these tasks. However, in general they have good large- and small-muscle motor skills.

Intellectual Characteristics

Second graders are concrete thinkers, but they do have some analytical skills and can organize their thoughts. For example, they can make comparisons and think reflectively. Yet, most of their thinking is concrete and focuses on the physical things that they can see or imagine. They might have trouble imagining something with which they are unfamiliar. For example, they may have trouble imagining a desert if they have never seen one. So, if knowing what a desert is like is an important part of a lesson, they may need to see a picture or a video clip of a desert.

Furthermore, second graders do have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, although they will not always understand the consequences of their actions. They do, however, like to please adults.

Social-Emotional Characteristics

The second-grade child is developing a sense of self. Interaction with classmates helps the child, but there are times when a second grader may want to be alone. And friendships can change quickly in second grade. At the same time, the seven- to eight-year-old child likes to play and work with friends. For this reason, second graders do best working with a partner or in a small group. Given that there is a heightened interest in friendships at this age, it is a good time to talk about Jesus as friend.



Third Graders

Third graders are spirited, lively, and eager to take on more challenging, complicated tasks. However, 8–9-year-olds do not necessarily have all the follow-through skills needed to complete their tasks. Although they will take some initiative and work enthusiastically, you will have to help them stay organized.

Physical Characteristics

Coordination and balance are much improved for third-grade children. Their muscle groups and their fine motor skills have developed to the point that they can do more intricate tasks beyond writing and drawing. They have the ability to use small instruments and thus can do things like simple sewing or threading small beads onto a string.

Intellectual Characteristics

Verbal skills are in high gear by third grade. Most third graders have mastered a grade-level ability for reading, writing, and listening. They also like to talk and discuss their ideas. They are inquisitive, and now they want to know not just the facts but also the reasons behind the facts. For example, third graders may want to know why Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, or why he asked James and John to leave their father to be his disciples. And, they are ready and willing to discuss the importance of these facts.

This deeper level of thinking helps third graders to evaluate and make judgments. They are beginning to see the connections between concepts and to think abstractly. They not only know the difference between right and wrong but can also usually understand the consequences of choices they make.

Social-Emotional Characteristics

In third grade, the peer group is very important, and peer pressure can become an issue. Also, it is fairly common for third graders to have a “best friend,” though sometimes to the exclusion of other children. You can build on the notion of Jesus as friend and use examples of Jesus and how he treated his friends. Point out that Jesus welcomed many friends, like Peter and the Apostles, Martha, Mary, Zacchaeus, and others.

Most third graders enjoy the social dimension of working in groups and having group discussions. They can also work effectively in small groups to complete a simple task.



Fourth Graders

Fourth graders are now some of the older children in their elementary school. Thus, they often feel pretty mature, important, and more autonomous. They are willing to work independently and have less need for adult direction. They are ready to take on more responsibility and make decisions. Indeed, as 9–10-year-olds, they are at a good age to discuss the responsibilities of discipleship. Fourth graders may also develop particular interests in a hobby, sport, or activity, and they may take it very seriously.

Physical Characteristics

Girls are more physically mature than boys at this point. Some girls have begun prepuberty and even puberty. Girls and boys alike may be more temperamental and brooding. But, at the same time, they are still high energy and still like to play outside and with friends. They may also enjoy team sports.

Intellectual Characteristics

Fourth graders are able to do some abstract thinking and reasoning, but they still do best with concrete, hands-on learning. They like using books and references, and they have an interest in facts and figures. They also have a developing conscience and definitely have a sense of what is fair, right, and just. These interests make it a good time to have them delve more deeply into the Scripture stories that have moral lessons, as most of them do. For instance, a fourth grader will be intrigued by the fact that Jesus tells Peter he should forgive not seven times but seventy times seven times. Why would Jesus ask us to keep forgiving someone who keeps sinning?

Also, fourth graders have the capacity to complete a more complicated and prolonged project. So, for example, with guidance from you, a small group can take a Scripture story and act it out as a skit.

Social-Emotional Characteristics

This is an age for high emotions and dramatic intensity, especially among girls. Fourth graders are often critical of themselves and others, sometimes expressing this inappropriately by talking about friends and classmates. Many fourth graders are interested in the opposite sex. Even when this is the case, however, most still want to stay within their same-sex groups for socializing. In addition, they like working in small groups and can even come to a group decision. Again, emphasizing that Jesus wants us not only to welcome one another as friends but also to love and help one another can lead fourth graders to develop empathy and respect for those they may not naturally like.



Fifth Graders

Fifth graders may be considered “tweens,” because as 10–11-year-olds they are between early childhood and adolescence. Many of them, girls especially, will begin puberty, which often starts between the ages of 10 and 12 for girls and a bit later for boys. These biological changes are often accompanied by changes in emotions and intellect as fifth graders become more socially, intellectually, and physically mature. At the same time, they are still children who like to be silly and have fun.

Physical Characteristics

Many fifth-grade girls will show the physical signs of puberty as they begin to enter the developmental stage known as adolescence. Breast development and menstruation often occur for girls. Many boys, however, do not begin puberty until the ages of 12 to 14. Both boys and girls are often growing taller, feeling more stress, and sometimes experiencing changes in their sleep habits. Don't be surprised if they arrive late or sleepy if you have a Sunday morning session.

Intellectual Characteristics

Children in fifth grade are capable of critical thinking and problem solving. They are able to think somewhat abstractly. For example, ritual symbols are meaningful. They can understand that the cleansing effects of baptismal waters mean more than physical cleaning.

Social-Emotional Characteristics

Most fifth graders enjoy group work. They are mature enough to compromise, cooperate, and collaborate when it comes to completing an assignment or solving a problem. Some fifth graders will have feelings for someone special and flirt with, text, or message those they are interested in. Social media can be a major source of influence and social anxiety at this age. Cell phones and mobile devices may become an issue in the classroom but can also be used as teaching tools.





Overview of Catholic Social Teaching

In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are urged to keep the light of Christ alive in our hearts for the rest of our lives. We are called to holiness. Though this may seem like a tall order, when we live lives that focus on loving God, ourselves, others, and creation itself, we move in the direction of lifelong holiness.

The Catholic Church has a rich history of social teaching that helps us live positive, meaningful, and holy lives through an understanding of our relationship and responsibility to others. This teaching has guided the lives of Christians since the beginning of the Church. Modern Catholic social teaching has been addressed and explained in Church documents since the 1800s. Catholic social teaching promotes our Catholic identity and helps ensure that we treat those around us and our environment with dignity and respect. It gives us the guidance to live our faith and navigate our modern world.

Some of the key themes of Catholic social teaching have been highlighted as general themes or principles. These principles challenge us globally—to view the world as one family and to work for justice and peace. They also challenge us locally. We are called to apply these principles daily in our encounters with people, in forming our opinions regarding current events, and in our willingness to give our time and money to those in need.

The following are seven of the key principles of Catholic social teaching:

1. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

This first principle is the foundation for the others. We cannot practice the other principles without fully embracing this one. This principle seems simple and uncomplicated, but it is extremely complex. It states that every life is sacred, and every person has dignity. The challenge to this principle is to comprehend that there are not degrees of sacredness and degrees of dignity. No one life is more valuable than another; every life is significant. An incarcerated person has just as much dignity as a priest or a bishop. An elderly person's life is just as sacred as an infant's. Every person is a child of God, and every person is precious.

2. **Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

Catholics are communal, and this principle reminds us that we cannot live in isolation. The first and most important community is family; we are called to strengthen and protect families. By participating in our communities, we can work on social issues and ensure that laws and policies benefit the common good.



3. **Rights and Responsibilities**

We must work to have all human rights protected. Every person has rights, such as the right to life, food, shelter, and work. Everyone has economic, political, and cultural rights. Along with these rights comes the responsibility to help others in our society and to protect and safeguard the rights of others.

4. **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

Jesus focused on those in most need—the disabled, the diseased, and the outcast. His concern for their welfare was a sign of the coming of the Kingdom of God among us. This principle encourages us to look for those who might need our help. The Catholic Church teaches that by celebrating the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity, we commit ourselves to concern for those who are poor and in need.

5. **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

All occupations are valuable and should be respected. Workers have a right to fair wages and to safe working conditions. Workers have a right to join unions. This principle especially speaks to our responsibility as consumers. Who makes the products we purchase? Where are they produced? What are the working conditions of those who produce them? Expanding our knowledge as responsible consumers means that we can use our consumer power to better the lives of workers around the globe.

6. **Solidarity**

As one family, we have a commitment to one another. Regardless of culture, race, or social status, we are called to be nonjudgmental in our support for one another. This principle reminds us that we are not to participate in groups that set one side against another. We should work to eliminate the “we-they” mentality in our speech and other social communication. Under this principle, we commit ourselves to seeking common solutions to common problems in an atmosphere of respectful dialogue. Working for peace in a world that is often filled with violence and conflict is at the core of this principle.

7. **Care of God’s Creation**

The Catholic Church calls care for the Earth and all of God’s creation essential to our faith. The responsibility of taking care of the Earth’s resources must be taken seriously and approached thoughtfully. Each day we are faced with choices, large and small, that help sustain our environment or contribute to the abuse of the tremendous gift of God’s creation.



One person can dramatically affect the lives of others. Catholic social teaching reminds us that we are called to embrace everyone: the poor, the immigrant, the incarcerated, the unborn, the nosy neighbor, the coworker that irritates us, and those whose opinions differ from our own. We are called to treat everyone lovingly, as God loves us. We are also called to use the resources in our environment with careful consideration.

The goal of Catholic social teaching has been articulated in the Church since the beginning: “Love one another” (John 15:17). The principles of Catholic social teaching articulate this love in a precise and measurable way. Together they serve as an “examination of conscience” for the Church today, and they can serve as a beacon of hope for all of human society. In our world today, the principles of Catholic social teaching outline our path toward building a just society and a life of holiness.

Discover! Finding Faith in Life brings the core concepts of Catholic social teaching to life for children. One chapter in every unit of the program focuses on a Catholic social teaching principle and the basic concepts around this principle. This introduces children to a crucial component of Catholic teaching and can enrich their faith and understanding of their role in working for a better world.





Faith and Fun in the Family

1. **Stick to the basics.** Never underestimate the power of repetition in forming faith. Pray the Prayer before Meals ("Bless us, O Lord . . .") before every meal, wherever you are (even in the car). And pray the Our Father and the Hail Mary as part of night prayers.
2. **Honor meals as family time.** Talk about things important to each family member. Share stories, memories, values, and upcoming plans or events. Make sure there are no electronics around that could cause distractions.
3. **Talk about Jesus.** Children should hear about Jesus at home as well as in church or during religious education sessions. Include conversations about what Jesus would do in different circumstances, ask Jesus to be with various people you encounter together, and remind one another how Jesus might feel when you do something good for others.
4. **Pray aloud.** Children should hear their parents praying. Share happenings of everyday life by requesting prayers from one another. For example, "Mom has a big presentation at work today. Let's pray now that the Holy Spirit will be with her." Or "Josh's spelling test is today. He really studied hard, so let's pray that he will remember what he knows." Also remember family members and others who are ill or in special need of prayer.
5. **Pray for safety and fair play in sports.** Emphasize that we pray for safety and fair play in our games, and that God does not favor one team over another. He loves the members of every team equally.
6. **Create a prayer space in your home.** A prayer space might be a small table placed in a corner of a room. Include a Bible, a candle (real or electric), a rosary, some favorite holy cards, and some Catholic children's books. Gather here at various times for family or individual prayer.
7. **Keep a rosary in the car.** Keep a rosary in the car, and pray it on short and long trips. Brush up on the list of the mysteries or keep a guide with you in the car, and announce one for each decade. When your child is ready, invite them to lead.



8. **Plan vacations with Mass in mind.** Each parish in the world is unique. Research nearby parish churches and plan to participate in the Eucharist on the Sundays you are vacationing. After Mass, introduce yourselves to the celebrating priest. Ask him for tips on local restaurants or other places to see in the area.
9. **Get out in the real world.** Enjoy God's gift of creation with your family. Visit a local park or nature preserve, and wonder aloud at the beauty of God's handiwork. At every site, pray a litany: "Thank you, God, for . . ." with each family member naming something they see in nature. Take turns naming as many gifts of creation as you like!
10. **Bless your child.** A parent's blessing is a powerful sign of God's love. With your hand on your child's head, make the sign of the cross with your thumb on your child's forehead, while saying, "God bless you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Any other appropriate words can be added. Blessings can be done before any occasion, special or routine, such as leaving for school, preparing for a test or sports competition, or going to bed.
11. **Talk about your values.** Use TV, social media, video games, or other influences as "teachable moments" to express your Christian values. Be sure to accentuate the positive if you see it illustrated in a particular character or situation.
12. **Prepare for Mass together.** Mass should be anticipated with preparation. Saturday night might be a good time to read the Sunday Gospel at the evening meal. Discuss as a family what Jesus might be telling or showing your family in the Gospel. After Mass, incorporate the homily into your conversation on the way home.
13. **Celebrate feast days.** Keep track of annual feasts by using your parish calendar and bulletin reminders. Though the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter are key, various feasts during the year merit attention and offer an opportunity to celebrate faith and make the day special. You may want to add family name days to your feast-day calendar, as well as baptismal anniversaries. There are many sources, in books and online, for celebrating feast days on the Catholic calendar. Feast days give us a respite from everyday routine and root us more firmly in the life of Christ as mirrored in each individual feast or saint.



Biblical Literacy and the Teaching of Scripture

As a religious educator, you know the power that Scripture has to touch children's hearts and inspire their moral and spiritual lives. To remind us to draw on this power in catechesis, the Church's teaching documents always call us to make the Bible an integral part of our ministry:

Catechesis should take Sacred Scripture as its inspiration, its fundamental curriculum, and its end because it strengthens faith, nourishes the soul, and nurtures the spiritual life. (*National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 70)

Likewise, the holy synod forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful, especially those who live the religious life, to learn "the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine scriptures. (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation [Dei Verbum, 1965]*, 25)

Through catechetical ministry, catechists equip children with the essential knowledge and skills required for their lifelong journey of faith. When it comes to the Bible, those in ministry want to begin teaching the knowledge and skills that will help children to ultimately become biblically literate adults. So let's start by describing biblically literate adults.

Biblically literate adults are comfortable reading and using the Bible. They know how the books of the Bible are arranged and how to quickly and easily locate a specific book or passage. They have a solid understanding of the biblical story of salvation history, and they are familiar with key people and events and how God's saving power worked through those people and events. Biblically literate adults understand that any book or passage from Scripture must be understood in its proper context. When reading the Bible, they consider things like the literary genre, the culture of the time, the original author's intended message, how the message fits into the bigger picture of salvation history, and how the passage is understood in the Church's Tradition.

We can help children to become biblically literate adults by working on three specific goals:

- A. Help them to become knowledgeable and comfortable using the Bible.
- B. Help them to know and understand the biblical story of salvation history.
- C. Help them to understand how to interpret Bible books and passages in their proper contexts.

Goal A is the **Access** goal. Goal B is the **Big-Picture** goal. Goal C is the **Context** goal. Taken together, these can be called the ABCs of biblical literacy.

The three goals of biblical literacy follow a certain progression. The **Access** goal is the most basic; its competencies create a foundation for working on the **Big-Picture** and **Context** goals. The **Big-Picture** competencies build on the **Access** competencies, creating greater knowledge that the **Context** competencies can then build on. All three goals are closely related; working on any one goal usually reinforces the others.

As a general guideline, with elementary-age children, the primary focus should be developing the **Access** competencies and introducing some **Big-Picture** knowledge. The **Context** competencies will probably not be focused on, because they require more abstract reasoning than most young children are capable of. However, specific **Context** skills and knowledge competencies will be used as children learn about the meaning of specific Bible stories.

Let's take a closer look at these three goals and how catechists can help children to develop the competencies needed to become proficient in them. (For a more detailed look at these three goals, read *Biblical Literacy Made Easy: A Practical Guide for Catechists, Teachers, and Youth Ministers*, Saint Mary's Press, 2008.)

Access Goal: **Helping Children Become Knowledgeable and Comfortable Using the Bible**

Many children do not know how to use the Bible. They may have heard Bible stories, and maybe they were even given a Bible for their First Communion. But they do not know how the Bible is structured or how to find specific passages or stories within it. By focusing on the competencies of the **Access** goal, we can help the children we teach to become more familiar and comfortable with the Bible.

The most critical practice for achieving the **Access** goal—a practice so basic that many people overlook it—is simply having the children *use* the Bible. Too often children read Scripture passages as quotations in textbooks. There may be only one Bible in the classroom, so the catechist looks up the passage and then hands the opened Bible to a young person to read. These practices do not encourage children to learn basic biblical literacy skills. If young Catholics are to become comfortable in accessing the Bible, they must use it regularly. Every classroom or meeting space must have enough Bibles for each child to use. What we model as important has a much greater impact than what we say is important!

To help children become comfortable in using the Bible, we can teach them two important competencies: (1) knowing the Bible's structure and (2) locating a passage in the Bible.

Knowing the Bible's Structure

The Bible is not one book; rather, it is a collection, or even a small library, of books and letters. These books are organized in a specific and intentional structure, sort of like books might be grouped in sections on a bookshelf. At the beginning of *The Catholic Children's Bible*, these sections are briefly explained and visually presented in the section called "The Bible Is Like a Bookshelf." Here is a slightly more detailed explanation of those sections:

- **The Old Testament** is the first major section of the Bible. Its books are primarily about God's relationship with his Chosen People, the Israelites (or the Jews).
 - The first part of the Old Testament is called the **Pentateuch**. The stories in these books are the heart of the Old Testament.
 - The second part of the Old Testament is called the **Historical Books**. These books recount how the Chosen People settled in the Promised Land and how they eventually became a kingdom ruled by great and not-so-great kings.
 - The third part of the Old Testament is called the **Wisdom Books**. These books teach some of the collected wisdom of the Israelites.
 - The fourth part of the Old Testament is called the **Books of the Prophets**. These contain the warnings and consolations of some of Israel's prophets.
- **The New Testament** is the second major section of the Bible. Its books tell how God fulfilled the Old Testament promises by sending us the Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - The first part of the New Testament is the four **Gospels** and the **Acts of the Apostles**. The Gospels have the stories about Christ's life and teaching, and the Book of Acts tells us about how the Church spread after Christ's Ascension.
 - The second part of the New Testament is the **Letters**. Early Church leaders sent these letters, some to certain individuals and others to specific Christian communities.
 - The last book of the New Testament is the **Book of Revelation**. It is a unique collection of prophecies and symbolic visions.

These sections can be referred to when the children look up passages in the Bible with comments, such as, "This Bible story is from the Book of Exodus, which is in the Old Testament of the Bible," or "This Bible story is from the Gospel of Mark. The Gospels have stories about the life of Jesus and the things he taught."

Locating a Passage in the Bible

The system for finding a particular passage in the Bible is simple and explained in the beginning of *The Catholic Children's Bible* in the section called "How to Find a Bible Passage." After explaining this system to the children, catechists can assist them in developing the skill of locating Bible passages through practice, practice, practice! This skill will take time for children to master, but it is a crucial skill for lifelong Bible reading. Help in teaching navigation skills to children can be found in the article "Helping Children Navigate *The Catholic Children's Bible*," included in each catechist guide and in this online director's manual.

Big-Picture Goal: **Helping Children Know and Understand the Biblical Story of Salvation History**

Because of our Lectionary-based liturgies, Catholics are often familiar with most of the important people and stories of history. But if liturgies are a person's only contact with Scripture, they may not see how those individual stories fit into the overarching biblical story of God's covenant relationship with the human race, which we also call salvation history. Much of Catholic theology is based on the presumption that we know and understand the overarching story of salvation history.

Salvation history is often organized into different periods to help us understand God's saving work. In all relevant Saint Mary's Press® resources, eight historical periods are named to describe the arc of salvation history:

1. Primeval History (the figurative stories in the Book of Genesis)
2. The Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)
3. Egypt and the Exodus (Moses and the desert experience of Israel)
4. Settling the Promised Land (Joshua and the Twelve Tribes of Israel)
5. The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel (the time of the Prophets)
6. The Exile and Return (the Babylonian captivity and restoration of the Temple)
7. The Life of Jesus Christ
8. The Early Christian Church

Understanding how each biblical book's story fits into this bigger history is the mark of a truly biblically literate person. This kind of knowledge grows with repetition and review. Catechists can best help children develop this knowledge by exposing them to key people and events in Scripture. *The Catholic Children's Bible* helps to do this by focusing on 125 key people and events in the featured Bible stories on two-page spreads. Using these featured Bible stories consistently with children will provide them an excellent foundation for knowing and understanding salvation history.

Context Goal: **Helping Children Understand How to Interpret Bible Books and Passages in Their Proper Contexts**

The **Context** goal is more subtle and complex than the **Access** and **Big-Picture** goals. Catechists typically do not work on the skills required to master this goal with children. It requires a level of abstract thinking that this age-group is not yet capable of. However, catechists need to understand this goal in order to teach children the correct interpretation of the biblical stories they read.

This excerpt from the Second Vatican Council document *Divine Revelation* describes how to correctly interpret the Bible:

Seeing that, in sacred scripture, God speaks through human beings in human fashion, it follows that the interpreters of sacred scripture, if they are to ascertain what God has wished to communicate to us, should carefully search out the meaning which the sacred writers really had in mind, the meaning which God had thought well to manifest through the medium of their words. (12)

This excerpt states that we must do two things when interpreting a Bible story or teaching. First, we must seek to understand what the original human author intended to communicate. The Church Fathers called this the “literal sense” of Scripture. Second, we must seek to understand what God is revealing through the story or passage. The Church Fathers called this the fuller sense or the “spiritual sense” of Scripture. Often the literal sense and the spiritual sense of a passage are closely related. But in some Scripture passages, God reveals, through the spiritual sense, a deeper and more universal truth than the human author originally understood or intended.

Paragraphs 109–119 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* further explain how to apply these principles. These paragraphs describe the contexts we must consider when interpreting any particular passage of the Bible, which is why we describe this as the **Context** goal.

- **Historical context** To understand the full importance or meaning of a certain event, we need to know the larger historical situation the event occurred within.
- **Cultural context** Sometimes the true meaning of certain actions or words makes sense only when we understand the cultural practices or beliefs of the time.
- **Literary genre** The Bible is composed of many different types of literature. We must know which type we are reading and realize that each genre has its own rules for interpretation.
- **Unity of the whole Bible** When taken as a whole, God’s revealed truth is presented in the Bible without error. This is the case in many Old Testament passages, whose Christian meaning can be completely and accurately understood only in light of the New Testament revelation.
- **Living Tradition of the Church** To fully understand some Bible passages, we must take into account how the Magisterium—the official teaching authority of the Church—has interpreted the meaning of those passages.
- **Coherence of the truths of faith** When it comes to religious or moral truth, the Bible cannot contradict itself or any other revealed truth of our Tradition.

If we do not interpret the Bible using these contexts, we could easily misinterpret God’s Revelation. This is the danger of biblical fundamentalism, an approach to biblical interpretation that Catholics are cautioned to avoid. In its extreme forms, biblical fundamentalism leads people to false beliefs, such as the belief that God created the universe in six 24-hour days.

Even though catechists will not necessarily mention these different contexts when working with children, the featured Bible stories in *The Catholic Children's Bible* provide trustworthy tools to help children correctly understand the contexts of 125 Bible stories. The engaging art in *The Catholic Children's Bible* provides strong visual cues about the human authors' intentions. The Tell It! features provide children the opportunity to retell the stories using the visual prompts so that they begin to process the meaning. And the short Understand It! features explain what God is revealing through the stories, drawing upon the contexts of the unity of the Bible, Tradition, and the coherence of the truths of faith.

Helping Children Navigate *The Catholic Children's Bible*

Helping children become familiar with the structure of the Bible so that they can easily locate specific books and passages is a foundational part of building biblical literacy. *The Catholic Children's Bible* offers multiple tools to help children in grades 1–5 more readily navigate the Bible.

Color Coding

When you look at the bottom of *The Catholic Children's Bible* or open it to any page, you will notice bands of color along the bottoms of the pages. These colors delineate the major sections of the Bible.

Bible Section	Bible Books	Band Color
The Pentateuch (or Torah)	Genesis through Deuteronomy	aqua
The Historical Books	Joshua through Second Maccabees	brown
The Wisdom Books	Job through Sirach	purple
The Books of the Prophets	Isaiah through Malachi	orange
The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles	Matthew through John and the Acts of the Apostles	blue
The Letters and Revelation	Romans through Revelation	green
Prayer and Bible Helps	back of the book	yellow

The same colors are shown in the table of contents (pages 3–6) as bands of color behind the name of each section of the Bible. They are also repeated in “The Bible Is Like a Bookshelf” image on page 15 of *The Catholic Children's Bible*. This image can be helpful in introducing children to the structure of the Bible, and it can be another resource to help them identify where a particular book of the Bible is located.

Page Tabs

You will also notice that the table of contents (pages 3–6) indicates a specific color for each book of the Bible. These colors are matched with tabs that are provided along the sides of each page within the Bible. A chapter number is also included in the tab to indicate the core chapter that is featured on each page.

Finding Specific Passages in the Bible

The article “How to Find a Bible Passage” on page 13 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* presents the traditional method of finding specific Bible passages by the name of the book, the chapter, and the verse. This is basic information for anyone who wishes to understand Scripture citations and use them to locate a particular Bible passage.

Navigating the Featured Bible Stories

One of the most attractive elements of *The Catholic Children's Bible* is its featured Bible stories. These stories encapsulate a Scripture story or passage, illustrate it, and surround it with the helpful Understand It!, Live It!, and Tell It! teaching aids. In addition, new or unfamiliar words are printed in bold type and presented with definitions. A full list of the 125 featured Bible stories that are offered within the Bible is presented on pages 7–11 of *The Catholic Children's Bible*.

When the children encounter a featured Bible story, such as the one presented on page 122, for example, they will see a green leaf at the beginning and end of the Scripture text. This indicates that this is a portion of text repeated from the main body of the Bible. To identify where this text comes from, the children can simply look at the Scripture citation or citations above the Scripture text. In many cases, the text shown for the featured Bible story is a shortened version of a longer Scripture passage. The children can find the “full story” citation in their Bibles and will see two green leaves that indicate where the full story starts and stops (see pages 120–121).

The Dark Passages of Scripture

In helping children read and understand the Bible, catechists must be aware that some Bible stories are not child-friendly. The accounts of incest, rape, genocide, and holy war in the sacred pages of Scripture can come as a surprise for many beginning Bible readers. In his apostolic exhortation "The Word of the Lord" ("*Verbum Domini*," November 2010), Pope Benedict XVI called these stories the "dark" passages of the Bible. Here is what the Holy Father said regarding these passages:

In discussing the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments, the Synod also considered those passages in the Bible which, due to the violence and immorality they occasionally contain, prove obscure and difficult. Here it must be remembered first and foremost that *biblical revelation is deeply rooted in history*. God's plan is manifested progressively and it is accomplished slowly, in *successive stages* and despite human resistance. God chose a people and patiently worked to guide and educate them. Revelation is suited to the cultural and moral level of distant times and thus describes facts and customs, such as cheating and trickery, and acts of violence and massacre, without explicitly denouncing the immorality of such things. This can be explained by the historical context, yet it can cause the modern reader to be taken aback, especially if he or she fails to take account of the many "dark" deeds carried out down the centuries, and also in our own day. In the Old Testament, the preaching of the prophets vigorously challenged every kind of injustice and violence, whether collective or individual, and thus became God's way of training his people in preparation for the Gospel. So it would be a mistake to neglect those passages of Scripture that strike us as problematic. Rather, we should be aware that the correct interpretation of these passages requires a degree of expertise, acquired through a training that interprets the texts in their historical-literary context and within the Christian perspective which has as its ultimate hermeneutical key "the Gospel and the new commandment of Jesus Christ brought about in the paschal mystery."¹ I encourage scholars and pastors to help all the faithful to approach these passages through an interpretation which enables their meaning to emerge in the light of the mystery of Christ. (42)

In this teaching, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the following points:

- The Bible does not shy away from telling about the worst things that humans do to one another. These are the very things that Jesus Christ came to save us from. Unfortunately, these evil acts continue even into our time.
- The biblical author does not always explicitly say that a particular action is immoral; at the time he was writing, these actions might not have yet been seen as immoral (such as the killing of whole groups of people) or the biblical author may have presumed the reader knew that these were immoral actions (such as Lot's daughters having sexual relations with their drunken father). Because God's Revelation is "manifested progressively" and "is accomplished slowly, in successive stages," the preaching of the prophets and, ultimately, the teaching of Jesus Christ help us see the true moral meaning of these actions.
- Properly understanding these passages requires the help of people trained in biblical interpretation, such as pastors and biblical scholars.

So what does this mean for catechists when it comes to these dark passages of Scripture? The best advice is to avoid these passages completely, because these stories can be too disturbing and confusing for young and innocent minds. *The Catholic Children's Bible* does not use any of these stories as featured Bible stories, so there is no need to worry about coming across any dark stories when the special two-page spreads are used.

People of Faith Index

People of Faith	Grade	Chapter
A		
Agnes, Saint	Grade 4	Chapter 6
Alphonsus Liguori, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 13
Andrew the Apostle, Saint	Grade 3	Easter
Anna Dengel	Grade 3	Chapter 17
Anne, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 14
Arnold Janssen, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 17
Augustine of Hippo, Saint	Grade 2 Grade 4	Chapter 10 Lent
B		
Benedict XVI, Pope Emeritus	Grade 5	Chapter 6
Benedict Joseph Labré, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 19
Benedict of Nursia, Saint	Grade 3	Chapter 7
Bernadette Soubirous, Saint	Grade 5	Chapter 12
Brigid of Ireland, Saint	Grade 2	Lent
C		
Catherine of Siena, Saint	Grade 3	Chapter 11
Cecilia, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 3	Chapter 16 Palm Sunday
Chiara Lubich, Servant of God	Grade 5	Chapter 14
Clare of Assisi, Saint	Grade 1	Chapter 5
Cyril of Jerusalem, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 11
D		
Damien of Molokai, Saint	Grade 1	Chapter 6
David the King, Saint	Grade 2 Grade 4 Grade 5	Chapter 5 Chapter 17 Chapter 7
Dismas the Good Thief, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 7
Dominic Savio, Saint	Grade 3	Chapter 3
Dorothy Day, Servant of God	Grade 3	Chapter 14

People of Faith	Grade	Chapter
E		
Elizabeth, Saint	Grade 5	Advent
Elizabeth Ann Seton, Saint	Grade 5	Chapter 20
Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 4	Chapter 11 Chapter 9
F		
Fiacre, Saint	Grade 1	Chapter 13
Francis, Pope	Grade 4	Chapter 4
Francisco Marto, Saint	Grade 5	Chapter 9
Francis of Assisi, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 3 Grade 5	Chapter 4 Chapter 4 Chapter 4
Francis Xavier, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 4	Chapter 7 Chapter 12
Frederic Ozanam, Blessed	Grade 4	Ordinary Time
G		
Gabriel the Archangel, Saint	Grade 3	Chapter 18
Gemma Galgani, Saint	Grade 3	Chapter 19
H		
Hippolytus, Saint	Grade 4	Pentecost
I		
Ignatius of Loyola, Saint	Grade 5	Chapter 16
J		
Jacinta Marto, Saint	Grade 5	Chapter 9
James Miller, Blessed	Grade 4	Chapter 14
James the Greater, Saint	Grade 4	Easter
James Walsh, Father	Grade 2	Chapter 18
Jane Frances de Chantal, Saint	Grade 2	Ordinary Time
Joachim, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 14
Joan of Arc, Saint	Grade 1	Chapter 20
John XXIII, Pope Saint	Grade 3 Grade 5	Chapter 16 Pentecost

People of Faith	Grade	Chapter
John Baptist de La Salle, Saint	Grade 2 Grade 4	Chapter 6 Chapter 18
John Bosco, Saint	Grade 3	Chapter 5
John Chrysostom, Saint	Grade 4	Christmas/Epiphany
John of the Cross, Saint	Grade 1	Chapter 3
John Paul II, Pope Saint	Grade 5	Chapter 10
John the Apostle and Evangelist, Saint	Grade 3 Grade 4 Grade 5	Chapter 13 Chapter 8 Christmas
John the Baptist, Saint	Grade 2 Grade 4	Chapter 2 Advent
John Vianney, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 3 Grade 5	Chapter 12 Chapter 2 Chapter 13
Joseph, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 2 Grade 2 Grade 3 Grade 4	Lent Chapter 3 Christmas Chapter 9 Chapter 3
Josephine Bakhita, Saint	Grade 4	Chapter 16
Joseph of Arimathea, Saint	Grade 5	Easter Triduum
Juan Diego, Saint	Grade 5	Chapter 19
Juliana of Liège, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 12
Julian of Norwich, Blessed	Grade 1	Chapter 1
K		
Kateri Tekakwitha, Saint	Grade 2 Grade 5	Chapter 1 Chapter 5
Katharine Drexel, Saint	Grade 4	Chapter 19
L		
Louis IX of France, Saint	Grade 4	Chapter 11
Louis and Zélie Martin, Saints	Grade 5	Chapter 17
Louise de Marillac, Saint	Grade 5	Ordinary Time
Lucia dos Santos, Servant of God	Grade 5	Chapter 9
Lucy, Saint	Grade 3	Advent
Luke, Saint	Grade 1	Pentecost

People of Faith	Grade	Chapter
M		
Margaret of Scotland, Saint	Grade 1	Chapter 8
Mark, Saint	Grade 4	Chapter 5
Martin de Porres, Saint	Grade 5	Chapter 11
Mary Joseph Rogers, Mother	Grade 2	Chapter 18
Mary Magdalene, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 2	Chapter 17 Easter
Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, Saints	Grade 4	All Saints' Day
Mary, Mother of the Church	Grade 3	Pentecost
Mary, Queen of Heaven	Grade 4	Chapter 10
Matthew the Evangelist, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 15
Monica, Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 10
Moses the Patriarch	Grade 2 Grade 4	Chapter 8 Chapter 2
N		
Nicolas of Myra, Saint	Grade 1	Christmas
O		
Óscar Romero, Saint	Grade 4	Chapter 7
Our Lady of Fátima	Grade 1	Mary
Our Lady of Good Counsel	Grade 3	Chapter 15
Our Lady of Guadalupe	Grade 2 Grade 5	Advent Our Lady of Guadalupe
Our Lady of Lourdes	Grade 2	Mary
Our Lady of the Presentation	Grade 3	Presentation of the Lord
Our Lady of the Rosary	Grade 2 Grade 4	Chapter 20 Our Lady of the Rosary
Our Lady of the Way	Grade 1	Chapter 18
Our Lady, the Immaculate Conception	Grade 1	Advent

People of Faith	Grade	Chapter
P		
Patrick, Saint	Grade 3 Grade 5	Chapter 10 Chapter 2
Paul the Apostle, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 3 Grade 4	Chapter 2 Chapter 8 Chapter 15
Paul VI, Pope Saint	Grade 2	Chapter 4
Peter, Saint	Grade 2 Grade 3	Pentecost Chapter 6
Peter Claver, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 4	Chapter 19 Chapter 20
Philip Neri, Saint	Grade 3	Chapter 20
Pius X, Pope Saint	Grade 1	Chapter 15
R		
Roger of Taizé, Brother	Grade 5	Chapter 3
S		
Salome, Saint	Grade 1	Easter
Solanus Casey, Blessed	Grade 5	Chapter 15
Stanley Rother, Blessed	Grade 5	Chapter 18
T		
Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Saint	Grade 4	Chapter 1
Teresa of Ávila, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 2	Chapter 10 Chapter 16
Teresa of Kolkata (Calcutta), Saint Mother	Grade 1 Grade 2 Grade 5	Chapter 14 Chapter 9 Chapter 1
Théodore Guérin, Saint Mother	Grade 1 Grade 3	Chapter 9 Ordinary Time
Thérèse of Lisieux, Saint	Grade 1 Grade 3 Grade 4 Grade 5	Ordinary Time Chapter 1 Chapter 13 Chapter 8
Thomas Price, Father	Grade 2	Chapter 18
Thomas the Apostle, Saint	Grade 5	Easter
W		
Wenceslaus, Saint	Grade 3	Christmas/Epiphany

Catholic Social Teaching Indexes

Index by Grade

Grade	Chapters	Catholic Social Teaching Focus
Kindergarten	Chapter 4 Chapter 9 Chapter 14 Chapter 19	Call to Family, Community, and Participation Option for the Poor and Vulnerable Solidarity Life and Dignity of the Human Person
Grade 1	Chapter 4 Chapter 9 Chapter 14 Chapter 19	Care for God's Creation Life and Dignity of the Human Person Solidarity Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
Grade 2	Chapter 4 Chapter 9 Chapter 14 Chapter 19	Care for God's Creation Rights and Responsibilities Call to Family, Community, and Participation Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
Grade 3	Chapter 4 Chapter 9 Chapter 14 Chapter 19	Care for God's Creation The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers Solidarity Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
Grade 4	Chapter 4 Chapter 9 Chapter 14 Chapter 19	Care for God's Creation Life and Dignity of the Human Person Call to Family, Community, and Participation Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
Grade 5	Chapter 4 Chapter 9 Chapter 14 Chapter 19	Care for God's Creation Life and Dignity of the Human Person Solidarity Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Index by Focus

Catholic Social Teaching Focus	Grades and Chapters
Life and Dignity of the Human Person	Kindergarten, Chapter 19 Grade 1, Chapter 9 Grade 4, Chapter 9 Grade 5, Chapter 9
Call to Family, Community, and Participation	Kindergarten, Chapter 4 Grade 2, Chapter 14 Grade 4, Chapter 14
Rights and Responsibilities	Grade 2, Chapter 9
The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers	Grade 3, Chapter 9
Option for the Poor and Vulnerable	Kindergarten, Chapter 9 Grade 1, Chapter 19 Grade 2, Chapter 19 Grade 3, Chapter 19 Grade 4, Chapter 19 Grade 5, Chapter 19
Solidarity	Kindergarten, Chapter 14 Grade 1, Chapter 14 Grade 3, Chapter 14 Grade 5, Chapter 14
Care for God's Creation	Grade 1, Chapter 4 Grade 2, Chapter 4 Grade 3, Chapter 4 Grade 4, Chapter 4 Grade 5, Chapter 4

Acknowledgments

The scriptural quotations in this manual are from the *Good News Translation*® (Today's English Version, Second Edition). Copyright © 1992 by the American Bible Society. All rights reserved. Bible text from the *Good News Translation* is not to be reproduced in copies or otherwise by any means except as permitted in writing by the American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023 (www.americanbible.org).

The first excerpt on page 67 is from *National Directory for Catechesis*, by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005), page 70. Copyright © 2005 USCCB, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

The second excerpt on page 67 and the excerpt on page 71 are from *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum, 1965)*, numbers 25 and 12, in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, Austin Flannery, general editor (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996). Copyright © 1996 by Reverend Austin Flannery.

The excerpt on page 75 is from "The Word of the Lord" ("*Verbum Domini*," November 2010), number 42, at www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini_en.html. Copyright © 2010 LEV.

To view copyright terms and conditions for internet materials cited here, log on to the home pages for the referenced websites.

During this manual's preparation, all citations, facts, figures, names, addresses, telephone numbers, internet URLs, and other pieces of information cited within were verified for accuracy. The authors and Saint Mary's Press staff have made every attempt to reference current and valid sources, but we cannot guarantee the content of any source, and we are not responsible for any changes that may have occurred since our verification. If you find an error in, or have a question or concern about, any of the information or sources listed within, please contact Saint Mary's Press.

Endnote cited in excerpt from "The Word of the Lord"

1. *Propositio 29*.