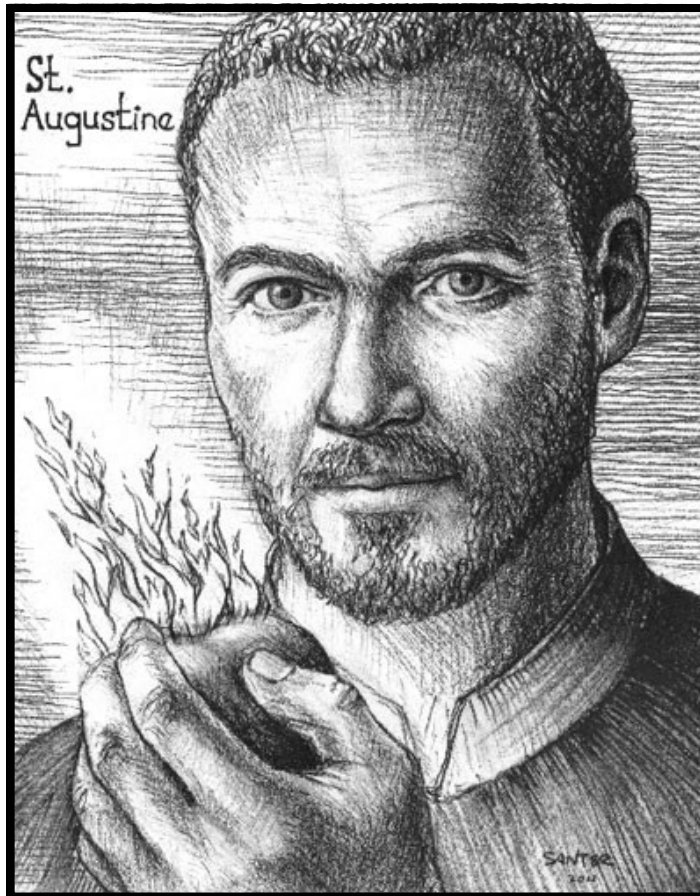


Virtues in Practice



Faith

GRADES 6—8

Virtues
in Practice

Faith

GRADES 6—8

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 (Theme: Service)	DEFINITION	GR. PK-2 SAINT	GR. 3-5 SAINT	GR. 6-8 SAINT
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. Tarcisus	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 & Francisco 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 & Zelle 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	Ven. Laura Vicuna
OCT.	FRIENDSHIP	Sharing a mutual love that seeks the good of the other	Sts. Benedict & Scholastica	Sts. Basil & Gregory	Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati
NOV.	COURTESY	Being thoughtful of others	St. Martin de Porres	Ven. Solanus Casey	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 Faith

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

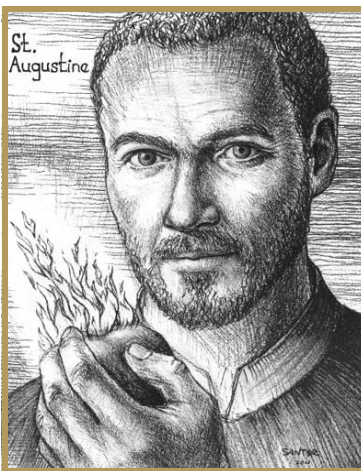
Faith: believing in God and all He has revealed

Sometimes we think of faith as our own choice: “I choose to believe”. Yet the fact is that unless God reveals Himself to us, none of us can know much about Him, much less know Him personally. Faith is how we thank God for revealing Himself throughout salvation history, most perfectly in Christ, and today by the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Though God plants the “seed” of faith, like any other virtue, we develop faith through practice—not just by thinking and studying *about* God, but by taking time each day to have personal encounters with Him. Saint Paul tells us that, “At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12), meaning that in this life, the virtue of faith only allows us glimpses of God, and that we must await life after death to see God Himself, as He is.

We’ve all heard the expression “Doubting Thomas” used to describe someone who, like Saint Thomas the Apostle, needs to see in order to believe. By making a conscious effort to live in God’s presence here and now, we can be assured that Christ will one day say to us, “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed” (John 20:29).

SAINT OF THE MONTH:



St. Augustine
by Christopher Santer

Saint Augustine
(354-430, North Africa)
Feast: August 28

After Saint Paul, perhaps one of the most compelling stories of conversion to faith in Christ must be that of Saint Augustine. Born of a pagan father, who became a Christian only on his deathbed, and of Saint Monica, who was born and raised in the Christian faith, Saint Augustine was blessed with great intelligence and burdened with an unruly heart.

Although raised in the faith of his mother, Saint Augustine was not baptized and drifted away from belief in God to follow the world. By the time he was 15, he was living with a woman outside of marriage, with whom he later had a son. Saint Augustine’s keen mind led him to the famous academic centers

FAITH: believing in God and all He has revealed

of the pagan Roman Empire, where he taught with great success. Unsettled in his understanding of the meaning of life, Saint Augustine followed the philosophy of the Manichaeans for a time, which saw the world as a great struggle between good and evil and life in the body as something to be scorned.

The turning point in the saint's life finally came when, inspired by the mysterious words of a child to "take and read," Saint Augustine opened up the Bible and his heart was opened to God. Baptized by Saint Ambrose, bishop of Milan, Italy, Saint Augustine eventually returned to Africa, sold his property, and founded a monastery.

Made Bishop of Hippo (North Africa) by popular acclaim, Saint Augustine fought against the heresies of the day—including Manichaeism—and became one of the most prolific writers on the Christian faith the world has ever known. Perhaps the most quoted of his sayings is the one that best describes the profound faith of Saint Augustine: "Our hearts were made for You, O Lord, and they are restless until they rest in You."

DISCUSSION:

1. What aspects of Saint Augustine's life surprise you?
2. Based on the facts of his life, how do you think you could describe Saint Augustine's personality?
3. What converted Saint Augustine? Can you name *three* things?

HOME PROJECT: Due 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 Luke 7:1-10

FAITH: believing in God and all He has revealed

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



VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Role play the following situations practicing the virtue of faith:

1. Imagine you are a medical doctor. You know there are several things going on in the hospital that the Church has said are immoral because they violate the dignity of the human person made in the image of God. Your boss approaches you in private to ask why you can't change your mind about those things. He asks, "Why do you have to agree with the Church?" He thinks you need to be quiet about your views and go along with everyone else in order to keep your job.
2. You are running for office in your state government. In a meeting with your campaign officer, he/she explains that you could increase your popularity with voters by 50% if you don't mention the fact that you are Catholic and don't make public statements about your moral beliefs. What do you say in response?
3. You're spending time with a friend at the local coffee shop. He/she asks why you believe in God, saints, angels—things we can't see. What is your reply?

PRAYER:

Saint Augustine, we are surrounded by temptations, as you were. Our society, like yours, is filled with unbelief. Help us to see the Truth of the faith, as you did, and to embrace it with the powerful love you did. Ask the Lord to move our hearts with His grace, drawing us ever more deeply into His own Heart. Amen. Saint Augustine, pray for us!

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Choose one of the following:

1. Write and illustrate a poem about Saint Augustine's dream in which he saw a little child at the beach filling a seashell with water over and over, emptying it into a hole in the sand. He asked the child what he was doing and the child answered, "I'm going to put the whole ocean in here!" Then God told Augustine that it is just as impossible for man to fully understand God.
2. Write a song or create a graphic design using Saint Augustine's phrase: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."
3. Saint Monica prayed for her son's conversion for 30 years! Write a letter to God telling Him about someone you love and asking for that person's conversion.

PRAYER:

Pray the First Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Annunciation, and reflect upon Our Lady's faith in all that was revealed to her. Ask her to help you grow in faith.

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 faith?

2. Who is Saint Augustine?

GROWTH IN FAITH:

1. Who cooperated with you on your faith project?

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

3. What more could you do in this area?

FAITH: believing in God and all He has revealed

October

PRAYER:

Act of Faith

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Reverence: Showing your deepest respect for God and the things of God

To show reverence toward someone means to have great awe or respect for that person. This particular virtue reminds us of God's *greatness*—the majesty, splendor, and glory of God that makes *Him alone* worthy of our complete adoration and worship. When we reflect on the perfect holiness of God—and, by extension, the holiness that He bestows on the Blessed Mother, the angels, saints, and all persons, places, and objects dedicated to Him—the virtue of reverence seems the most appropriate response: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, God of Hosts!" (Isaiah 6:3)

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Margaret Clitherow
(1556-1586, England)
Feast: March 26

Margaret Middleton Clitherow, also known as "the Pearl of York," was born during very tumultuous times in England, when the persecution of the Catholic Church in that country was at its height. Although a Catholic queen named Mary Tudor ruled the country at the beginning of Margaret's life, Elizabeth I reigned during the end of Margaret's life, and it was under her rule that Saint Margaret would be condemned to death for her faith.

Raised as a Protestant, Margaret joined the Catholic Church not too long after her marriage to prosperous butcher John Clitherow. John was a Protestant, but he had a brother who was a Catholic priest and was very supportive of his wife's faith, even allowing their children to be raised as Catholics. All during her married life, Saint Margaret made her home a place of refuge for the Catholic priests who had to offer the Mass in secret for the Catholic faithful, facing execution if they were caught. Many of the Catholics of Saint Margaret's native area of Yorkshire, England, knew of and supported this holy wife and mother's determination to protect priests so that they could continue to administer the sacraments.

When the civil authorities finally discovered what was happening, they arrested Margaret for giving protection to Catholic priests who were considered "traitors and seducers of the Queen's subjects". Warned that to save her life she needed to plead guilty or stand trial, she



*Engraved image of
St. Margaret Clitherow*

REVERENCE: showing your deepest respect for God and the things of God

responded, "I know of no offense whereof I should confess myself guilty. Having made no offense, I need no trial." Pregnant with her fourth child, St. Margaret was executed on Good Friday, 1586, by having large weights laid upon her until she suffocated. Because of her faith, Yorkshire remains one of the most Catholic areas in England.

DISCUSSION:

1. In our society, people are free to claim almost any religion without interference. In fact, it is not considered acceptable to question someone else's religion. Why was religion such a public matter at this time in England?
2. Saint Margaret hid priests at the risk of her life and the safety of her family. Why do you think she risked so much. Why was the priesthood so important to her?
3. How did Margaret's husband show reverence toward his wife and her religious beliefs?

HOME PROJECT: Due October _____

PRAYER & VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Practice reverence for God's living Word. Find a quiet place where you can sit apart from the other members of your class.



Choose one of the Scripture passages below:

- A: Jesus' Entrance into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-40)
- B: The Visitation (Luke 1:39-56)
- C: Healing of the Centurion's Servant (Luke 7:1-10)
- D: Christ's Majesty and Humility (Philippians 2:1-11)

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. *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.*

Make the *Sign of the Cross* and ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart to whatever God wants to say to you through His living Word. Read the entire passage slowly and silently one time. In your heart, ask God: "Lord, what is the message You have for me today?" Choose a sentence or phrase from the Scripture that you think is the main idea, or one that stands out to you.

Read that sentence/phrase *out loud*, even if you have to do it in a whisper. Listen to the words. Read it out loud a second time. What is God trying to tell you with these words? Read it out loud a third time. How can you live differently today, in the light of what God

REVERENCE: showing your deepest respect for God and the things of God

has taught you?

If you're brave enough, make the *Sign of the Cross* and kiss the page before closing the Bible.

PRAYER:

Saint Margaret, help us to have a spirit of reverence, so that we may be witnesses of God's love and power. Help us, and help all those who live in countries where practicing Christian faith is forbidden. Help us to maintain a spirit of reverence in spite of social pressures and even persecutions. Give us the strength to glorify God, to help priests, and to offer a holy example to our families and friends in imitation of you. Amen. Saint Margaret Clitherow, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Choose a character, or draw from a basket: Catholic wife, Catholic farmer, Catholic policeman, Catholic priest, Catholic politician, Catholic seminarian, Protestant policeman, Protestant neighbor who knows Mass is being celebrated next door, Protestant school teacher who hears the farmer's children talk about Mass, etc. Consider some of the laws against Catholics at Saint Margaret's time (below), and write a journal entry about what you plan to do this Sunday based on your particular character.

A sample of some of the anti-Catholic laws from 16th century England:

1. If you maintain that the pope has any spiritual or church authority, you forfeit all your lands and property. Or, if your property is worth less than 20 pounds (\$6,000 in today's money), you will be imprisoned for one year.
2. If you don't attend Sunday services at the Anglican church, you must pay a fine of 12 pence (\$15 in today's money).
3. If you travel to another country (for free worship, Catholic school, seminary training) without permission from the queen, you owe a fine of 100 pounds (\$30,000) and you also forfeit all your land and property if you are gone longer than 6 months.
4. Mass is forbidden. There is a penalty of 200 marks (equivalent of \$4,000 today) and one year imprisonment for a priest who celebrates Mass, and a penalty of 100 marks (\$2,000) and one year imprisonment for any person who is caught attending Mass. Also, if you have been caught attending Mass in the past, your fine for not attending Sunday services at the Anglican church is increased from 12 pence (\$15) to 20 pounds a month (\$6,000 a month).
5. It is high treason for any priest or seminarian to be present in the country. It is a felony to harbor a priest or give him assistance. There is a penalty of death for high treason.

Imagine what life is like for your character. What will you do this Sunday? If you are a Catholic, will you attend the Anglican service? Will you attend Mass? How will you avoid being caught? If you are not Catholic, will you protect the Catholics, or turn them in? What do you think of them? What do you think of the laws against them?

Write your journal entry on separate paper.



REVERENCE: showing your deepest respect for God and the things of God

PRAYER:

Pray the Fifth Sorrowful Mystery of the Rosary, the Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord. Reflect on the reverence of Our Lady as she received the Body of the Lord and prepared it for burial. Ask her to deepen your spirit of reverence.

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 reverence?

2. Who is Saint Margaret Clitherow?

GROWTH IN REVERENCE:

1. Who cooperated with you on your reverence project?

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

3. What more could you do in this area?

REVERENCE: showing your deepest respect for God and the things of God

November

PRAYER:

Act of Faith

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Stewardship: Returning to God the first fruits of your time, talent, and treasure

In centuries past, when a ruler or other powerful leader had to be absent, the person appointed as *steward* exercised the power and authority to govern all the material possessions of the master. The greater the possessions of the owner, the greater the responsibility of the steward. Each of our lives—our very existence—is a gift from God. When we die, we must render an account to the Lord for all we have done with His gifts to us and return to the possession of the King the treasure we carry in “earthen vessels” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

“Who, then, is the faithful and prudent servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household to distribute to them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on his arrival finds doing so. Amen, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property” (Matthew 24:45-47).

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Joseph Moscatti

(1880–1927, Italy)

Feast: November 16

Giuseppe Mario (Joseph) Moscatti entered the world on the 12th of July, 1880, at Benevento, Italy, the son of a father who practiced law and served as a local judge and a mother whose family were members of the Italian nobility. Along with his parents and his eight brothers and sisters, young Joseph moved to Naples, Italy, and would spend much of the rest of his life in that area, becoming acquainted with two other Italians who would also be venerated for their holiness of life: Blessed Bartolo Longo and Saint Catarina Volpicelli.

When his brother Alberto was seriously injured in a military accident, Joseph observed the excellent medical care he received and resolved to pursue medicine as his profession, receiving his MD from the University of Naples in 1903. A man of deep faith who took a private vow of chastity and attended Mass daily, Dr. Moscatti quickly won a reputation as a dedicated and compassionate physician.

He was instrumental in the successful evacuation of a hospital destroyed by a volcano, in researching and developing measures to halt the spread of cholera, and in being one of the

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



Saint Joseph Moscatti, 1923

first physicians in his area to use insulin in the treatment of diabetes. Dr. Moscati also directed a local school and received his license to teach clinical medicine.

Saint Joseph Moscati saw his chief medical responsibility as contributing to the alleviation of suffering. Many times his ability to heal his patients involved their own faith and reception of the sacraments. He never charged the poor for his services, often tucking some money in the prescriptions he gave them. Miraculous cures were even attributed to his treatment of patients while he was still living, and after his sudden but peaceful death on April 12, 1927, prayers asking for his intercession were granted many times.

Saint Joseph Moscati was canonized in 1987, after the mother of a young man cured of leukemia claimed a man in a white coat appeared in a dream to tell her that her son would live—and then identified the man from a photograph as Dr. Joseph Moscati.

DISCUSSION:

1. What is the difference between stewardship, generosity, and justice?
2. Does everyone have to give up wealth and family in order to be a good steward?
3. How does faith help us to practice the virtue of stewardship?

HOME PROJECT: Due November _____

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. *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 21:1-4.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Saint Joseph Moscati was a doctor who devoted his career to serving the poor. Think of different school subjects or extracurricular activities where you or your friends show talent. What are some careers in which those talents could be used? How could you use each career to serve God? Discuss with your friends and fill in the chart on the next page.

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

<i>Talent</i>	<i>Possible Career</i>	<i>Way to Serve</i>
Math/Science	Chemist	Evaluate clean water sources in underdeveloped areas
	Architect	Volunteer to design churches or develop economical housing
	Doctor	Work one day a week in a free clinic; missionary

PRAYER:

Saint Joseph Moscati, you could have been a wealthy doctor, husband, and father, and volunteered to serve the poor on weekends. Instead, you chose to give your entire life and career to God. Help us to offer all that we do every day as a gift to God. Amen. Saint Joseph Moscati, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Write some "prescriptions" for virtue. Look at the list of virtues for all three years of VIP and brainstorm creative ideas with a small group. What pill-sized objects could you put in a medicine bottle for each virtue? (Example: "Prescription for Stewardship" could be a bottle filled with dimes with a label that says, "Put two in the poor box each morning and evening after spending a few minutes of prayer in Church." Or "Diligence Medicine" could be a bottle filled with your favorite candy, with a label that says "Take small doses no more than once per week, after finishing the most difficult work.")

Bring in empty medicine bottles and use blank nametag-sized labels to decorate with your prescriptions.



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

Additionally, several charities collect empty medicine bottles for the use of doctors who visit the poorest areas. Look to see if there is a charity like this near you, and set a goal for how many bottles your class should collect

PRAYER:

Pray the Fourth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. Reflect on how Joseph and Mary gave their first born Son to God. If even the Holy Family did this, what is expected of us?

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 stewardship?

2. Who is Saint Joseph Moscati?

GROWTH IN STEWARDSHIP:

1. Who cooperated with you on your stewardship project?

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

3. What more could you do in this area?

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

December

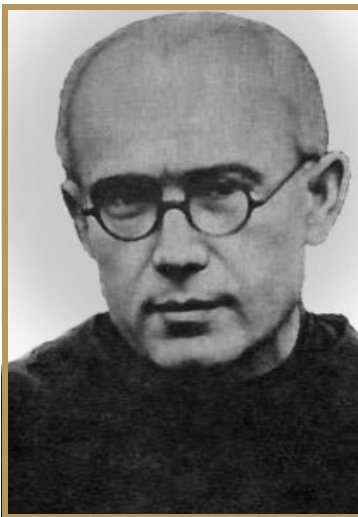
PRAYER:

Act of Faith

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Generosity: giving without counting the cost.

If someone is selfish, stingy, or gives just the socially acceptable minimum, are they a true disciple of the God who gave His very life for us? Generosity is God-like. It means throwing open the doors of one's heart and pouring out all our love on *everyone*. It means looking out for everyone else instead of looking out for ourselves. It means giving not only because we have extra or leftovers, but giving when there is a cost to us—and expecting nothing in return. It means giving not only where we have a duty to give, but giving to the undeserving: to those we don't like, or to those we don't know at all.



Saint Maximilian Kolbe

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Maximilian Kolbe
(1894–1941, Poland)
Feast: August 14

Saint Maximilian was born on January 17, 1894 in Zdunska-Wola, Poland, and given the name Raymond. When he was still a child he had a vision in which Our Lady held out to him two crowns, one white, the other red, asking him to choose between the two. The white symbolized purity and the red symbolized martyrdom. Raymond chose both of them.

When he was only 17, he joined the Conventual Franciscans, and seven years later he was ordained Father Maximilian.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe carried Christ's message from Poland all the way to Japan, setting up small towns and naming them after Our Lady.

When World War II broke out, Maximilian was in Poland. He was captured by the Germans and sent to the concentration camp of Auschwitz. At Auschwitz, one of the horrible rules was that any time a prisoner escaped, ten others would be condemned to death by starvation. One day, after an escape, the guards were choosing ten prisoners to die. One man cried out when he was chosen, saying that he had a wife and children. Risking the cruelty of the guards, Saint Maximilian intervened and offered his own life instead. The guards asked why he should die in the other man's place. Saint Maximilian Kolbe replied: "I am a Catholic priest."

GENEROSITY: giving without counting the cost

Everyone at Auschwitz was surprised to hear prayers and songs coming from the starvation bunker, but those inside had been inspired by the holiness and leadership of Saint Maximilian. After a few weeks, Kolbe was still alive, so his guards murdered him with a fatal injection. He died on the vigil of the Solemnity of the Assumption, and so was able to celebrate it with Our Lady in heaven, receiving there both of the crowns of purity and martyrdom that she had offered to him as a child.

DISCUSSION:

1. What do you think Saint Maximilian meant by his reply, "I am a Catholic priest"?
2. Who was Saint Maximilian Kolbe's greatest ally in his work?
3. How does the virtue of faith help us to practice generosity?

HOME PROJECT: Due 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 reflect on John 15:11-13.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Saint Maximilian Kolbe spread the message of God through the publication of a secret newspaper called *Knight of the Immaculata*.

Break into small groups. Imagine that the Catholic faith has been outlawed by the government, and you are publishing an underground newspaper to inform Catholics of what is happening and how to stay strong. What kind of things would the faithful want to know? What information would they need in order to sustain their faith? Brainstorm a short list of sections that would be featured in every edition. Choose a member of each group to write a short article for that section. Decide whether some information needs to be written in code-language, in case the paper is found. How would you distribute it?

GENEROSITY: giving without counting the cost

PRAYER:

Saint Maximilian Kolbe, you gave your entire life for a total stranger. Help us to have the generosity to do what is right, no matter what the cost. Thank you for showing us the powerful help available through Our Lady. Help us to be as dedicated to her as you were, and brave enough to offer our lives to her Son. Amen. Saint Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

1. Share with the class ways that people you know practice generosity at Christmas time. Write down ideas that you would like to suggest to your parents or to remember when you are creating family traditions with your own children someday.

2. Do you think God might be calling you to give him your ALL as a priest, brother, nun, or sister? See how many religious Orders you can name (e.g., Dominicans, Carmelites, etc.) If someone your age feels called to dedicate his or her life to God, what should they do now to prepare? What can others do to support them?

GENEROSITY: giving without counting the cost

January

PRAYER:

Act of Faith

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Gratitude: seeing everything as a gift from God and being thankful

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “Every joy and suffering, every event and need can become the matter of thanksgiving which, sharing in that of Christ, should fill one’s whole life” (#2648).

It can be easy to race through a day without giving thought to how grateful we should be, even for the splendor of a sunset or the fidelity of a close friend. Yet we are called not only to be grateful for these things, but even for the difficulties in life, which God allows for the greater good of our salvation. Everything God has made, everything that happens, is a gift. So, in all things, “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His love endures ...FOREVER!” (Psalm 118)

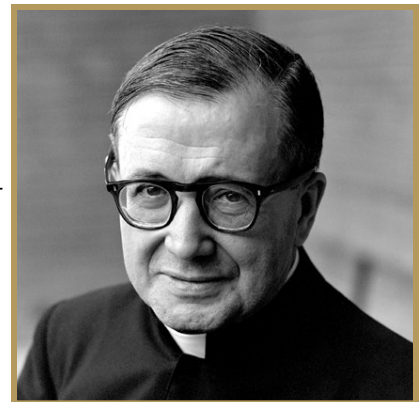
SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Josemaría Escrivá

(1902–1975, Spain)

Feast: June 26

“I did not know what it was [the Lord] wanted, but *I went forward...without doing anything unusual...*” These words uttered by the young seminarian Josemaría Escrivá would be a premonition of the “Work” literally, “Opus Dei,” the Work of God—the movement encouraging personal holiness through ordinary life that would become his apostolate as a priest and his gift to the whole Church.



Saint Josemaría Escrivá

Born in 1902 in the small town of Barbastro in northern Spain to José Escrivá, a prosperous textile merchant, and his wife Maria Dolores, Josemaría was the second-oldest of six children, only three of whom were to survive to adulthood—a loss that was to have a profound affect on the family. Josemaría himself almost died of a serious illness at the age of two; but his devout mother commended him to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and he made a full recovery, which he always attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Mother.

As a teenager, glimpsing the footprints in snow made by the bare feet of a monk ignited in Josemaría a desire to give to God whatever He wanted, to make his life a pleasing gift to the Lord. With this end in mind, he entered the seminary, was ordained a priest, and served

GRATITUDE: seeing everything as a gift and being thankful

in various ways—as pastor, confessor, and teacher, ministering to the poor, sick, and abandoned. It was not until the Feast of the Guardian Angels, October 2, 1926, that Saint Josemaría received the inspiration to found Opus Dei, a movement to help ordinary lay people pursue holiness in the midst of their work, sanctifying the world around them, and bearing great spiritual fruit for the whole Church. Despite a horrible persecution of the Church in his country, Saint Josemaría worked tirelessly for the next 50 years to further this mission, establishing lay groups and organizing priests to help carry out the work of growing in holiness through “ordinary life.” Today, Opus Dei has more than 80,000 members worldwide.

All his life, Saint Josemaría felt a deep gratitude to God for the gift of his family, especially the formation in living a Christian life provided by the example of his parents. Throughout his priestly life promoting Opus Dei, he would always regard the family as the first school of holiness, the place where both parents and children would learn to “sanctify themselves and sanctify others.”

DISCUSSION:

1. Does Saint Josemaría Escrivá’s life seem *ordinary*, *extraordinary*, or both? Explain.
2. Why might it help to have a “movement” or organization to help people grow in holiness through ordinary work?

HOME PROJECT: Due 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 Colossians 3:17 & Psalm 118:28-29.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Role play responding with gratitude in the following situations. Along with being grateful to other people, remember to pause and thank God in your heart.

1. You score a winning goal and your team takes the championship. Should you take all the credit? Who should you thank?
2. You win a scholarship to a prestigious high school. Who should you thank?
3. Your parents say “no” when you ask to join a friend for a family vacation. They say that they never see you these days and want you to stay home with your own family during vacation. Even though you get really mad and argue about it, what is good in this situation? Who should you thank?

GRATITUDE: seeing everything as a gift and being thankful

4. Your teacher gives you your first "C" on a project. You didn't work really hard on it, and didn't follow all the directions, but you're used to getting easy "A's", so you're a little surprised. What is good in this situation? Why should you thank the teacher?
5. You stand at the beach and see a gorgeous sunset with your friends. Practice thanking God out loud in front of them. (That takes guts!)
6. Your best friend points out that you are making a bad choice in some of the music you are selecting. It annoys you and makes you a little mad at your friend for being a goody-goody, but you know your friend is right. Why should you thank your friend?

PRAYER:

Saint Josemaría, help us to offer all our work each day to God. Help us to sanctify every moment by making it a sacrifice of praise to Him. Show us how to be grateful for the opportunity to serve the Lord according to His plan, even when the way is rough. Help us to rejoice in the midst of persecution, grateful for the confirmation that we are following Christ, and gaining graces for His work. Amen. Saint Josemaría Escrivá, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

"The life of each one of us ought to be a hymn of thanksgiving...You, Lord, have laid hold of instruments that were in no way suitable, and you have spread the Work all over the world." (Saint Josemaría Escrivá, March 28, 1975)

Imagine that you were going to start a Catholic Youth Movement where students your age helped one another to grow in holiness. Discuss the following questions in small groups and then share as a class.

1. What kinds of things would members do together during meetings? (This should include prayer, service, fun activities.)
2. What are the sorts of prayers and sacrifices to which they would commit?
3. Are there any things they should promise *not* to do?
4. What other good works would they do?
5. After you have answered #1-4, discuss what you would NAME your movement.
6. Are there any other characteristics you would like the group to have?

GRATITUDE: seeing everything as a gift and being thankful

PRAYER:

Pray the Second Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Visitation. Reflect on Mary's song of gratitude, the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-56).

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 gratitude?

2. Who is Saint Josemaría Escrivá?

GROWTH IN GRATITUDE:

1. Who cooperated with you on your gratitude project?

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

3. What more could you do in this area?

GRATITUDE: seeing everything as a gift and being thankful

February

PRAYER:

Act of Faith

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Honesty: being trustworthy and true

We all long to be trusted, because trust is a prerequisite for true friendship. No one will make their true self vulnerable to someone they don't think they can trust. To be trustworthy, we must develop the virtue of honesty, which means more than just telling the truth when someone asks us a question. The virtue of honesty includes the ability to discern what someone has a right to know, and how much is good and helpful for them to know, when to tell the whole truth, and when to protect another's privacy. "The right to the communication of the truth is not unconditional. . ." (CCC #2488); "Charity and respect for the truth should dictate the response to every request for information or communication. . . No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it." (CCC #2489)

Being honest and trustworthy means not only protecting and proclaiming the truth; it includes practicing what we preach. No one aspires to be a hypocrite, to say one thing and do another. To be trustworthy we must strive to be men and women of integrity, integrating our deepest principles into every area of our lives. A person of honesty and integrity will naturally win the friendship of many.



Saint Athanasius, Saint Athanasius
Orthodox Mission, Toronto

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Athanasius
(296-373, Egypt)
Feast: May 2

Saint Athanasius studied the Greek classics and theology in Alexandria, where he became bishop. He attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. and defended the faith against the heresy of Arianism, which claimed that Jesus was a mere creature and not truly God. Athanasius taught that Jesus was God the Son, having the same nature as God the Father. This sounds normal to us who profess this in the *Creed*, but the Council of Nicaea is what added this section to the *Apostles Creed*, because the issue was hotly debated at the time, and saints like Athanasius realized that the divinity of Christ was an issue of vital importance.

Religious and political leaders persecuted him for remaining

HONESTY: being trustworthy and true

steadfast to this great truth of our faith, sending him into exile five times, for a total of 17 years. Yet he never wavered in remaining faithful to the truth, and we continue to profess the *Creed* as he taught it, over 1,600 years later!

DISCUSSION:

1. If you meet someone online and they ask you a personal question, does the virtue of honesty require you to answer truthfully?
2. What are some examples of information people have a right to know? What are some examples of information people do not have a right to know?
3. Why aren't "white lies" okay, if they don't hurt anybody?
4. How is Saint Athanasius a model of honesty?
5. Why do you think leaders at that time used the method of exile to punish him?

HOME PROJECT: Due 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 John 8:31-32 & John 18:37.

HONESTY: being trustworthy and true

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

In a section on the Eighth Commandment, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists the three behaviors on this chart as “offenses against truth” (CCC #2477). In small groups, complete the chart below. For each offense, give an example of two situations where you might be tempted in this way. Share your answers with the class and discuss appropriate responses to the different situations. How should you guard the truth?



Offense	Definition	Situations Where You Might Be Tempted
Rash Judgment	Hearing something bad about someone and assuming it is true, without sufficient proof	
Detraction	Without a valid reason, telling someone's faults to a person who did not already know the faults	
Calumny	Harming someone's reputation by saying things that are not true	

PRAYER:

Saint Athanasius, pray for us that we may be honest. Help us to see as God sees, and to act accordingly. Help us to have integrity, to preach the truth and to practice what we preach. In our words and actions, may we proclaim the divinity of Christ, as you did. Amen. Saint Athanasius, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Choose one of the following activities:

1. Write a poem or rap about integrity, “walking the walk”.
2. Write a poem or create a banner with the word *veritas* (Latin for “truth”).
3. Draw a picture of Christ with a banner that says: “I am the Truth” (John 14:6).
4. Proclaim the divinity of Christ in imitation of Saint Athanasius. Make a poster based on John 10:30 or Mark 4:41.
5. Script a speech by Saint Athanasius at the Council of Nicaea—how would he explain that Jesus is GOD?
6. Write out and decorate a section of the *Nicene Creed*.

HONESTY: being trustworthy and true

PRAYER:

Pray the Fourth Sorrowful Mystery, the Carrying of the Cross, and reflect upon how Our Lady and only a few others were honest enough to show that they were disciples of Jesus and knew He was innocent.

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 honesty?

2. Who is Saint Athanasius?

GROWTH IN HONESTY:

1. Who cooperated with you on your honesty project?

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

3. What more could you do in this area?

HONESTY: being trustworthy and true

March

PRAYER:

Act of Faith

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Mercy: caring for those who suffer

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities" (#2447). According to Jesus, "Blessed are the merciful, they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Mercy is the desire to lessen the suffering of others. It has its ultimate expression in the passion and death of Jesus on the cross, His saving act of mercy for all people of all time who suffer the effects of separation from God through sin. When we sin, we suffer; and the only relief from *that* suffering is the mercy of God. When *others* suffer, bodily and/or spiritually, we can imitate God's own mercy through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. If we pray the *Our Father*, we know that to receive the mercy of God, we must extend that mercy to all.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta
(1910-1997, Albania & India)
Feast: September 5

"At the end of our lives, we will not be judged by...how many great things we have done. We will be judged by 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in.'" Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born in the country of Albania and left home at age 18 to join the Sisters of Loreto as a missionary. By 1929, she was assigned to a girls' school in Calcutta, India, where she spent many happy years teaching.

It was in 1946 that she experienced an encounter with Christ that led her to dedicate her life to serving the poorest of the poor in imitation of the mercy of Jesus. With permission, she left her religious community, trading the habit of the Sisters of Loreto for a plain white sari bordered with blue. Very soon, young Indian women came to join her—including some of her former students—and her new community became known as the Missionaries of Charity. Throughout the remainder of her life, Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity would spread the mercy of Christ throughout the world, attending to the needs of the most abandoned and neglected of our brothers and sisters.

MERCY: caring for those who suffer



Blessed Teresa of Calcutta,
Mother Teresa Center

DISCUSSION:

1. Have you ever met one of the Missionaries of Charity? Share your experience.
2. Why did Mother Teresa dedicate her work to the *poorest* of the poor?
3. How does the virtue of faith help us to practice mercy?

HOME PROJECT: Due 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 Matthew 25:31-46.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Brainstorm with a small group to complete the chart below. Think of your neighborhood, city, state, country, and the world. Do any of your answers give you an idea for a family, class, or school-wide service project?


Types of Suffering	Examples	How we can help
Spiritual		
Physical		
Emotional		

MERCY: caring for those who suffer

PRAYER:

Mother Teresa, help us to see Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor. Thank you for showing us how to love those who suffer, even when they are hard to love. Intercede for us, that we, too, may be witnesses to the love of Jesus by caring for those who need it most. Amen. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Mother Teresa knew that in order to understand, love, and work among the poor, her Sisters must be poor themselves. The Missionaries of Charity voluntarily choose to live a life of extreme poverty. All religious take a vow of poverty. All Christians are called to live the evangelical counsel of poverty. 

How is someone your age called to live poverty? In small groups, brainstorm something you could give up this week, in solidarity with the poor. Do you predict that making the sacrifice would cause you to be unhappy, or more happy? Share your experiences with the class. Consider trying out your ideas.

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 is mercy?

2. Who is Blessed Teresa of Calcutta?

GROWTH IN MERCY:

1. Who cooperated with you on your mercy project?

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

3. What more could you do in this area?

April

PRAYER:

Act of Faith

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Justice: being fair and giving each his due

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the 'virtue of religion.' Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good" (#1807). Justice prompts us to pay debts owed to others, to keep promises and commitments, to obey just laws made by those who have authority to make them, to play games fairly, and to respect the property of others. Justice directs us to act fairly and honestly toward others.

There are some debts we can never repay; for example, the debt we owe to God who created us, to our parents for giving us life and raising us, or to our country. The respect, love, and loyalty that we show to them are derived from the virtue of justice.

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Thomas More
(1478-1535, England)
Feast: June 22

Scholar. Lawyer. Writer. Lord Chancellor of England. Husband. Father. Martyr. As one who laid down his life rather than support an unjust law that would have him deny his faith, Saint Thomas More exemplified the words of Psalm 19, "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart...the statutes of the Lord are true, all of them just."

The son of a well-known lawyer, Thomas More was given an excellent education as a young man and served as an assistant to the Archbishop of Canterbury while he was still a teen. Married, widowed, and remarried, he was the father of three daughters and a son. At a time when education was generally denied to women, Thomas broke with custom and ensured that all of his children were well versed in the classics and fluent in Greek and Latin.

As a public servant with a great reputation for honesty and fairness and considered one of the most brilliant men of his day, St. Thomas rose through the ranks to eventually become one of King Henry VIII's most trusted advisors. However, when Henry VIII declared himself the head of the Catholic Church in England (instead of the Pope) he demanded that all the

JUSTICE: being fair and giving each his due



St. Thomas More
by Louis Laumen

subjects of the realm swear an oath of submission to this law or face execution. Saint Thomas More, an ardent defender of the Catholic Church, refused to take this Oath of Supremacy and so forfeited his life. Having served his king and his country in positions of great responsibility and authority—including as Lord Chancellor (the equivalent of Prime Minister)—Saint Thomas nevertheless did not hesitate to choose the higher law of God over the laws of men. According to eyewitness accounts at the time, Saint Thomas' final words as he was about to be beheaded paid tribute to his defense of this higher law: "I die the King's good servant—but God's first."

DISCUSSION:

1. How does Saint Thomas More's life exemplify the virtue of justice? Explain.
2. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has said that the two most important elements of freedom are *restraint* and *responsibility*. How was this evident in Saint Thomas More's story and how was it lacking? What about in today's society?
3. How does the virtue of faith help us to practice justice?

HOME PROJECT: Due April ____

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 5:1-12. Consider ways in which you might be confronted with similar situations in the future, and ask God to help you act justly.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

In small groups, discuss how you would respond to the following situations with justice. Remember that justice includes giving God His due. 

1. Your dad is driving you and your teammates to a game. If he speeds up just enough through the construction zone (workers are present), you'll make it in time, but if he sticks to the speed limit, you'll be late—and may have to forfeit the game.
2. One of the clubs at your parish is trying to set up their tent at the parish festival—with little success. You're part of another work crew but happen to have a talent for all things mechanical. In order to serve both groups, you would have to stay late.
3. An opportunity comes up over summer vacation to help spread the word about some unjust legislation regarding human life issues.

JUSTICE: being fair and giving each his due

PRAYER:

Saint Thomas More, thank you for showing us the nobility of serving one's country, but serving God first. Help us to be as strong as you were in upholding what is right and just. Intercede for us in moments when we are tempted to succumb to what is popular when we know it is wrong. Help us to glorify God as you did. Amen. Saint Thomas More, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

"[God's] grace has strengthened me until now and made me content to lose goods, land, and life as well, rather than to swear against my conscience" (Saint Thomas More to his daughter, Margaret, while he was awaiting execution).

Imagine that you were going to run for office as state senator. As a practicing Catholic, you are aware of and support the seven basic areas of Catholic social teaching:

- upholding the sanctity of life and dignity of the human person;
- answering the call to family, community, and participation;
- supporting basic human rights and responsibilities;
- being mindful of the poor and vulnerable;
- recognizing the dignity of work and rights of workers;
- the solidarity of all peoples;
- and care for God's creation.

1. How might these principles be challenged or violated by current movements in society?

2. As an elected official, what are some things you can do to promote these principles and ensure they are carried out?

After you have answered these questions, watch the trial scene from *A Man For All Seasons* and discuss the treatment of Saint Thomas More at the hands of the English Parliament. How was true justice violated in his case?

JUSTICE: being fair and giving each his due

PRAYER:

Pray the Fourth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. Reflect upon the ways that Mary and Joseph practiced justice, and how we can imitate them.

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 justice?

2. Who is Saint Thomas More?

GROWTH IN JUSTICE:

1. Who cooperated with you on your justice project?

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

3. What more could you do in this area?

JUSTICE: being fair and giving each his due

May

PRAYER:

Act of Faith

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Zeal: being driven by an intense love for God

If the virtues could be given images from modern culture, then zeal would be the super-hero/action figure. In what is probably the best description of zeal in the New Testament, Saint Paul describes the sufferings he has endured in spreading the faith:

“Five times at the hands of the Jews I received forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a day on the deep...in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, through hunger and thirst, through frequent fastings, through cold and exposure. And apart from these things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 24-28).

Saint Catherine of Siena, who epitomized zeal in her love for the Vicar of Christ and His Church, said that “If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world on fire.” May zeal for the Lord consume us!



St. Francis Xavier
by Fr. Angelo Castalonga, SX

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

Saint Francis Xavier
(1506-1552, Spain)
Feast: December 3

“[The thought of thanking God for His goodness] would certainly stir most [university students] to meditate on spiritual realities, to listen actively to what God is saying to them. They would forget their own desires, their human affairs, and give themselves over entirely to God’s will and his choice. They would cry out with all their heart: ‘Lord, I am here! What do you want me to do?’ Send me anywhere you like – even to India!” These words of Saint Francis Xavier sum up his whole life as one of the greatest missionaries the Church has ever known, a man on fire with the love of God.

Raised in a wealthy family from the Basque region of Spain, Francis met Saint Ignatius of Loyola at the University of Paris. The founder of the Jesuit Order found a ready recruit in the energetic young nobleman. One of the first missionary priests in his community, the life of Saint Francis Xavier reads like an action-adventure story: Sent to the shores of India and the Far East, he dined with head hunters, bathed the sores of lepers, and taught the faith to Indian children, baptizing 10,000 in a single month. He endured extreme weather

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conditions on long, primitive sea voyages, much like Saint Paul. During less than 20 years as a priest, he traveled thousands of miles, most of it on his bare feet. God granted him the gift of tongues (speaking in the multitude of languages of those whom he served) as well as the ability to raise people from the dead, calm storms, prophesy, and heal. Completely spent in body from his labors in the service of God, Saint Francis Xavier died on the shores of China at the age of 46.

DISCUSSION:

1. How does Saint Francis Xavier's life exemplify the virtue of zeal? Explain.
2. In his book *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said, "Zeal for God's house leads [Jesus] to the Passion, to the Cross....Thus he definitively established the criterion for true zeal—the zeal of self-giving love" (p. 22-23). How is this evident in the life of Saint Francis Xavier? How should this self-giving love be evident in our lives?
3. How does the virtue of faith help us to be zealous?

HOME PROJECT: Due 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 Acts 2: 1-4, 37-41 & 1 Corinthians 9:24-25.

VIRTUE ACTIVITY:

Role play responding with Godly zeal in the following situations. Remember to reflect on how you can be zealous in your relationship with God by acting with intense love for Him.

1. After a weekday Mass with your homeroom, one of your classmates remarks that she skipped Mass last weekend because she wanted to sleep in—and she knew she would be coming to Mass during the week anyway.
2. You attend a ballgame at the local university with a group of your friends. The person next to you in the stadium notices the Brown Scapular under your shirt collar and asks you about it.
3. An opportunity comes up over summer vacation to help out with Vacation Bible School, but you'd much rather have the time free to hang out with friends.

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PRAYER:

Saint Francis Xavier, help us to have great zeal for spreading the faith, so that we may be a witness of God's love and power. Help us, and help all those who live in countries where practicing the Christian faith is forbidden. Help us to maintain a spirit of zeal in spite of social pressures and even persecutions. Give us the strength to glorify God as you did by spreading the faith and offering a holy example to our families and friends. Amen. Saint Francis Xavier, pray for us.

SAINT ACTIVITY:

Research the Christian population of different continents or countries. Create a key and color in the map below. Do the results surprise you or not? What parts of the world have the highest population of Christians? What parts have the lowest? How would zealous saints (like Saint Paul, Saint Dominic, and Saint Francis Xavier) feel about your findings? Do you share their zeal?

**Key:**

- 0-10% Christian
- 10-20% Christian
- 20-40% Christian
- 40-60% Christian
- 60-80% Christian
- 80-90% Christian
- 90-100% Christian

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PRAYER:

Pray the *Memorare* for an increase in the virtue of zeal, and for opportunities to grow closer to Jesus over the summer.

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 zeal?

2. Who is Saint Francis Xavier?

GROWTH IN ZEAL:

1. How did you grow in understanding of the virtue of zeal?

2. What did you do for your project related to zeal?

3. Reflect on the virtue of zeal and how it can help you as a student in high school.



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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*

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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 Faith

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

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

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

Amen.