

Virtues in Practice



Charity

GRADES 6—8

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in Practice

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DOMINICAN SISTERS OF ST. CECILIA CONGREGATION
Nashville, Tennessee

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What is Virtue?

A virtue is a good habit.

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

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

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

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

Who are the Saints?

A saint is a person who is in heaven.

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

Steps of Canonization*:

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

**The Church has the authority to bypass this process, and does so at times.*

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

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September

PRAYER:

Act of Charity

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

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

Saint Paul tells us that charity is the greatest of the virtues (1 Corinthians 13:13) and Saint John tells us that God is charity, or love, and that those who live in charity, live in God (1 John 4:16b). Charity spurs us on to give our every thought, word, and deed to God out of love for Him, and to care for each person we meet as we would Christ Himself. If we look at how we treat the people who aren't our best friends, or the people who irritate or even repulse us, the way we treat them shows how much or how little love is in our heart, and how honest we are when we say, "I love God" (1 John 4:20).

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Blessed Laura Vicuna
(1891-1904, Chile & Argentina)
Feast: January 22

Your parents and teachers often pray for you. How often do you pray for *them*? They'd give up their lives for you....could you do the same?

When Blessed Laura Vicuna was only three years old, her father died. His parents were nobility, but had rejected him when he married a peasant. After that, he had worked as a soldier, so his death left his wife and two daughters terribly poor. A wealthy ranch owner, Manuel, offered to support Laura's mother and to pay for her two daughters to attend a boarding school if she would agree to live with him. He did not ask her to marry him, but expected her to act like his wife. Desperate for money to support the girls, she agreed.

Laura loved the Salesian Sisters who ran her school and took to heart all that she learned. On the day of her First Communion, she noticed that her mother did not receive Communion, and did not seem truly happy. She began to pray often to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, asking for her mother to grow closer to God and to be happy. That year, she enrolled in the Sodality of the Children of Mary, and always wore a medal of Our Lady on a wide ribbon, thinking of it as a sort of protective shield.

During school vacations over the next few years Laura began to understand, with sorrow, the difficult situation of her mother. Several times, Manuel began to act inappropriately toward Laura, also. Her mother drew the line and demanded that Manuel stay away from her

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



Blessed Laura Vicuna

daughters. He agreed, but sometimes forgot his agreement if he had been drinking.

When Laura was 11, the bishop visited her school and she asked him if she could become a Sister. He knew that Laura was popular, a great athlete, and very holy and mature for her age, but he told her to wait until she was older. Yet Laura wouldn't give up the idea. She begged her confessor to ask God if she was called to take vows. The priest agreed that she did have a vocation, but they kept it a secret between them. That Easter, after her confirmation, Laura asked her confessor for permission to offer her life to God for her mother's conversion, and he gave it.

When Laura was 13 she fell very ill and was sent home to recover, but her health only grew worse. Manuel even physically abused her. Laura died within a short period from a combination of illness and injury. On her death bed she told her mother her secret, "Mama, I'm dying, but I'm happy to offer my life for you. I asked Our Lord for this." She also said that she forgave Manuel. Inspired by the sacrifice of her daughter, her mother left Manuel and was reconciled to God and His Church.

DISCUSSION:

1. What are the differences between a theological virtue and other virtues?
2. What does it mean to love your neighbor?
3. How did Blessed Laura Vicuna show her love for God? For her neighbor?

HOME PROJECT: Due on September _____

PRAYER:

- V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
- R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*
- V. Let us pray.
- R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read and reflect on 1 Corinthians 13, Mark 12:28-31, and 1 John 4:16b, 20-21.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Role-play the following situations, practicing how to respond with charity.

1. It's Sunday morning and you're absolutely dead tired. Your mom sends your annoying little brother to wake you up for Mass.
2. Your soccer coach announces that there will be a mandatory practice to prepare for a game against your toughest rivals. Two of your teammates are students from your parish school, and they realize that the practice is at the same time as the Passion Play being prepared and led by your class.

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

3. You're praying after receiving Holy Communion. One of your best friends is kneeling next to you and starts whispering to you about what other people are doing.
4. You are playing basketball at recess when you notice a classmate standing off alone in a corner. Last time you asked the person to play, he/she said, "no, thanks."
5. Two of your friends are mad at another friend for ditching your table at lunch, so they are making fun of that person.
6. It's Friday afternoon in class. Your teacher looks tired, and your classmates are pushing the line, trying to see how much they can get away with before getting in trouble.

PRAYER:

Blessed Laura Vicuna, you truly believed that the way we treat other people is the measure of our love for God. Pray for me, that my faith would increase, that I might seek to love God with our every thought, word, and deed and manifest this love by the way I treat my neighbor. In little and big ways, give us the love to lay down our lives for others! Amen. Blessed Laura Vicuna, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Blessed Laura Vicuna was one of many saints who were members of a sodality dedicated to Our Lady. A sodality is a religious group, like a club for holiness, that usually includes prayer, service, and social activities.

If you were part of a sodality, what would you want it to be like? In a small group, brainstorm and write out your answers to the questions below. If you design a really great group, you might want to make it a reality!

1. How will the members grow in holiness through the intercession Our Lady? Will they promise to say certain prayers? Which prayers should they say each day? Each week/month/year? Should they say these prayers together or on their own?
2. Is there a certain feast day of Mary that the group would like to honor with an annual celebration? (*January 1: Mary Mother of God, February 11: Our Lady of Lourdes, March 25: Annunciation, March 31: Visitation, August 15: Assumption, August 22: Queenship of Mary, September 8: Mary's Birthday, October 7: Our Lady of the Rosary, December 8: Immaculate Conception, December 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe*). What will the celebration entail?
3. How often should they meet? Should some meetings be for prayer, some for service, others for fun—or should meetings combine two or three aspects? What will the members do to have fun together?
4. Should members be girls only, boys only, or mixed?
5. What will the name of the group be?
6. Would you have a specific focus for service? Who will you help and how?

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

PRAYER:

Pray the Fifth Luminous Mystery of the Rosary, the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Ask Our Lady to increase your devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist and to unite all Christians in charity.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

REVIEW:

1. What is charity?


2. Who is Blessed Laura Vicuna?

GROWTH IN CHARITY:

1. Who cooperated with you on your charity project?

2. What did you try and how did it go? Did it help you to grow in charity?

3. What more could you do in this area?

When you see this symbol, 
remember to invoke your guardian angel!

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

October

PRAYER:

Act of Charity

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Friendship: sharing a mutual love that seeks the good of the other.

What is the difference between “fair-weather friends”, “friends-for-a-time”, and someone who is truly a “friend forever”? There are three types of friendship: friendship of utility, friendship of pleasure, and friendship of virtue. The last is the strongest and longest-lasting, and it often starts out as one of the other two kinds.

Friendships based on utility or pleasure just happen according to circumstances and, unless they grow into friendships of virtue, they usually end when circumstances change. You might be friends with someone because he is the only other person your age on your street that can play with you (pleasure), because she is a great study-buddy for Science (utility), or because you two have the most in common in the class, and so you choose each other for activity partners or for someone to hang out with at recess (utility and/or pleasure).

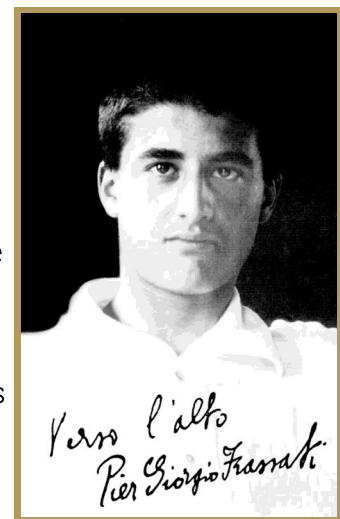
Friendship of virtue is much more rare and valuable. This kind of friend loves you for who you are, not for what he/she gets out of the friendship, and wants what is best for you. True friends are willing to risk their own popularity if it will do you good. Ultimately, they want you to get to heaven, and will be honest with you about things you need to work on to grow closer to God.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati
(1901-1925, Italy)

Feast: July 4

Born into a wealthy Italian family, Pier Giorgio lived frugally and gave his money (and several times even the shoes or coat he was wearing) to the poor. His father was an agnostic, a senator, and the founder of a liberal newspaper. Neither he nor his wife were very affectionate with their children. Pier Giorgio’s parents disapproved of his faith, but this did not keep him from his daily Mass and Rosary, and sometimes whole nights of Eucharistic Adoration. He was often scolded for being late for meals but he never revealed that his tardiness was due to feeding the poor, running errands to buy them medicine, or finding a place for widows and their children to stay. The few times that his parents caught Pier Giorgio giving his things away, they punished him.



Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

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

Despite the somber and tense life at home, Pier Giorgio was cheerful and popular, and attracted a group of friends that jokingly called themselves "The Sinister Ones". They often played practical jokes or enjoyed fun trips, and wrote coded letters to anyone who had been missing. Pier Giorgio was a leader in the group, and made sure that no matter where they went, Mass was included. Although they joked and had fun, the friends often spoke of spiritual things, too, and helped one another to grow in holiness. In spite of having many friends, Frassati found school tedious and difficult, but pushed himself to do well out of a sense of family honor. He found greater joy in sports, including hiking, riding, horseback riding, skiing, and mountain climbing. His took as a personal motto the phrase *verso l'alto!*—in English, "to the heights!", which for him meant not only the summit of a mountain, but heaven.

Eventually, Pier Giorgio fell in love with one member of his group of friends. Cautiously, he tested his parents' general attitude toward the girl, and realized that they would never approve of the match. In order to spare her a life of scorn from her potential in-laws, he kept his affections a secret from her, although he suffered much in doing so.

At age 21, Frassati became a Lay Dominican and took the name "Fra Girolamo" after Savonarola, a famous, fiery Dominican preacher of social reform during the Renaissance. Many of the poor only ever knew Frassati by this religious name, and had no idea that he was from the family of a wealthy senator.

When he was 24, Pier Giorgio contracted polio, probably from the poor whom he served. He was ill for six weeks, but his parents did not notice and instead were upset with him for not showing greater concern for his grandmother who was dying. They were shocked when he died on July 4, 1925. At the news of his death, literally thousands of poor people came to the funeral of the young man who had so generously served them. Pope John Paul II beatified Pier Giorgio Frassati in 1990, calling him the "Man of the Eight Beatitudes."

DISCUSSION:

1. Do you think some of Pier Giorgio's friendships began as friendships of utility/pleasure?
2. Was it right for Frassati to sacrifice his chance at love because of his parents?

HOME PROJECT: Due on October _____

PRAYER:

- V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
- R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*
- V. Let us pray.
- R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read and reflect on John 15:12-14.

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

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Answer these questions on your own, then share answers with a group or the whole class.

1. List some examples of each type of friendship (*not* names). How can you identify each kind?

utility

pleasure

virtue

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. What is the best response if someone wants to hang out with you, but you want to be alone with your friend(s)?

3. Why is having friends important?



4. If your friend is mean to someone, how should you respond as a true friend? Give an example situation.

5. What do you think is the best way to grow in the virtue of friendship? Be specific.

PRAYER:

Blessed Pier Giorgio, help us to grow in the virtue of friendship. Intercede for us, that we may be an inspiration to our friends, as you were. Help us to strive for the heights of holiness, as you did, and in our recreation to draw one another to heaven. Amen. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, pray for us.

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

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Blessed Pier Giorgio was a great athlete who always put his faith first. With a small group, brainstorm and write out some ways that you could sanctify your school sports teams.

1. Do you ask the pastor for a blessing of the team to start the season?
2. Do games interfere with Sunday Mass? Does the team ever attend Mass together?
3. Do you pray before/after practices and games? Do you have a patron saint?
4. Do you hold one another accountable for Christian behavior on the court and field?
How?
5. Is there anything about your teams that tempts people to be unkind? How could you improve/reverse that aspect from the beginning?
6. How can you tell if a team's purpose is simply to win, or to have fun and glorify God?

PRAYER:

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to you do we send up our sighs, mourning, and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

REVIEW:

1. What are the three types of friendship?

2. Who is Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati?

GROWTH IN FRIENDSHIP:

1. Who cooperated with you on your friendship project?

2. What did you try and how did it go? Did it help you to grow in friendship?

3. What more could you do in this area?

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

November

PRAYER:

Act of Charity

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Courtesy: being thoughtful of others

The word *courtesy* refers to the medieval royal court. The court was a group of people made up of knights, ladies, and gentlemen. Back then, those terms were official titles indicating ownership of wealth and lands. It was understood that the rich were well educated and knew enough manners to be at ease with royalty.

So . . . courtesy is outdated, right? Wrong. Courtesy flows from charity. The medieval royal court was a Christian society; they studied Christ's commands to love God above all and one's neighbor as oneself. The society we live in today tries more and more to remove Christianity from common life, so many people today don't see a problem with being rude or neglecting to protect and care for the most vulnerable members of society.

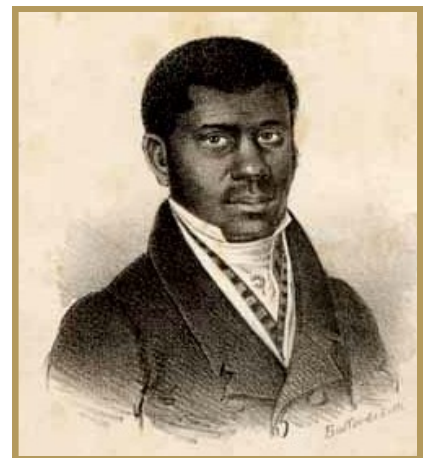
When we practice courtesy, we honor and defer to others out of respect for the dignity of every person as a child of God. We honor God's laws and the boundaries that protect moral behavior between men and women. Good manners without kindness of heart is not courtesy. Courtesy means being thoughtful of others, because Jesus told us that whatever we do to them we do to Him. Courtesy is also a humble recognition that none of us are self-sufficient. We depend on others, and so we offer small tokens of respect to say thank you. It is only fair that we should take care of things and places we share with others because we expect them to do the same out of consideration for us.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Venerable Pierre Toussaint
(1766-1853, Haiti & United States)
Feast: June 30

Pierre Toussaint was born as a slave on the plantation of John Berard in Haiti. Berard noticed that Pierre's grandmother had taught him to read, and that he was a bright child, so he assigned Pierre to be a slave in the house rather than in the fields. He opened his library to the boy, encouraged him to study, and treated him as one of the family.

During a period of dangerous political unrest in Haiti, the family moved to New York City. The house in New York was so much smaller than the plantation house in Haiti that there was not much for a slave to do. John Berard's young



*Drawing of Pierre Toussaint
from a 19th century biography*

COURTESY: being thoughtful of others

wife suggested that Pierre could be an apprentice to her hairdresser, spending his time to learn a trade. Meanwhile, John returned to Haiti to check on his property and possessions and found them all destroyed. He died while he was there, making his young bride a young widow, stranded in a foreign country, without any income.

Pierre Toussaint found that the wealthiest ladies appreciated his talent for hair-styling, and he began to make a good profit. Before long, he had enough money to buy freedom for himself and for his sister, Rosalie. Pierre purchased his sister's freedom, but sacrificed his own: he felt so indebted to the Berard family for the kindness they had shown him, that he could not leave the poor young widow defenseless and without means. He knew that it would destroy her dignity to accept gifts of money from him, so he opted instead to remain her slave. As a slave, he asked to take on the responsibilities of running the household, and his mistress agreed. No one from the outside would have guessed the truth that he was not only managing the house, but funding it himself.

Pierre was saddened to see his mistress sink further and further into depression, and sought to lift her spirits through his constant acts of courtesy toward her. Remembering the good times she had enjoyed in Haiti, he arranged parties at the house, and secretly paid for them himself. This seemed to do the trick, and Madame Berard even remarried, but Pierre continued to fund the house. He didn't mind, as long as she was happy.

On her death bed, Madame Berard freed Pierre from his slavery, but in truth it was only a formality. He would have been wealthy had he not funded her household and given the rest of his money to poor people in the city. And his status as a talented hairdresser made him the confidante and counselor of many of the most influential ladies in New York City.

After being freed, Pierre continued attending daily Mass and helping the poor. He married Juliette Noel and together they opened a home and school for orphans. They helped many slaves afford freedom, helped poor widows find jobs, and made secret contributions to aristocratic widows to preserve their dignity.

When Venerable Pierre Toussaint died at the age of 87, his funeral was packed with crowds of people from all classes and races who had called him a friend. Although divided by many social customs of the time, they all agreed that Pierre Toussaint was a true gentleman, a true Christian, and a saint. Today you can venerate his relics at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, where he is buried among bishops and cardinals.

DISCUSSION:

1. Rosalie criticized Pierre for remaining a slave. Who do you think was right?
2. Do we practice courtesy in the classroom, cafeteria, hallways, and playground?
3. The internet is a new public forum where manners are sometimes suspended. Why do you think this is the case? Discuss courtesies that should be used when communicating online or when texting.

HOME PROJECT: Due on November _____

COURTESY: being thoughtful of others

PRAYER:

- V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
- R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*
- V. Let us pray.
- R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read and reflect on Romans 12:9-10.



VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Make a courtesy video! Discuss common courtesies, especially between men and women. What are some general courtesies you need to work on as a class? What are some courtesies you hope to see in your classmates when they are adults with their own families? See how many you can add to the list below.

Circle the courtesies you think need the most improvement. Video record students role-playing these acts. Watch the video clips as a class and discuss which examples are most truly courteous. Does it depend more on *what* the person does, or *how* they do it?

Ideas for Scenes:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Letting ladies go first through a doorway | Holding the door for someone |
| Greeting people in the hallway | Entering the hallway quietly after recess |
| Open/close a car door for a lady | Helping someone carry things |
| Thanking a teacher as you leave class | Leaving room for others to pass in a hallway |
| Picking up messes | Making eye contact with speakers |

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

PRAYER:

Blessed Pierre Toussaint, thank you for showing us that whatever we do to the least we do to Christ. Help us to defer to others because they are made in the image of God. Pray that we may become more thoughtful of others and imitate you. Amen. Blessed Pierre Toussaint, pray for us!

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Look up some of the following hairstyles. Draw pictures of a few different styles and/or try to create them on your friends! Afterwards, discuss why you think customers tend to form a bond with their hairdressers, and what kind of relationship you think Blessed Pierre Toussaint had with his customers.

- Afro, Bangs, Beehive, Bouffant, Braid, Bun, Corn Rows, Finger Wave, French Braid, French Twist, Flip, Odango, Slicked-Back*

COURTESY: being thoughtful of others

PRAYER:

Pray the Second Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Visitation. Reflect upon Our Lady's thoughtfulness to her cousin, Elizabeth. Ask her help in being thoughtful of others.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

REVIEW:

1. What is courtesy?

2. Who is Venerable Pierre Toussaint?

GROWTH IN COURTESY:

1. Who cooperated with you on your courtesy project?

2. What did you try and how did it go? Did it help you to grow in courtesy?

3. What more could you do in this area?

December

PRAYER:

Act of Charity

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Purity: keeping your soul free of sin

If a bag of sugar says “pure sugar” we know we will find nothing but sugar inside. When we speak of pure water, we expect the water to be free from chemicals, dirt, and disease. In the same way, God calls us to have pure hearts, hearts that are totally for God and for love, hearts that are free from sin and selfishness.

To have pure hearts, we must set our hearts totally on God and not let them become contaminated by the impurity of sin. Sometimes this means being counter-cultural in our choices of music, movies, and dress, because we do not want to allow anything sinful to enter our minds and hearts, and we do not want to become an occasion of sin for others. Someone who is confident in God’s love does not need to do what is wrong in order to seek the approval of others. Be confident! Never lower your standards, but surround yourself with friends who seek purity, and glorify God in all you say and do.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Maria Goretti

(1890-1902, Italy)

Feast: July 6

Maria Goretti was born to a very poor family. Her father and mother, unable to adequately support Maria and her three brothers and sisters, moved from their small farm in Corinaldo, Italy to become tenant farmers in the Pontine Marshes. They shared the rent with Mr. Serenelli and his son, Alessandro, because they could not afford their own home.

When Maria was nine her father became sick and died. Maria now took up the cooking, housework, and care for her younger brothers and sisters so her mother could work in the fields. Her love overflowed in joyful care for them. She taught her siblings their prayers and the teachings of the Catholic faith she had learned from her mother. She generously put the rest of the family first, giving them larger portions of the food. Once the grocer gave her an apple. Instead of eating it, she put it away to take to her brother. Then he gave her a cookie, but this too she put away for her sister. Finally he gave her another cookie which he insisted she eat herself! She did so immediately to please him.

Maria’s one desire was to receive Holy Communion. She found a woman who could teach

PURITY: keeping your soul free of sin



*Saint Maria Goretti by
Giuseppe Brovelli-Soffredini*

her Catechism classes, and would walk the two hours to town a few times a week until she was prepared. On the day of her First Holy Communion, Maria went around the house asking everyone's forgiveness for any ways she had offended them. Because of her obvious love for Jesus in Holy Communion, the parish priest allowed her receive Communion three times that month, which was a rare privilege in the days before frequent Holy Communion.

Alessandro Serenelli liked to read sensational newspapers. Perhaps this contributed to his restless heart. He saw how beautiful Maria was becoming, and he tried to approach her several times. Each time Maria rebuked him. She tried to stay near her mother and never to be alone with him. On July 5, 1902, Maria's mother was working in a nearby field while Maria was near the house watching her younger sister. Alessandro had been working in the field too, but he came alone back to the house. He called Maria inside, but she would not come. He then dragged her back into the building. As she fought him, she screamed, "No! No! No! What are you doing? Do not touch me! It is a sin—you will go to Hell!" Suddenly he pulled out a knife and began to stab Maria.

Maria survived the attack long enough to receive the Anointing of the Sick and Holy Communion for the last time. Before she died, her parish priest asked her if she forgave Alessandro. She responded, "Yes, I too, for the love of Jesus, forgive him, and I want him to be with me in Paradise." She was only eleven years old.

Her attacker, Alessandro, was sentenced to 30 years in prison. He did not repent for his crime until one night, after eight years, he dreamed that Maria came towards him in a field and offered him fourteen beautiful flowers, one for each time he had stabbed her. The next day he confessed his sins and began a life of penance. When he was released from prison he went first to Maria's mother to ask her forgiveness. She forgave him, and they attended Christmas Midnight Mass together. Both were still alive when Maria was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1950 and proclaimed a martyr for holy purity.

DISCUSSION:

1. What are some of the virtues in Maria Goretti's life that supported growth in purity?
2. How might Alessandro have better guarded his own purity of heart as a youth?
3. Why is it hard to be pure in today's culture? How can we protect purity?

HOME PROJECT: Due on December _____

PRAYER:

- V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
- R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*
- V. Let us pray.
- R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read and discuss Hebrews 12:14, Matthew 5:8, and Philippians 4:7-8.

PURITY: keeping your soul free of sin

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Prayerfully read each passage. Think about the "Reflect" questions, and then write an answer to each "Respond" question on a separate piece of paper. Be ready to discuss your answers.

1. "The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness. And if the light in you is darkness, how great will the darkness be." (Matthew 6:22-23)

Reflect: Do the things I look at fill me with light or darkness?

Respond: When, where, and how do my friends and I need to guard our eyes to have light in ourselves?

2. "And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God." (John 3:19-21)

Reflect: Do I live my life in the light? Are there things in my life I would not want my parents or friends to know about?

Respond: What are some important times and places when teenagers need to "keep the lights on," literally or figuratively?

3. "Immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among you, as is fitting among holy ones, no obscenity or silly or suggestive talk, which is out of place, but instead, thanksgiving....So do not be associated with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord....Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light." (Ephesians 5:2-13)

Reflect: Do I use or listen to obscene or suggestive talk?

Respond: What can I do if my friends or classmates begin to use obscene or suggestive language?

4. Jesus proclaimed, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). But at another time He said to His disciples, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father." (Matthew 5:14-16)

Reflect: How am I called to bring the light of Christ to the world, to my family, to my friends, to my classmates?

Respond: How can teenagers give witness to the light of Christ by the way they speak, act, dress, and spend their time?



PRAYER:

Dear Saint Maria Goretti, teach us to love Jesus with pure hearts and to flee from anything that could stain our souls with sin. Obtain for us from God victory in temptation, comfort in life's sorrows, and the graces we need to enjoy the pure vision of God in heaven. Amen. Saint Maria Goretti, pray for us!

SAINT ACTIVITY:

1. Saint Maria Goretti prayed for Alessandro's salvation. Write a prayer "for protection of purity". As part of the prayer you might want to invoke your guardian angel, Our Lady and other saints who are models of purity. Ask Jesus for the grace of protection for your purity and the purity of your friends.
2. Research the Angelic Warfare Confraternity and consider enrolling as a special way to help protect purity and grow in the virtues of purity and chastity.

PRAYER:

Pray the First Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Annunciation. Reflect upon Our Lady's total availability to God and her openness to His grace. Ask her to watch over you and to help you to be single-hearted in seeking only what is pleasing to God.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

REVIEW:

1. What is purity?
2. Who is Saint Maria Goretti?

GROWTH IN PURITY:

1. Who cooperated with you on your purity project?
2. What did you try and how did it go? Did it help you to grow in purity?
3. What more could you do in this area?

PURITY: keeping your soul free of sin

January

PRAYER:

Act of Charity

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Fortitude: being brave and strong in face of trials

All of us have experienced moments of fear. Sometimes we wish we were brave, but it just doesn't seem possible. We avoid the person who scares us, procrastinate on the project that seems too difficult, or leave a friend hanging when they need our help. In these moments that we must remember the power of grace. Often we put up a tough front and hide our weaknesses because we worry about what others will think of us. It is freeing to recognize the fact that *all* of us are weak, so there's no need to hide it. When we recognize our weakness, we realize not only how much we need God's help but we also see how strong He is, and how much He loves us. In recognizing our weakness and relying on God's strength, we find true freedom, and can say with Saint Paul, "I will gladly boast of my weaknesses . . . for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good . . . It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause" (paragraph 1808).

Sometimes we can describe behaviors as passive, assertive, or aggressive. To be assertive means to get involved and defend a just cause, and can be a type of fortitude. Aggressive behavior tries to overpower another person, and doesn't respect boundaries or the dignity of the person; obviously, this is the opposite of charity. What is not so obvious is that passive behavior can also be the opposite of charity. When we see others being hurt or misled, we must pray for the grace to be strong enough to defend what is right.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Paul Miki and Companions

(1562-1597, Japan)

Feast: February 6

Saint Paul Miki was a missionary to his own people in Japan. He became a Jesuit brother at a young age, and was known for his preaching. The Jesuits converted many souls to Christ, and at first the government and tradesmen supported them. This changed when a Spanish ship wrecked on the coast of Japan, and as the Japanese took the goods the ship had carried, the angry captain showed the Japanese how powerful Spain was by pointing to a map and showing all the lands they had conquered. He warned them that



St. Paul Miki and Companions, Church of the Holy Martyrs of Japan, Sullivan, MO

FORTITUDE: being brave and strong in face of trials

the first step to conquering a land was sending in priests to convert the people. This made the Japanese see the Jesuits as a threat, and Christianity was outlawed.

As a demonstration to frighten other Christians into abandoning their faith, Saint Paul Miki and 25 of his companions were forced to march 600 miles from Kyoto to Nagasaki, and were tortured along the way. With God as their strength, they overcame their exhaustion and fear, and as they marched they sang the *Te Deum*, an ancient hymn of praise to God. When they reached Nagasaki, they were crucified.

Saint Paul Miki is known for giving his last sermon from the cross on which he died. The onlookers were told that the people being killed were foreigners who wanted to conquer Japan, but Paul Miki proclaimed from the cross that he was Japanese by birth, and a follower of Christ. He forgave his persecutors and prayed for their conversion.

DISCUSSION:

1. Think about passive behavior. Is this sometimes the same as a sin of omission? Are there ever times when it is virtuous *not* to act?
2. How did Saint Paul Miki and his companions show fortitude? Use the words passive and aggressive to describe other ways that they could have responded to persecution.

HOME PROJECT: Due on January _____

PRAYER:

- V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
 R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*
 V. Let us pray.
 R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read and reflect on Psalm 27:1-3, Psalm 18:2-3, 32-35 & Luke 21:12-19.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Choose an activity from the list below:

1. *Research:* For over 200 years, the people of Japan had no priests, but they still kept their faith, passing it on in secret. Research the condition of the Catholic Church in Japan today, and tell your classmates about it. What percentage of the Japanese population is Catholic?
2. *Creative Writing:* Pretend you are one of the 26 martyrs on your way to Nagasaki and write a journal entry telling about your day, what you expect will happen, and your prayers for strength and courage.
3. Make posters to encourage others to offer prayers and sacrifices for missionaries.
4. Copy and illustrate the *Te Deum* (page 27).
5. Think of a hymn of praise or come up with a cheer that would give you courage in the face of fear. Share it with the class.

FORTITUDE: being brave and strong in face of trials

PRAYER:

Saint Paul Miki, you became a Jesuit and preached God's truth fearlessly by your words and actions. Help us to be strong in our youth. Help us to spread the Gospel in word and deed, to defend what is right, and to be unafraid in the face of persecution. Amen. Saint Paul Miki, pray for us!

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Practicing the virtue of fortitude in everyday interactions helps us to grow strong enough to face larger issues and situations. Whether the situation is large or small, Christ is our strength and we should call on Him!

1. List "larger issues" that call for young people and adults to exercise fortitude.
2. List "smaller issues" that call for young people and adults to exercise fortitude.
3. Role-play some of the situations on your "smaller issues" list as practice for handling the larger issues of life.

Label popsicle sticks or a beach ball with the parts of the FORTITUDE acronym shown to the right, and take turns drawing sticks or catching the ball to choose from these different methods to be assertive in everyday situations.

FORTITUDE:

ideas for standing up for someone else

Fine/Penalty

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

Opposite

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

Report it

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

Take over

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

Investigate

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

Talk about it later

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

Understanding

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

Distract

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

Exclaim

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



PRAYER:

Saint Paul Miki and his companions sang the *Te Deum* (below) on their 600 mile march to crucifixion. Recite it together as a class prayer. At the end of the prayer, "V" and "R" stand for verse and response: choose a leader to read the verses, and have the whole class respond.

O God, we praise You, and acknowledge You to be the supreme Lord.
 Everlasting Father, all the earth worships You.
 All the Angels, the heavens and all angelic powers,
 All the Cherubim and Seraphim, continuously cry to You:
 Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!
 Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Your glory.
 The glorious choir of the Apostles,
 The wonderful company of Prophets,
 The white-robed army of Martyrs, praise You.
 Holy Church throughout the world acknowledges You:
 The Father of infinite Majesty;
 Your adorable, true and only Son;
 Also the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.
 O Christ, You are the King of glory!
 You are the everlasting Son of the Father.
 When You took it upon Yourself to deliver man,
 You did not spurn the Virgin's womb.
 Having overcome the sting of death, You opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
 You sit at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.
 We believe that You will come to be our Judge.
 We, therefore, beg You to help Your servants whom You have redeemed with Your Precious Blood.
 Let them be numbered with Your Saints in everlasting glory.
 V. Save Your people, O Lord, and bless Your inheritance!
 R. Govern them, and raise them up forever.
 V. Every day we thank You.
 R. And we praise Your Name forever, yes, forever and ever.
 V. Keep us today, O Lord, from all sin.
 R. Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us.
 V. Lord, show us Your love and mercy on us;
 R. for we put our trust in You.
 V. In You, Lord, is our hope;
 R. and we shall never hope in vain.

REVIEW: (answer on a separate sheet of paper)

1. What is fortitude?
2. Who is Saint Paul Miki?

GROWTH IN FORTITUDE:

1. Who cooperated with you on your fortitude project?
2. What did you try and how did it go? Did it help you to grow in fortitude?
3. What more could you do in this area?

FORTITUDE: being brave and strong in face of trials

February

PRAYER:

Act of Charity

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Prudence: making good decisions in specific circumstances

It is usually easy to know the difference between right and wrong...but what happens when you need to choose between two things that are right? What if you have to decide whether to donate money to a homeless shelter or to a soup kitchen? What if your family has a trip planned, but a friend really needs you? The virtue of prudence helps us to discern God's will in specific circumstances and to make the best decision. For example, your father and mother might be proud of you if you sacrificed the fun of a family trip to stay home with a friend who had been seriously injured. On the other hand, if you recently had a fight with your parents and your friend was already recovering, it might be more important to go on the trip and strengthen your relationship with your parents.

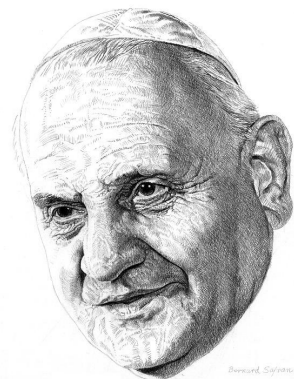
Prudence is one of the four cardinal virtues because it is a key to other virtues. Something might sound like a good choice, but it is only virtuous if it is prudent, that is, if it is the most reasonable choice, given the circumstances. Prudence guides our conscience. (Read CCC# 1806.) Although there are many situations in which we need this virtue, some decisions that call for prudence include the following:

1. Choosing between two goods;
2. Knowing the right time and way to talk to someone about a problem;
3. Creating new policies to address new situations and needs.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint John XXIII
(1881-1963, Italy)
Feast: October 11

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was born to a peasant family, but was gifted with intelligence, a desire for justice and holiness, and a great sense of humor. After studying and being ordained in Rome he served as a chaplain in World War I, and then in several assignments where he was chosen to serve as a Vatican representative or a mediator between disagreeing parties among the government and/or clergy. Missions like these gave him large responsibilities in areas such as Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, France, and Venice.



Pope John XXIII
by Bernard Safran

Elected pope in 1958, he took the name Pope John XXIII. He was loved throughout the world and nicknamed "the good pope" for having such a good sense of humor about himself (for instance, he said the men who carried him in procession should get a bigger salary

PRUDENCE: making good decisions in specific circumstances

because they were carrying a bigger pope) and for his deep kindness and care for others throughout the world. He worked for just wages for poor workers, care for orphans, and cooperation among different denominations of Christianity as well as other religions. In 1962 he opened the Second Vatican Council, a gathering of bishops from around the world, because he recognized the changing situation of the modern world and the need for the Church to bring the light of the Gospel to bear on all of humanity's needs.

Pope John XXIII died in 1963, and Pope Paul VI carried on his work, concluding the Second Vatican Council in 1965. Like Pope John Paul I, Karol Wojtyla took the name Pope John Paul II out of deep admiration for Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI .

DISCUSSION:

Think-Pair-Share

1. Look at the three types of decisions listed on the previous page. Give an example of each type from the life of Saint John XXIII. How did he use the virtue of prudence?
2. List three or more examples of situations in your daily life that require prudence. Try to come up with an example for each of the three types of decisions listed.

HOME PROJECT: Due on February _____

PRAYER:

V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*

V. Let us pray.

R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read and reflect on Proverbs 14:15 & 1 Kings 3:5-14.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Part of prudence is knowing how and when to talk to someone about a problem. In small groups, discuss one of the following situations. *Decide who is the best person to talk to Sam.* Then role-play using the P-R-U-D-E-N-T process as outlined on page 30.

Scene A: Samantha sometimes picks on Molly for fun. She's not super mean, but Molly is pretty sloppy about her clothes and hair and she only cares about soccer. So Sam figures its good for her, because if Molly wants to be popular she needs to learn to "get with it". Today Sam is sitting at lunch with her best friend, Julie, who thinks everything Sam does is cool.

PRUDENCE: making good decisions in specific circumstances

Jen is with them; she's been pretty good friends with Sam and Julie for three years. The fourth girl at the table, Liz, is new at school and is figuring out where she fits in. There are two empty spots at the table, but when Molly asks, "May I join you?" Sam laughs and says, "Um, sorry, no soccer socks allowed."

Scene B: Samuel is really good at basketball, but he can be a ball hog. Winning is really important to him, and he figures that if he can almost guarantee every shot, the team should pass to him as much as possible. At practice, while the coach is helping another teammate, Sam is stealing the ball from everyone, and bragging about his shots. His friend Greg is furious at him because he's pretty good, too, and can't get a turn. Paul is friends with both of them, but he's used to Sam showing off and Greg getting mad. Luke is new on the team and is wondering if the whole season will be like this.

Scene C: Samantha has been best friends with Meg and John since kindergarten. This year Sam is dating one of John's friends, Mike. At a school dance, Meg overhears John and Mike laughing over one of her deepest secrets. She yells at them to stop and asks who told. Sam rejoins the group, and when she realizes what she's done, she apologizes: it just slipped. Meg feels betrayed and the guys feel bad—they didn't know it was a secret.

P-R-U-D-E-N-T PROCESS: *speaking privately to solve a problem*

Plan ahead what to say.	<i>Sample:</i>
Request a private moment.	P: Mentally go through all the steps
Utter a prayer.	R: You see the person alone in the hall; ask to talk.
Describe the deed. (Maintain eye contact.)	U: As you lead them aside, pray, "Help me, Jesus!"
Effect on me	D: "When you poured out my beaker in lab today..."
Nothing. Wait for a response.	E: ...it really embarrassed me."
Terms	N: (Pause until the other person says something.)
	T: "Please don't touch my things again or I'll have to report it to the teacher."



PRAYER:

Saint John XXIII, you saw the needs of the Church and convened the Second Vatican Council. Help us, when we see a problem, to remember to pray to discover the best solution. Give us your lightheartedness and trust in the Lord. Help us to work for the salvation of all peoples, as you did. Amen.
Saint John XXIII, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

In honor of Saint John XXIII's great sense of humor, have a "Clean, Friendly Joke" contest. Break into small groups and brainstorm knock-knocks, riddles, one-liners, corny jokes, etc. Take turns telling one joke each to the class. Give up to five points for each joke and see which jokes win the high score. Give one point for each aspect of the joke:

- Clean

PRUDENCE: making good decisions in specific circumstances

- Friendly, not mean
- Original (you haven't heard it many times)
- Clever or creative
- Really, really funny bonus point

PRAYER:

Pray the Second Luminous Mystery, the Wedding Feast at Cana. Reflect upon how Our Lady saw a problem and knew the best solution. Ask her to remind us always to turn to Christ and to trust in Him as she did.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

REVIEW:

1. What is prudence?

2. Who is Saint John XXIII?

GROWTH IN PRUDENCE:

1. Who cooperated with you on your prudence project?

2. What did you try and how did it go? Did it help you to grow in prudence?

3. What more could you do in this area?

PRUDENCE: making good decisions in specific circumstances

March

PRAYER:

Act of Charity

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Respect: recognizing the dignity of all people

Our society often bases a person's value on their appearance or abilities. But that is not how God see us. In reality, what we *are* is much more important than what we can do. Each one of us is created in the image and likeness of God, and we are unique and unrepeatable gifts of His love. God loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for us, that we might live forever with Him in heaven.

When we look at people from this perspective, we can't help but respect them. When we see the very poorest, the weakest, or those who think they have no worth, we know that God treasures them individually, and that we are called to meet one another again in heaven. We cannot degrade, harm, manipulate, or take any human life for granted. Instead, the Gospel calls us to have deep respect for all people, including people of different ages, cultures, ideas, and abilities.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

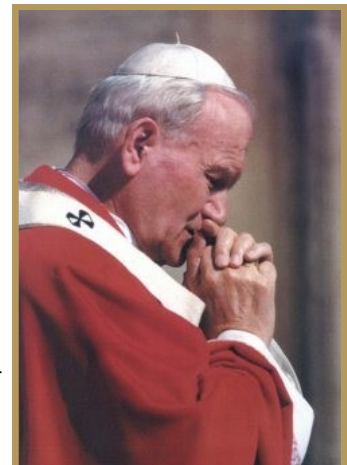
Saint John Paul II

(1920-2005, Poland & Rome)

Feast: October 22

Karol Wojtyla experienced great suffering and loss as a child. His mother died when he was eight years old, and when Karol was 12 his only brother died. Karol was only 20 when his father died, leaving him alone in the world.

A brilliant student, actor, and devout Catholic, Karol eventually had to study, act, and pray in secret because he lived during the Nazi occupation of Poland. His archbishop secretly trained Karol and a few other young men for the priesthood, and Karol was ordained in 1946.



Saint John Paul II

Despite so much sorrow and struggle, Karol possessed true greatness of soul. He believed in the dignity and goodness of all people and loved them. Along with being a scholar and actor, he was an outdoorsman and athlete, and possessed a great sense of humor. Others recognized his indomitable spirit, and followed his natural leadership. He was ordained a bishop at the age of 38, the youngest in his country. He became the archbishop of Krakow, then a cardinal, and in 1978 was elected pope, taking the name Pope John Paul II.

RESPECT: recognizing the dignity of all people

Saint John Paul II's deep appreciation and zeal for the dignity of all people changed the world. With the power of truth, he played an important role in the collapse of European Communism. He strengthened dialogue with Jewish, Islamic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican believers. He visited and kissed the ground of 129 countries. He showed the dignity of people of all ages and cultures by beatifying over 1,000 people and canonizing over 400 saints to show that all people are called to holiness.

DISCUSSION:

1. What are some of the challenges Saint John Paul II experienced in life that could have challenged his trust in God and in humanity? What made him steadfast in respect?
2. Why do you think having a deep respect for all people would lead to challenging Communism, and forging relationships with other faith traditions?
3. Why do you think Saint John Paul II kissed the ground when he visited a country?

HOME PROJECT: Due on March_____



PRAYER:

- V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
- R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*
- V. Let us pray.
- R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read and reflect on Genesis 1:26-31.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Sometimes we disrespect a person unintentionally. We might laugh at or avoid people who are different from us, because we have never seen someone like them before or because we aren't sure how to act around them. Brainstorm examples of people of different ages, cultures, ideas, and abilities. Then write how you plan to show respect when you meet people who are different from you in that way.

Examples of people of different **ages**: _____
 Ways to respect them: _____

Examples of people of different **cultures**: _____
 Ways to respect them: _____

Examples of people with different **ideas**: _____
 Ways to respect them: _____

Examples of people with different **abilities**: _____
 Ways to respect them: _____

RESPECT: recognizing the dignity of all people

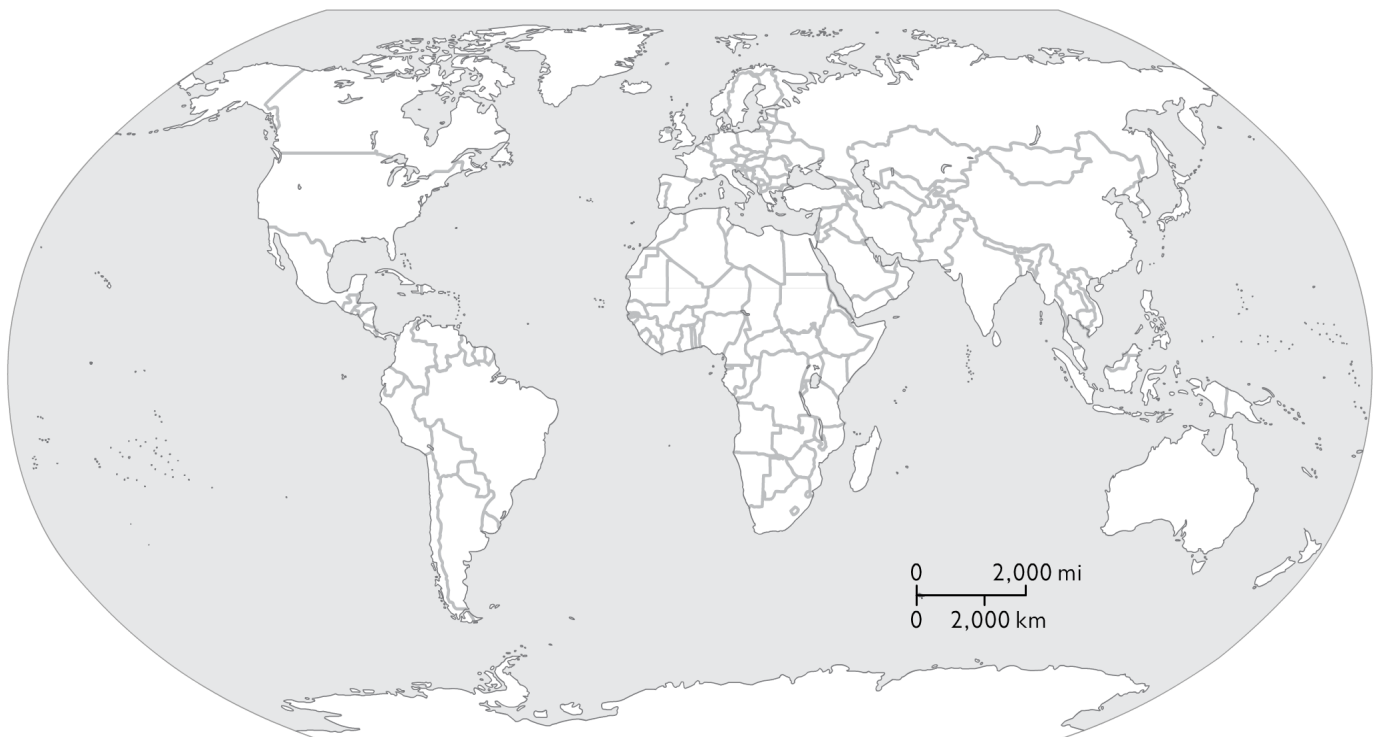
PRAYER:

Saint John Paul II, pray for us, that we might see the eternal worth of each person we interact with throughout the day. Give us your love for all people, and help us to “be not afraid!” Amen. Saint John Paul II, pray for us!

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Saint John Paul II travelled more than any pope in history!

1. Visit the Vatican website to see a list of all of the countries he visited during his papacy: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/travels/
2. Mark on a map the countries he visited.
3. Pray that you can be filled with the apostolic zeal and love for all people that led John Paul II to travel so extensively to share the Gospel!



Map courtesy of [National Geographic](#). National Geographic does not review or endorse content added to this map by others.

RESPECT: recognizing the dignity of all people

PRAYER:

Pray the Third Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Nativity. Reflect upon how Our Lady welcomed the shepherds who came to see Jesus just as she welcomed the kings, and how she respected the kings even though they were foreigners. Ask her to help you to respect all people, especially those who are different.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

REVIEW:

1. What is respect?

2. Who is Saint John Paul II?

GROWTH IN RESPECT:

1. Who cooperated with you on your respect project?

2. What did you try and how did it go? Did it help you to grow in respect?

3. What more could you do in this area?

RESPECT: recognizing the dignity of all people

April

PRAYER:

Act of Charity

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Forgiveness: pardoning those who offend you

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he emerged from his tomb bound with strips of cloth. Jesus said, "Untie him and let him go" (John 11:44). The Gospels use the same Greek word for "untie" when Jesus gives the Apostles the power to forgive sin. He says, "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). In freeing us from our sins, our souls are loosed from bondage.

God offers us freedom from our sins. However, every time we pray the Our Father, we place a condition on God's mercy towards us. We say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that God's "outpouring of mercy cannot penetrate our hearts as long as we have not forgiven those who have trespassed against us. Love, like the Body of Christ, is indivisible; we cannot love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brother or sister we do see. In refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and their hardness makes them impervious to the Father's merciful love..." (paragraph 2840). It is in forgiving others that we experience true freedom from the bondage of sin.

Forgiving others does not mean we approve of their behavior or do not want their actions to have just consequences. It means that we let go of bitterness in our hearts and pray for their conversion and for God to show them mercy. Jesus gave the perfect example of forgiveness when he prayed for those who crucified him, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Josephine Bakhita
1869-1947, Sudan & Italy)
Feast: February 8

Josephine Bakhita was born in Sudan, Africa, to a loving family. Missionaries had never evangelized her village, and her family practiced a traditional African religion. When Bakhita was nine years old, she and a friend went outside their village to gather plants. Bakhita saw two men who asked her to get a bag at the edge of the forest. She did not know the men were Arab slave traders from northern Africa. As she went to get the bag, she was captured and carried away. She never saw her family again.

The slave traders locked her in a dark hut for a month, where she cried herself to sleep each

FORGIVENESS: pardoning those who offend you

night longing for her family. She was so traumatized that she forgot her own name, so the slave traders named her *Bakhita*, which means "lucky one." Finally she was marched to a slave market and sold to the first of several cruel masters. She was beaten often, once so severely that she couldn't get out of her straw bed for a month and she walked with a limp for the rest of her life.

After about four years she was sold to an Italian merchant. This master was kind to Bakhita and calmed her fears. Later he decided to return to Italy, and Bakhita begged him to take her along. Once there, he gave her to the wife of a friend who wanted help with her young daughter, Mimmina. Bakhita cared for and loved Mimmina. When her master and his wife had to return to Sudan for business, they decided to leave Bakhita and Mimmina in Italy. They stayed at a school run by Canossian Sisters. There Bakhita was able to learn about Jesus and the Catholic faith. She rejoiced to learn about God. She said of her childhood that, "Seeing the sun, the moon and the stars, I said to myself: who could be the Master of these beautiful things? And I felt a great desire to see Him, to know Him and to pay Him homage..."



Saint Josephine Bakhita

Bakhita wanted to be baptized and receive Holy Communion. However, several months before she was finished with her preparation, her master's wife returned to take Bakhita and Mimmina to Sudan. Bakhita did not want to leave and asked to be able to stay to receive the sacraments but her mistress refused. The Sisters appealed to the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, and he to the royal governor. The governor declared that since slavery was illegal in Italy, Bakhita was not a slave but a free woman!

Bakhita stayed with the Canossian Sisters and received Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation on January 9, 1890. She added Josephine as her baptismal name, but kept the name Bakhita, truly feeling that she was now a fortunate one. Often after her Baptism, Bakhita kissed the baptismal font saying, "Here I became one of the daughters of God!" After several years, Bakhita asked to join the Canossian Sisters.

Saint Josephine Bakhita saw God's care and purpose in her life. She was able to let go of all bitterness toward those who had kidnapped, enslaved, and mistreated her. She said, "If I were to meet those slave raiders that abducted me and those who tortured me, I'd kneel down to them to kiss their hands, because, if it had not been for them, I would not have become a Christian and religious woman."

DISCUSSION:

1. What evidence is there that Saint Josephine Bakhita forgave those who enslaved her?
2. Does forgiving them mean she thought what they did to her was right?
3. How might seeing God's plan for her life fulfilled have helped Bakhita forgive those who had hurt her?

HOME PROJECT: Due on April ____

FORGIVENESS: pardoning those who offend you

PRAYER:

V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*

V. Let us pray.

R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read and reflect on Luke 18:21-33.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Find a quiet, prayerful place such as a church, chapel, or your room. Bring a pen and paper. Pray to the Holy Spirit. Open your heart to God and ask Him: *Lord, is there anyone I need to forgive?* Write down what comes to you. Ask Him what you need to do to know that you have fully forgiven.

**PRAYER:**

Saint Josephine, you forgave those who stole you, sold you, and harmed you, even though they were not sorry. You trusted God to bring good out of evil, and recognized that a lack of forgiveness would only hurt you more. Although you were enslaved in body, your soul was free because you had the faith to forgive. Help us to be free from bitterness and resentment, and to forgive others as you did. Amen. Saint Josephine Bakhita, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Binding and Loosing (work in groups of 3-4):

Together, think of all the painful things Bakhita endured in her life because of others' actions. Choose one person to represent all those who hurt Bakhita. Make a list of the ways Bakhita was hurt by others. For each action that caused her grief, make a loop around the offenders wrists with a soft strip of cloth. Count the number of loops according to the number of offenses.

Now choose someone else from the group to represent Bakhita. Wrap the same number of loops with soft strips of cloth around Bakhita's wrists. This represents how a lack of forgiveness binds the heart of the person who does not forgive.

Yet we know that Saint Bakhita experienced God's grace and was able to forgive those who wronged her. The student representing Bakhita should look her "enemy" in the eye and say for each offense, "I forgive you for" With each statement, one loop of the cloth strips should be untied from both their wrists till both are set free.

Discuss in your group how forgiveness unbinds our hearts. Talk about the need for God's help to be able to forgive. As God commands us to forgive He gives us the grace to do so. Talk about what it means to forgive and how to seek God's grace to pardon others.

FORGIVENESS: pardoning those who offend you

PRAYER:

Pray the Fifth Sorrowful Mystery of the Rosary, the Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord. Reflect upon Jesus' prayer for those who crucified and mocked Him, "Father, forgive them..." (Luke 23:34). Ask Our Lady to pray for you, that you might have her Son's Heart of love and forgiveness.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

REVIEW:

1. What is forgiveness?

2. Who is Saint Josephine Bakhita?

GROWTH IN FORGIVENESS:

1. Who cooperated with you on your forgiveness project?

2. What did you try for your project? How did it go? Did it help you to grow in forgiveness?

3. What more could you do in this area?

FORGIVENESS: pardoning those who offend you

May

PRAYER:

Act of Charity

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Responsibility: being reliable in your duties and accountable for your actions.

“Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one’s own responsibility” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1731).

Who of us wants to be thought of as unreliable? We all want to be a friend, an employee, a spouse or parent who can be counted on to take care of other people and the jobs entrusted to us. We’ve all been tempted to make excuses when we’re caught neglecting our duty or doing something wrong—and we all know how we lose trust in people when we can tell they’re just making excuses. Practicing acts of responsibility makes it easier for us to follow through and to own up to our mistakes.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Blessed Bartolo Longo

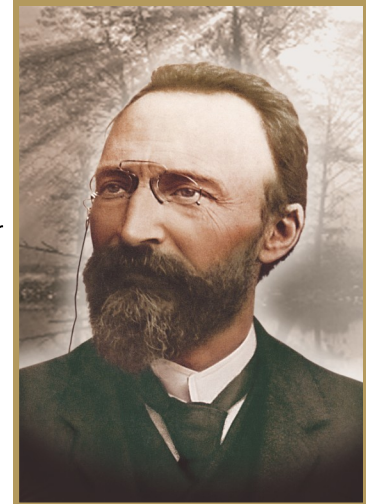
(1841-1926, Italy)

Feast: October 6

Do you think of some people as “hopeless cases” who will never turn to God? Do you think that some deeds, maybe some of your own, are unforgivable? Blessed Bartolo Longo gives us hope that anyone can turn to God and find forgiveness.

Bartolo was raised Catholic, but while studying for a law degree he fell away from his faith, became involved in a cult, and was ordained a satanic priest. An old friend brought him back to God and introduced him to a Dominican friar, Father Alberto, who heard his confession and helped him to leave the cult. He began to work for a charity group, and to use his skill as an attorney to help the poor. He married the Countess di Fusco who led the group and together they raised many orphans and funded about 45 seminarians.

Blessed Bartolo remembered Father Alberto saying that the Blessed Virgin Mary had promised, “One who propagates my Rosary shall be saved” and so he began to spread devotion to the Rosary in reparation for his past sins. He moved to the ancient city of Pompeii, where he started a yearly feast for the Rosary which included fireworks, music, and games. He published pamphlets on the Rosary and worked with the people of Pompeii to build a



Blessed Bartolo Longo,
official beatification image

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

shrine to Our Lady Queen of the Rosary. He became so well known for this that Pope John Paul II praised him in his 2002 letter on the Rosary, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. Blessed Bartolo Longo died at the age of 85, listening to the Rosary prayed around his bed by the orphans he had assisted.

DISCUSSION:

1. We are often tempted to leave things unfinished or to make excuses rather than apologize. Why? Name some challenges to responsibility. How can we overcome these challenges?
2. What does Blessed Bartolo Longo's story show us about God's mercy? How does this encourage us to take responsibility for any sins we've committed?

HOME PROJECT: Due on May _____

PRAYER:

- V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
 R. *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*
 V. Let us pray.
 R. *O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant us through the same Spirit a love and relish for what is right and just and a constant enjoyment of his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Read and reflect on Matthew 25:19-21.



VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Have you ever made a mistake, been totally ashamed, and not wanted to admit it? Have you ever hurt a friend, on accident or on purpose, felt too awkward to apologize, and seen it create a distance between you? Frequent Confession really helps us to practice owning up and gives us the grace to make amends and do better in the future. When we've hurt a relationship, we usually need to talk it out, and that can be pretty intimidating. Having a method for admitting our mistakes and practicing it will make it easier to face when the time comes.

OWN UP:

admitting you were wrong and asking forgiveness

- OPINION:** Ask God His opinion: "Am I in the wrong?" Listen humbly.
WHO: Who did I hurt?
NEXT TIME: What made me do it? What will I do next time?
UNBURDEN: Go to the person. Name the deed you regret. Explain why you did it and what you will do next time. ASK FORGIVENESS.
PAY EXTRA ATTENTION: Watch closely for small ways to show you like that person over the next few days, to mend the relationship.

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

Role-play the situations below, naming the OWN UP steps as you go. Think of more situations on your own or replay these, so that everyone gets practice.

OWN UP Situations:

1. Without noticing, you took the last seat in the cafeteria and someone else in your class ate alone. You were too embarrassed to fix it after you realized it.
2. Someone was joking about one of your friends and you joined in. Later, you realized it was pretty mean. Your friend heard about it and you feel like a traitor.
3. You were a ball hog in the basketball game. You helped the team to win, but two of your teammates are discouraged because they never got the ball.
4. When the teacher was collecting homework, the kid in front of you noticed you didn't have yours. You were embarrassed and said your mom was really sick last night (even though she wasn't). Your teacher overheard and came over to ask if your mom was okay, so you said she was better now.



PRAYER:

Blessed Bartolo Longo, although you had offended God severely, you turned back to Him in confession, and dedicated your life to reparation. Help us to be honest with ourselves, to take responsibility for our actions and sins, and to determine to change them for the glory of God. Intercede for us that we may have the strength to repent, as you did. Amen.

Blessed Bartolo Longo, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Bartolo Longo had lived in dramatic opposition to God as a satanist. After his conversion, he bitterly regretting his sins, but trusted in Our Lady's words and dedicated his life to reparation through promoting the Rosary. Because he had used the early part of his life to turn others from God, he sought to now bring others close to God through praying the Rosary.

You too can spread devotion to the Rosary!

- Learn how to make a cord rosary. Give it as a gift for someone and teach them how to pray it.
- Consider establishing a club to make rosaries on a regular basis and send them to hospitals, shelters, or the missions.
- Set up a time for your class to visit a younger grade and teach them to pray the Rosary. Model prayer for them, and teach them how to reflect on the mysteries in their hearts as they say the prayers aloud.

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

PRAYER:

Pray the *Memorare* for persons in roles of great responsibility (home, school, parish, city, state, country, world, business, science, justice, etc.):

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

REVIEW:

1. What is responsibility?

2. Who is Blessed Bartolo Longo?

GROWTH IN RESPONSIBILITY:

1. Who cooperated with you on your responsibility project?

2. What did you try for your project? How did it go? Did it help you to grow in responsibility?

3. What more could you do in this area?

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

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Acknowledgements

The *Virtues in Practice* program was originally written by a team of parents and faculty members at St. Gertrude School in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2005, and implemented beginning with the 2006 academic year. The program began as a nine-year cycle with students in kindergarten through eighth grade learning about a different virtue, and a saint who exemplified that virtue, each month. It was intended only for the use of St. Gertrude School, but within a short time it became clear that many schools desired the use of such a program.

To make the program accessible to a wider audience, Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia from St. Gertrude School, St. Mary's School in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Newport News, Virginia, and St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School in Woodbridge, Virginia worked together with faculty and staff volunteers in those schools to create the current program which follows a spiraling curriculum that repeats the same virtues over a three-year cycle while introducing new saints each year. To all who have contributed time and talent to the creation of this program, we are deeply grateful.

This program is the fruit of grace and collaboration, and is offered free of charge to those who wish to use it in their home or school. It is our prayer that all who read it will be inspired to pattern their lives more faithfully on that of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May our lives radiate His virtues, so that others may come to know and believe in the life and love He offers freely! To that end, we offer this work to His glory through the patronage of Mary, our Mother, and Star of the New Evangelization.

~ *The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation*
801 Dominican Drive
Nashville, Tennessee 37228
(615) 256-5486
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For questions related to the *Virtues in Practice* program,
please contact the Office for the New Evangelization at neoffice@op-tn.org.



Eight centuries ago St. Dominic de Guzman, inspired by the Holy Spirit in response to the needs of his time, founded an Order with the mission of preaching for the salvation of souls. Dominic's love for God and neighbor continues to inspire the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation today, as they joyfully embrace the Church's call to the New Evangelization. Through their teaching apostolate, the Sisters serve over 16,000 students in 41 schools in the United States, Canada, Australia, Italy, and Scotland.

Act of Charity

O my God, I love You above all things,
with my whole heart and soul,
because You are all good
and worthy of all love.

I love my neighbor as myself
for the love of You.

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

Amen.