

saint mary's press

Discover!

Finding Faith in Life

Catechist Guide

1





Chapter
2

We Celebrate God's Love




**Chapter
2**

Lesson at a Glance

Scripture Focus

Romans 8:35, 37–39

Lesson Goals

- to identify that nothing can separate us from God's love
- to explain that Jesus shows us God's love
- to name how we celebrate God's love as a parish community

Catechism Pillar

Celebrate

Catechism References

50–73, 456–463, 1066–1199

Key Words

persecution, victory, revealed, parish

Music Suggestions

- "O the Deep, Deep Love," by Yancy (Standard Publishing)
- "I Could Sing of Your Love Forever," by Monica's Joy Choir, Ed Archer conducting (GIA)

Materials Needed

- *The Catholic Children's Bible* and the chapter 2 activity booklet
- a board or poster to write on
- a paper heart or other small heart-shaped object
- pink or red construction paper
- several pairs of scissors
- a picture of each child, printed on regular paper
- markers
- several bottles of glue
- materials for any of the additional activities you choose

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 the children understand God's love for them as his beloved children.



Get Ready! (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer

- Invite the children to turn to page 1 of the chapter 2 activity booklet.
- 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 all the children to say "Amen," and then close with another Sign of the Cross.

Engage Activity

- Ask the children to think of things or people they love (God, family, food, games, toys, etc.), allowing time for everyone to share.
- Write the named things or people on the board or in a place where the children can see. Then ask the following questions:
 - Do you love some of these things more than the others?
 - Do you think your love of some of these things might ever change?
 - Is there anything that you know for sure you will love forever?
- Help the children understand that we use the word *love* in different ways and that sometimes our love for something changes. Tell them that today they are going to learn about how deep God's love is for each of us, how it never changes, and how we celebrate God's love together with others.

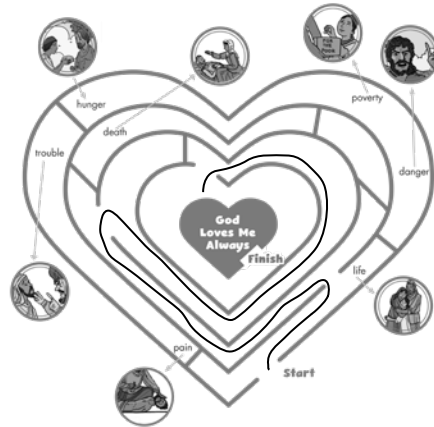


Dive In! (15 minutes)

Scripture Focus

- Invite the children to find Romans 8:31–39 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (page 1779). Point out the green leaf at the beginning and end of the passage.
- Have the children turn to the Featured Story on page 1780. Explain that the green leaves on this page mark that this is a shortened version of the same Scripture passage found on the previous page.
- Ask the children to look at the artwork on pages 1780–1781. Invite them to describe what they see.
- Read aloud the title of the Featured Story and then the verses on page 1780.
- Ask the children several questions to check for comprehension, such as the following:
 - What separates us from God's love? (*nothing*)
 - Who brings us the love of God? (*Jesus*)

- Tell them that the Scripture story lists some specific things that cannot separate, or divide, us from God's love. Point out that some of these things include trouble, hunger, danger, and death. Then remind the children that the Bible story ends by saying that nothing can separate us from the love of God.
- Have the children turn to the activity on page 2 of the activity booklet and complete it. *Solution:*



Understand It!

- Read the Understand It! on page 1781, or have a volunteer read it.
- Invite the children to summarize what they just heard, asking them key questions about the reading to check for comprehension.
- Review some of the key points with them:
 - The mother in the story tells her daughter that she will always love her, even if she accidentally breaks something, is naughty, or is mean.
 - Jesus has this same unending love for us.
 - Jesus' love for us can help us through whatever hard things we face.
 - Nothing can stop God from loving us.

Live It!

- Read the Live It! on page 1781, or have a volunteer read it.
- Have the materials ready, and help the children follow the instructions to complete the heart project.
- Ask the children if they understand why they wrote their name underneath "God Loves," and invite a few volunteers to share.
- Remind them that God loves them every day. Tell them that it is important to remember that God will never stop loving us even when we are sad, angry, in trouble, or when we make mistakes.

Tell It!

- Ask the children to look at the images in the Tell It! on page 1781.
- Invite several volunteers to share what is being shown in each image and how each image relates to the Scripture story.
- Invite them to look at the images while you reread the Scripture story on page 1780.



Discover! (25 minutes)

Core Learning Activity

Share the Love Game

- Invite everyone to stand or sit in a circle. Explain to them that you are going to hand a paper heart to the child on your right. Tell them that when that child receives the heart (or other heart-shaped object), the group will say together, "God loves (name) always!"
- Tell them that the first child will then hand the heart to the next child to his or her right. Explain that when that child receives the heart, the class will again say together, "God loves (name) always!"
- Help the children with everyone's names if they are not yet known.
- Continue to play the game, making sure that everyone, including yourself, gets a chance.
- Play the game again, but this time go the other way and tell the children that you will try to go even faster for fun.
- Consider other versions of the game, such as one in which you play music while the heart is passed around the group. When you stop the music, the group says, "God loves (name) always!" to the child left holding the heart. Repeat until every child ends up with the heart so no one is left out. Another possibility is to include hand motions with each word, such as *God* (hands in prayer) *loves* (arms crossed over heart) *name* (two hands pointing toward the child) *always* (pointer finger making a continuous circle).

Process the Activity

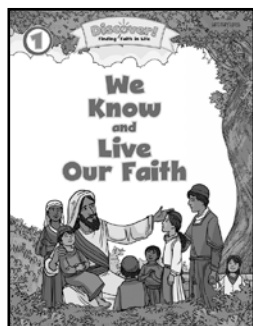
- Invite the children to share what it was like to hear everyone tell them that they are loved by God always.
- Tell them this is a reminder that we need to share with others how much God loves us. Explain that God's love is a reason to celebrate!

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 57 in its place.

Core Teaching

- Explain that Jesus was sent by God to show us God's love. Tell the children that we sometimes use the word **revealed** as another word for *showed*, so we can say Jesus revealed God's love to us.
- Continue by sharing some of the following points:
 - Jesus showed us God's love through his words and actions. The Bible teaches about all the wonderful things Jesus did on Earth. Jesus healed people. Jesus loved those who felt alone and made them feel special. Jesus showed us that nothing can separate us from God's love.
 - A **parish** is a group of people who gather together to celebrate or remember God's love. Your parish is your church family. *(Help the children identify the name of their parish.)*
 - We celebrate God's love in many ways in our parish: we go to Mass, we sing together, we pray, we are kind to one another. Our prayers and songs to God allow us to remember his love and share our joy with him. At Mass, we receive God's love through the Bible readings, the special prayers that we pray with our parish community, and the Eucharist.
 - We are kind to one another because we know that God loves each person and we should too. The more we can understand God's love for us the more we want to celebrate it with others.
- Ask the children some questions to check for comprehension, such as the following:
 - How did Jesus show us God's love? *(through his words and actions)*
 - What is a parish? *(a gathering together of people who remember and celebrate God's love)*
 - What ways can we celebrate God's love in our parish community? *(go to Mass, sing together, pray together, and be kind to one another)*
- Invite the children to turn to the activity on page 3 of the activity booklet and complete it.
- Have the children turn to page 4 of the activity booklet. Read the "People of Faith" section to the group. Add any other information you know about Saint Paul the Apostle, and encourage the children to say, "Saint Paul the Apostle, pray for us," during the next week.



We Know and Live Our Faith

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

- "Jesus Saves People from Their Sins," page 14
- "Sunday," page 20

Read the selections aloud, or invite a volunteer to read, as time allows. Check for understanding by asking several questions. You may want to summarize the key concepts for the children.



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, write them on the board, and circle them:
 - Nothing can separate us from God's love.
 - Jesus shows us God's love.
 - We celebrate God's love as a parish community.
- Ask the children to find the sticker sheet and the Seek and Find sheet in their folders. Direct them to place the chapter 2 sticker in the correct location on the Seek and Find sheet.



Chapter 2

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.
- Ask the children to open their hands in their laps to show a physical sign of being ready to receive.
- Invite them to slowly repeat after you the following:
 - Dear God / nothing can ever stop you from loving us.
 - We open our hands / to receive your gift of love.
 - We open our hearts / to know your love / in every moment of our lives.
 - We smile / as we celebrate your amazing love for us.
- Play a piece of music, if time allows, that speaks about being loved by God.
- End by saying: "May God bless us as we continue to learn and grow to celebrate the love of God. Amen." Close with a final Sign of the Cross.

Additional Activities

Materials Needed

- blank paper
- markers or crayons
- emojis drawn on the board or printed on individual sheets for each child to cut out
- several pairs of scissors
- several bottles of glue

Materials Needed

- black construction paper
- star stickers, several for each child plus extras to take home
- instruction sheet to parents explaining how to continue this activity at home

Materials Needed

- a computer with internet access
- a computer projector

No Matter What (15 minutes)

- Create emotion-face emojis (happy, sad, angry, etc.) in advance. You can either draw these on the board and invite the children to copy them to the best of their ability, or you can copy these on a sheet for each child and they can cut them out and glue them on their paper.
- Explain that this activity is meant to help the children remember that no matter what they feel or experience in their day, God loves them always.
 - Provide each child with a piece of blank paper and a marker or crayon. Write the following words on the board for them to copy on the top of their papers: "God Loves Me."
 - Invite the children to select two or three emojis that represent how they have felt throughout the day or week and to draw or cut out and glue them on their paper.
 - Tell them that they can hang these pictures somewhere at home to remind them that no matter what they are feeling, God still loves them.

Countless as the Stars (15 minutes)

- Provide each child with a piece of black construction paper and several star stickers. Invite the children to take turns sharing examples of how they felt loved by God today. You may need to help them with some ideas. For each example they can come up with, invite them to place a star on the black paper.
- Explain to the children that there are so many stars in the sky that we could never count them all. If we take time to pay attention, God's love for us is shown throughout each day in too many ways to count, just like the stars in the sky.
- Send extra star stickers home with directions for parents to continue this activity to encourage awareness of the many different ways we can see God's love. Invite parents to use this activity to prepare their children to be ready to thank God for his love when they go to Mass.

God Is with Us in Our Day (15 minutes)

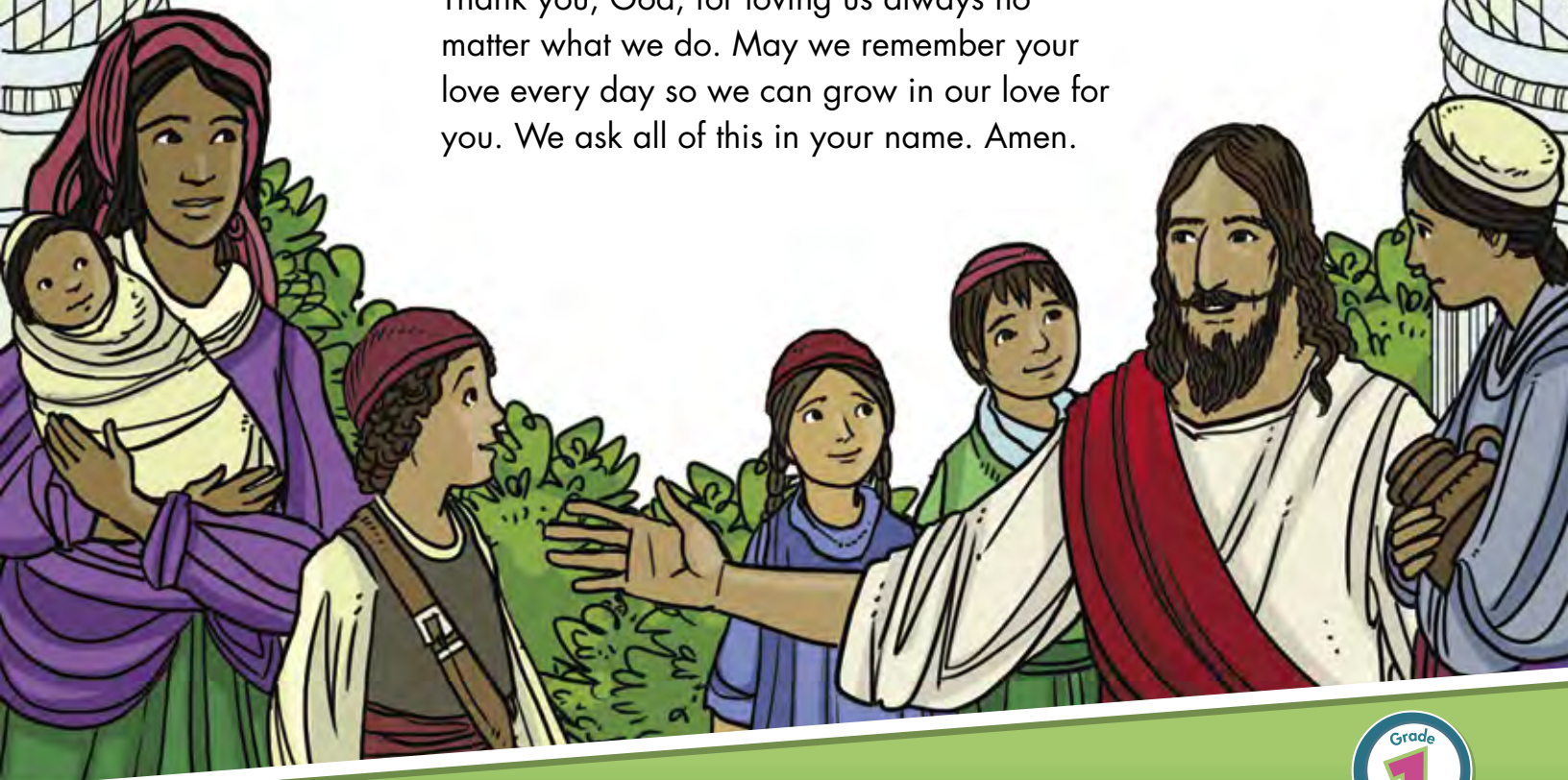
- Show the video "VeggieTales—My Day" (YouTube, 2:42).
- Invite volunteers to explain what happened in the video.
- Ask the children to share how the video reflects how we can celebrate God's love throughout our day.
- Celebrate of God's love by counting to three and inviting the children to jump, put their hands up in the air, cheer, or do all three. Do this several times, counting faster and slower to make it more exciting.
- Remind the children that when they are happy, sad, or busy, God's love remains the same. God is always pouring out his love for us to receive and to celebrate.

We Celebrate God's Love

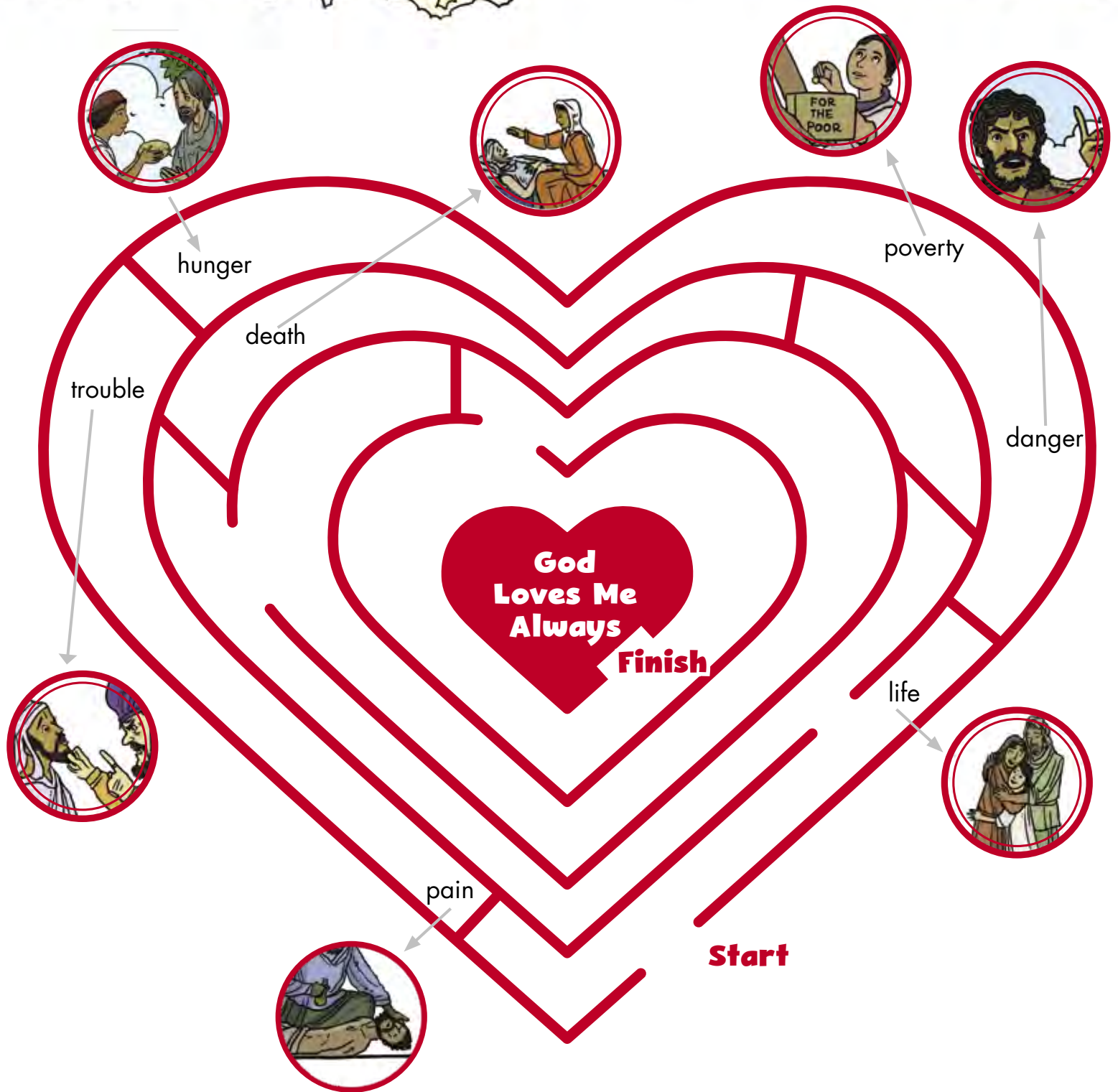
Romans 8:35, 37–39

Prayer

Thank you, God, for loving us always no matter what we do. May we remember your love every day so we can grow in our love for you. We ask all of this in your name. Amen.



Find your way to the center heart in the maze to learn that nothing can separate you from God's love.



Draw yourself celebrating God's love with your church family. You might be singing, praying, or listening.



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.

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.

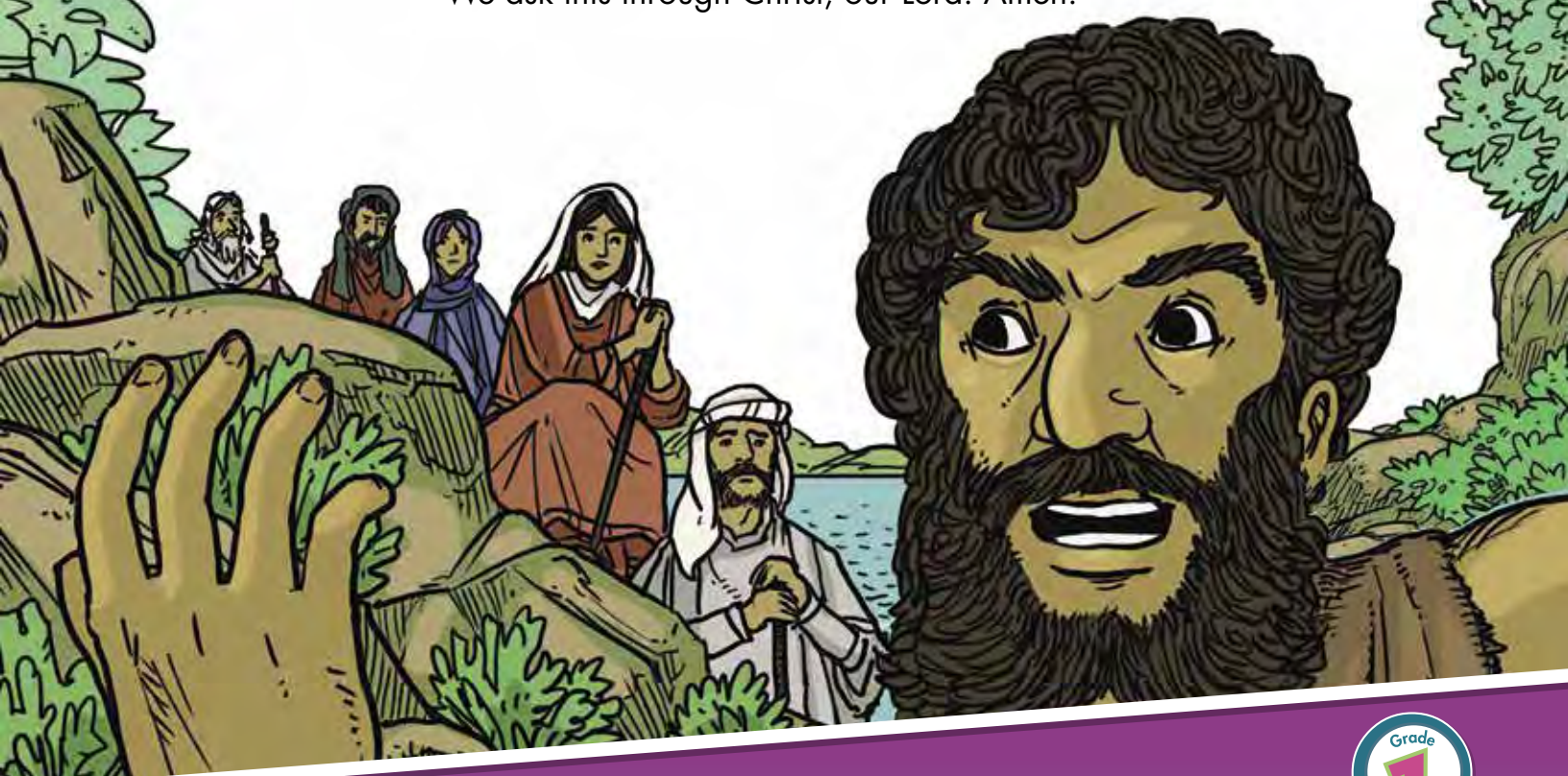


Preparing for Jesus


Mark 1:4-8


Prayer


Loving God, you sent your Son, Jesus, to show us the way to you. Help us to follow your way every day and to grow closer to you this Advent season. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.




Color the picture below using the correct color for each number listed. Find the name of the person who helped prepare God's people for Jesus.


1 = 

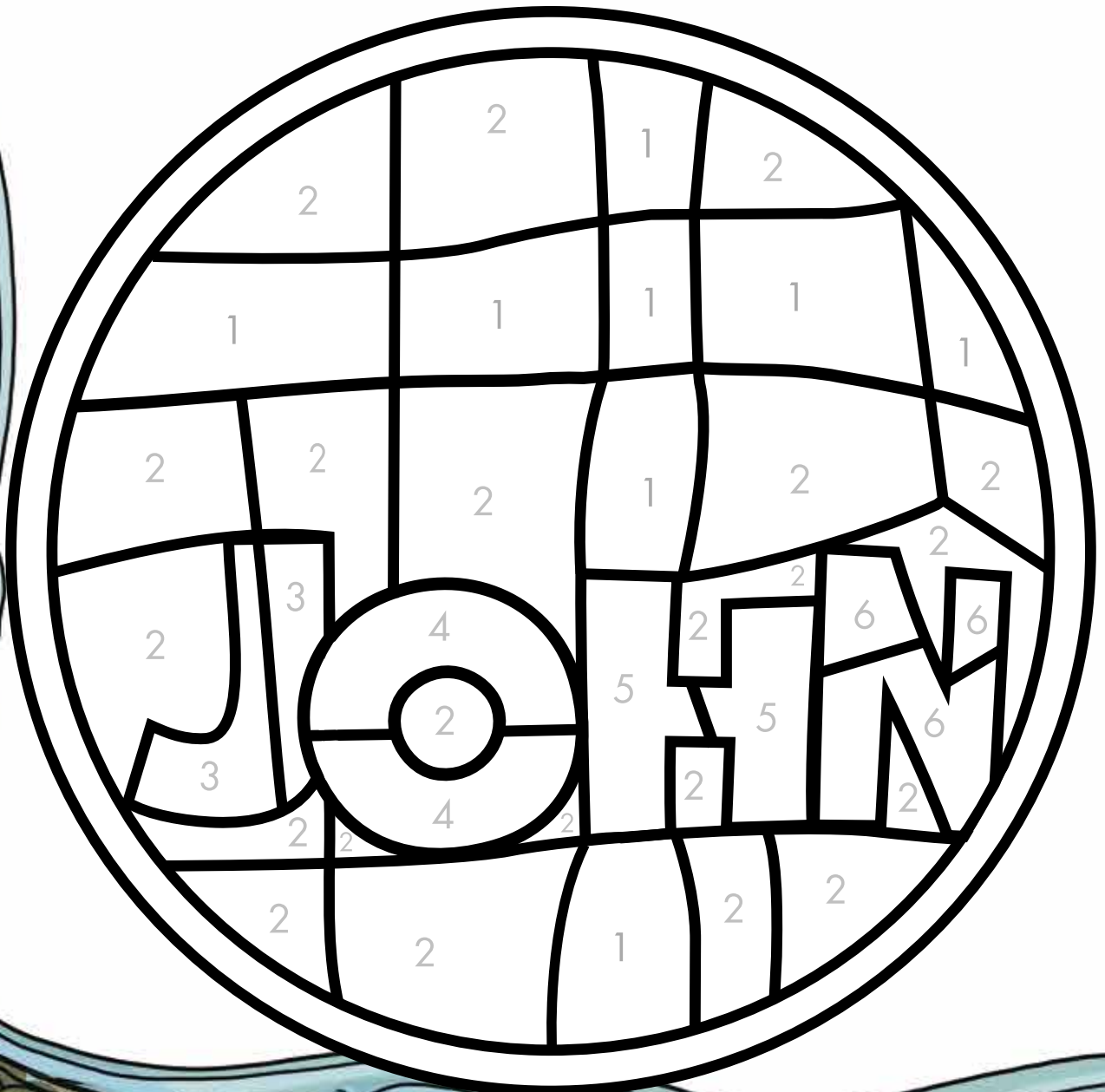
3 = 

5 = 

2 = 

4 = 

6 = 





A Soft Welcome for Baby Jesus

Leader: Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

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

Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are truly God and truly human. More than two thousand years ago, you came into the world as a tiny baby.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: As we prepare to welcome you at Christmas, we offer you all of our good actions throughout this Advent.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: We offer you our lives, our hearts, and everything you have given to us.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: We will look for your presence in our world and in one another.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: We will welcome you with every kind action we do for one another.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Family Page

Background Reflection

Anyone who has ever helped prepare to welcome a new baby into a family already has some sense of what Advent can mean to us. The sacrifices we make, as we prepare space in our homes and hearts for this new member of our family, are made with excitement and anticipation. In a similar way, when we choose to take on sacrifices or penances as part of our Advent practice, we make room for the love of Jesus in our lives.

Sacrifice and *penance* are really shorthand terms for “loving.” Love means going beyond ourselves to care for the good of another. Learning to love is a lifelong task. We practice this task more mindfully in Advent. As adults, we too can learn from the practice of placing straw into the manger to prepare “a soft bed” for Jesus, marking our acts of love (or penance, or sacrifice). Sharing this practice with our child helps us to realize that even our smallest acts of love have infinite value in the eyes of Jesus.

Family Activities

- Write the names of each family member on slips of paper, and place the slips into a bag, bowl, or basket. Each person draws the name of a family member, who then becomes their “*Christkindl*,” or “Christ Child,” for the season of Advent. Each person has the challenge to do one kind action for their *Christkindl* per day.
- Set aside time to talk with your child about waiting. Ask her or him if it is hard or easy to wait for good things to happen. Share one or two ideas that you use for yourself when you are trying to wait patiently.
- Watch the video “Tell Me the Story: John the Baptist” (YouTube, 2:23) together. Explain that John the Baptist helped the people get ready for Jesus. As a family, discuss ways you are getting ready for Jesus and sharing God’s love this Advent.



People of Faith

The Immaculate Conception of Mary

God kept Mary free from sin before she was born so that she could be the mother of Jesus. The angel Gabriel called Mary “full of grace” because she never sinned. We celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.

Prayer

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

Lord Jesus, we look forward to welcoming you at Christmas with excitement and joy. Help us to act with patience and kindness this Advent. We ask this in your name. Amen.