

An abstract painting with a rich, textured background. The colors are vibrant and varied, including deep blues, purples, greens, reds, and yellows. The brushstrokes are visible, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall composition is dynamic and colorful.

Living in the Community

A BOOK FOR THE SIXTH YEAR OF CATECHESIS

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A publication of the Secretariat for Catechesis
of the Archdiocese of Malta, 2017.

A project commissioned and authorised
by the National Catechetical Commission, Malta.

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Thanks are due to Dr Carl M. Sultana, Archbishop's Delegate
for Catechesis, Fr Stefan Bonanno and his team for their
collaboration at the Media Centre, the parishes, independent
schools and the two sections of the Society of Catholic Doctrine
which participated in the pilot project, as well as the Adolescent
Team. This book is the result of their contributions.

Extracts from the Bible have been taken from the Catholic Youth
Bible (Revised).

Stampat: Salesian Press

IMPRIMATUR

DATUM IN CURIA ARCHIEPISCOPALI

MELITENSIS, FLORIANÆ

DIE 9^A IUNII AD2017

+ CHARLES J. SCICLUNA

ARCHIEPISCOPI MELITENSIS

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Presentation



It is the aim of this book, with the theme “Living in the Community”, to be of great help to catechists who accompany adolescents, both in preparing them for their Confirmation, as well as in instructing them on how to live their life in the community.

May this book help adolescents and their families to give more space to God in their lives. May they also be helped to appreciate the fact that the Church’s teachings and the Liturgy are necessary companions in their lives as responsible Christian citizens.

I thank God for his infinite greatness and for the graces he bestowed on each person who worked with others, as a team, to produce this book.

I thank each individual, who in one way or another, helped in this catechetical project.

SR ALEXANDRA CHIRCOP
CO-ORDINATOR OF THIS PROJECT

Introduction

Little by little, we have reached the age of adolescence, and in a few months' time we will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is an interesting time of our life, during which we discover many new things about ourselves and about those around us. It is also a time for overcoming the new challenges that we will face throughout our life.

These challenges may present themselves in different ways. Some may be related to our education and others may be more social in nature, like the friends we choose, as well as other persons who will be close to us. But, besides these, during adolescence we will meet with challenges that concern our faith and the way we live what we believe in. We are no longer children and so the challenges will be harder. One of the greatest challenges that we will meet is the fact that we cannot live on our own; we have to live with others in the community.

This is the reason why during this year we are going to learn more about the Holy Spirit and the way the Holy Spirit unites us in one community, although we remain individuals, separate from each other. It is hoped that we will live this challenge together and that we will grow up and live in the community as persons who believe, and therefore, wish to make the best decisions which will give witness to what we believe in.

REV. DR CARL-MARIO SULTANA
DELEGATE FOR CATECHESIS

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Curiosity: Who is the Holy Spirit?



THE FIRST THEME

Discovering the Holy Spirit

There are those who say that we know very little about the Holy Spirit and, maybe, they are right. We often hear people talk and preach about God the Father and about Jesus Christ but very rarely about the Holy Spirit. Yet, the Holy Spirit has a very important role as he is God, like the Father and the Son. This means that the Holy Spirit has been present since the beginning of creation, is still with us today, is present in the life of the Church and in our lives as a community of Christians.

The Holy Spirit has been present since the beginning of creation. This fact is found in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, which gives the account of creation.

*“In the beginning God created heaven and earth:
Now the earth was a formless void;
there was darkness over the deep
And God’s spirit hovered over the water.”**

GEN 1, 1-2

** The words “God’s Spirit” refer to the Holy Spirit.*



1.1 THE MOST IMPORTANT
QUESTION HERE IS:

Who is the
Holy Spirit?

LET US TRY TO DISCOVER THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 The Holy Spirit is **one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity**: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

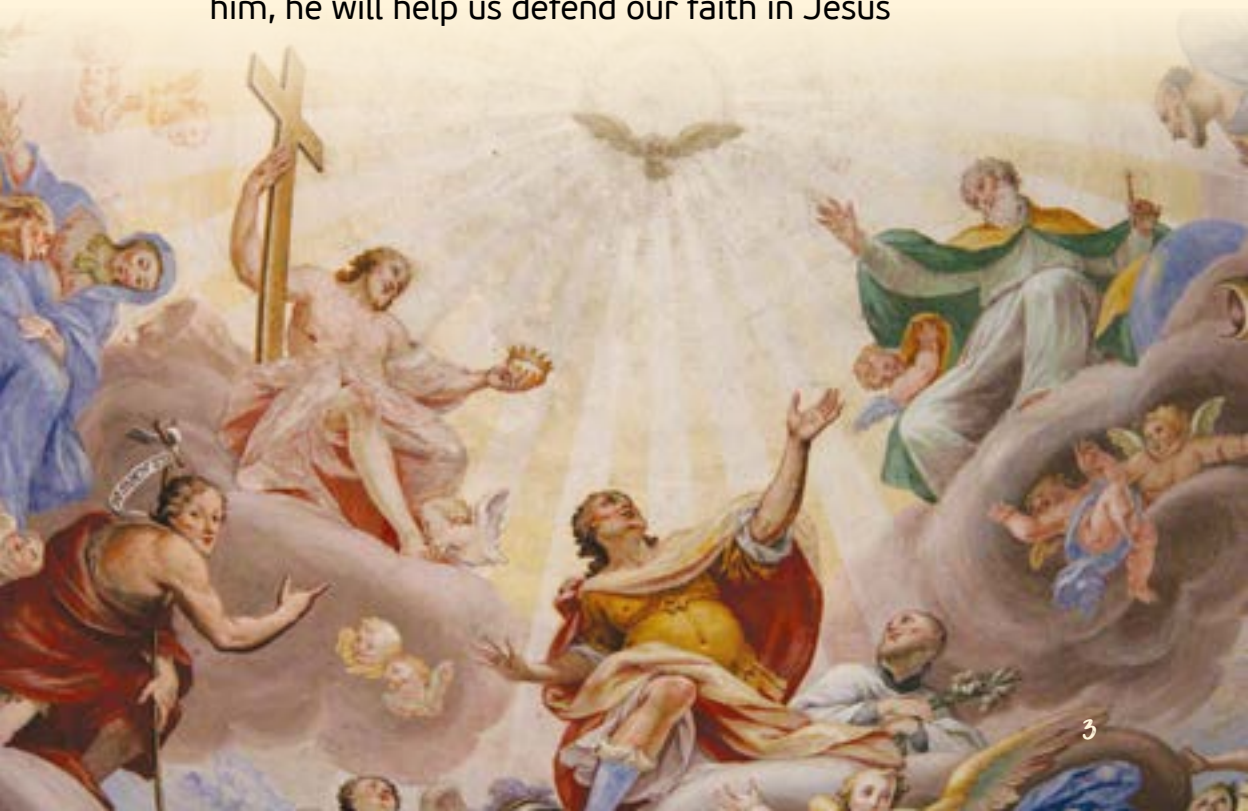
2 The Holy Spirit is **one and the same with the Father and the Son**; the three together form the Holy Trinity. They are three persons, equal to each other. This means that no one is greater or better than the other. The three persons work together with much love for us. Creation is the fruit of the love among them. Therefore, the Father is equal to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. The Son is equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit. **The Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son.** They are three persons, who together are one God.

3 The Holy Spirit is a living person. We cannot see him with our eyes, but we can believe in him and relate to him; this means we can pray to him. Better still, we must pray to him. Like we pray to Jesus and God the Father, we can pray to the Holy Spirit with much faith and trust.

The Holy Spirit has a very important role in our life as Christians. He teaches us and guides us so that we live the life that is expected of us as Christians.

1.2 THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIFE AS CHRISTIANS

- » As Christians we cannot live without the Holy Spirit. We need him in all the areas of our lives.
- » The principal role of the Holy Spirit in our life is to help us **love** just as Christ wants us to. The more we relate to the Holy Spirit, the more we learn to love.
- » Another role of the Holy Spirit in our life is that of **lawyer/defender**; in other words, he is somebody who defends. If we pray to him, he will help us defend our faith in Jesus



Christ; he will help us defend the teaching of Jesus Christ in the way we speak and in the way we live our life as Christians.

Jesus himself told us this when he promised the apostles that he would send them the Holy Spirit.

“*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.*”

JOHN 14, 26

- » The Holy Spirit also has another important role in our life, that of **guiding us towards the truth**. For the Christian, the truth is only found in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Holy Spirit guides us to **understand** better the mission of Jesus. He does this to help us discover how to live as Christians in our daily life.



Jesus himself said:

*“ But when he comes, the Spirit of **truth**, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak he hears and he will declare to you the things that are coming.”*

JOHN 16, 13



- » The Catholic Church is **led by the Holy Spirit**. Had the Church been led by persons, it would have become extinct long ago. Yet, despite the weaknesses of persons during the past two thousand years, it is still existing and it has continued the mission of Jesus.

- » We receive the Holy Spirit , who is still with us, from the Father and the Son, through the Church. We receive the Holy Spirit through all the Sacraments, particularly through Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders.



1.3 THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE

You should consider the Holy Spirit as a sincere friend, particularly during your adolescent years, as he is always ready to help you.

- » He helps you to **understand** the words, teachings, actions and the work of Jesus; in other words - his mission kliem, it-tagħlim, l-azzjonijiet u l-ħidma ta' Ġesù, jiġifieri l-missjoni tiegħu.

We get to understand this mission through the Word of God and the teaching of the Church.

Therefore, before reading or praying from the Bible, it is recommended that you pray to the Holy Spirit so that he will help you understand the message that the Lord wishes to transmit to you through his Word.

- » When you pray to the Holy Spirit he **helps you in your studies** and in everything you are doing or are going to do. Of course, you must also do your part.

Before starting your studies or before sitting for an examination, pray to the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you are studying or what is asked of you during an examination.

- » When you pray to the Holy Spirit, who is a Spirit of love and wisdom, he will help you to make **good choices and decisions**.

- » The Holy Spirit **also helps you to become holy, which means becoming better persons than you are.** It is very easy for one to start a life of vice out of curiosity. But, when one grows older and becomes mature, one will find it difficult to get out of such a life.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to become friends with the Holy Spirit and pray to him to help you to remain good persons. Pray to him when you sin to have the courage to confess without shame and renew your relationship with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

1.4 THE SYMBOLS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THEIR MEANING

In the Catholic Church we find various symbols that refer to the Holy Spirit. The most important symbols are water, fire and the dove. Besides these, there are symbolic gestures, which are actions with a meaning behind them, such as the anointing with oil and the laying on of hands by the Bishop or a priest during the celebration of Sacraments.

I. SYMBOLS:

Water: Water is the symbol of the action of the Holy Spirit in Baptism. St Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians wrote:

“For in one Spirit we were all baptised...”

1 COR 12, 13

FROM JOHN'S GOSPEL:

“But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”

JOHN 16, 7

“When he comes, the Spirit of truth he will guide you to all truth.”

JOHN 16, 12

Water is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Water gives life; therefore, the Holy Spirit gives life. When we are born we start our natural life. Through Baptism we start a new life in Christ. All this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Fire: Fire is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Many things are transformed by fire; they take on new shapes. For example, by using fire, glass can be shaped into different models. Even iron can be transformed into various objects and into different designs by using fire. Fire has the strength and energy to change things.



Let us recall Pentecost. On that day tongues of fire appeared on the heads of the apostles and all those who were with them in the cenacle. After this event, the apostles and those who were present with them, changed from cowards into courageous persons, going out to preach and talk about Jesus of Nazareth.

“When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.”

ACTS 2, 1-4

The Dove: In the four Gospels we read that at the Baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came down on him in the form of a dove. In the Book of Genesis we find:

“... and God’s spirit hovered over the water.”

GEN 1, 2

That is why in Christian art we find the symbol of the dove representing the Spirit of God – the Holy Spirit.

In a wider sense, in art, the symbol of the dove represents peace, gentleness and beauty, three

qualities that are all present in the Holy Spirit: a Spirit that gives us peace, gentleness and beauty in our soul and in all that surrounds us.

II. SYMBOLIC ACTIONS: ACTIONS WHICH HAVE MANY MEANINGS

Anointing with oil: During the rite of certain Sacraments, the persons receiving them are anointed with oil by the priest or Bishop. These Sacraments are: Baptism (Bishop, priest or deacon), Confirmation (Bishop or priest), Holy Orders (Bishop) and Extreme Unction, the anointing of the sick or dying, (Bishop or priest). In the Catholic Church, the anointing with oil is considered as a symbolic action representing the Holy Spirit.

The Romans used to anoint their soldiers with olive oil to strengthen them. During the



celebration of these four Sacraments the Bishop or priest (or deacon in the case of Baptism) prays to the Holy Spirit to descend on that person and fill him/her with his strength.



The laying on of hands: In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that people received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands.

“Then they laid their hands on them and they received the holy Spirit.”

ACTS 8, 17

The same thing happens today. When the priest or Bishop lays his hands on a person who is receiving the Sacraments, he implores the Holy Spirit to come to that person.

CHALLENGE

During this week pray to the Holy Spirit to guide you in all that you are doing. Try to say this prayer: Holy Spirit show me what to do. You can also pray like this: Holy Spirit help me make good choices.

FAMILY CATECHESIS FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

“Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will also accomplish it.”

1 THESS 5, 19-23

FAMILY PRAYER: AN EXTRACT FROM THE PRAYER FOR THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit, endless love,
come within us with your energy,
come and enkindle our hearts.



THE SECOND THEME

THE GIFT JESUS GAVE US: THE HOLY SPIRIT

2.1 WHEN JESUS WAS ON EARTH, HE PROMISED THE APOSTLES THAT HE WOULD SEND THEM THE HOLY SPIRIT

The apostles and the “loss” of their leader

Although the apostles were ordained priests and bishops during the last supper, they were fragile persons. After the death of Jesus, they were still



overcome with fear, despite the fact that they believed and Jesus himself appeared to them after rising from the dead. They had seen with their own eyes what had happened to Jesus. Quite understandably, they were afraid for themselves and for their families.

The apostles were in a dilemma: they wanted to remain the disciples of Jesus, persons following his teaching; they also wanted to be apostles, preaching this teaching. Yet, they were frightened of taking the risks which this task involved.

It was because of all this that before going to heaven, Jesus promised he would send them the Holy Spirit, whom he called "the defender". They were to have recourse to this defender, first of all to overcome their fear and secondly to defend what they believed in: Jesus and his teaching. In John's Gospel we find this:

*“ I have told you this
while I am with you.
The Advocate,
the Holy Spirit,
that the Father will send
in my name –
he will teach you everything
and remind you of all
that I told you.
Peace I leave with you,
my peace I give to you.
Not as the world gives
do I give it to you.
Do not let your hearts
be troubled or afraid.”*

JOHN 14, 25

2.2 THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO US AS CHRISTIANS

REFLECT

Mention some of these great gifts, which you can understand and practise in your adolescence.

A. The spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

The Holy Spirit bestowed many spiritual gifts on the apostles and those who were praying with them on the day he descended on them. These great gifts represent the attitude of the Church and our attitude as Christians. They show us how we are to behave with all persons, whom we should consider as our brothers and sisters.

B. The Sense of Community: The efficacy of praying together

The Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and those who were with them when they were all praying together.

This proves the need and the strength of praying together. We Christians should feel the need and importance of praying together, because prayer unites us and reminds us that we need each other.

C. Courage

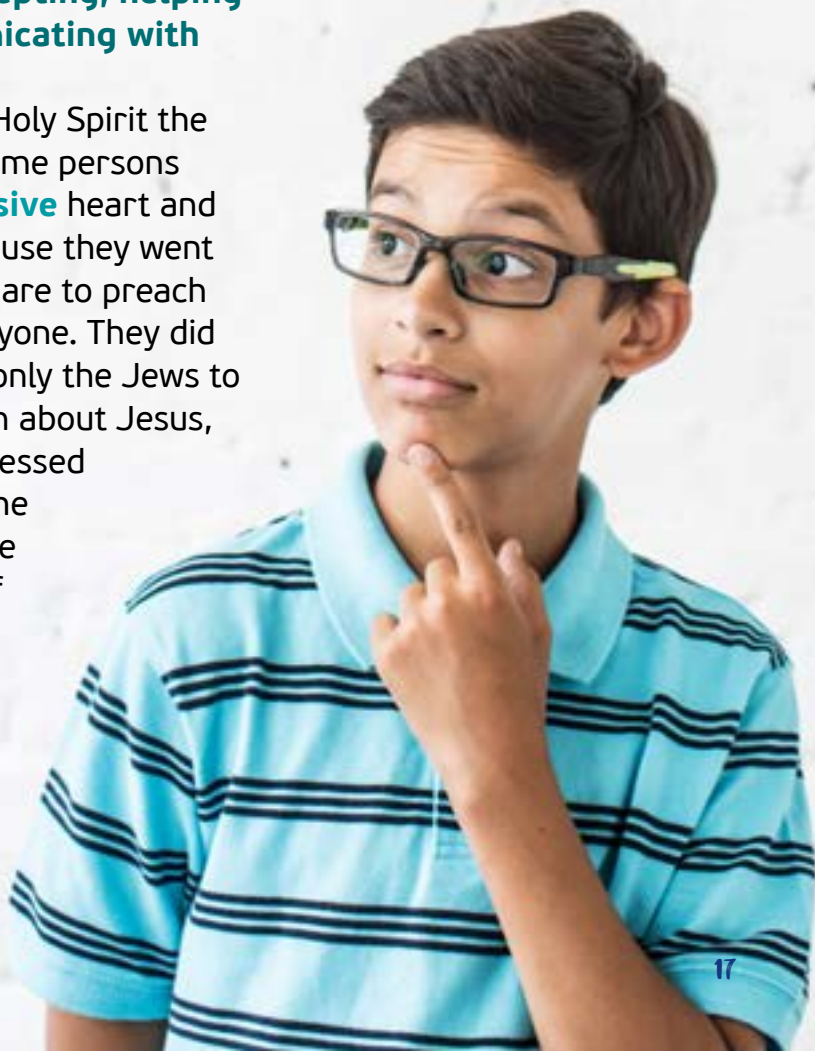
Through the Holy Spirit, the apostles were filled with **courage** in such a way, that from persons overcome with fear, they went out to preach the news about the suffering of Jesus, his death and resurrection. This is good news to us Christians. In this way, the community of the apostles, together with the disciples – that is, the Church - began its mission as

a Church. The Church began preaching the Good News to all, all over the world. This showed great courage on the part of the apostles. People realised that something had happened because they had never seen the apostles so filled with courage.

Besides this, another miracle had taken place. While the apostles spoke in Aramaic – the language spoken by the Jews at that time – people understood them in their own language. This is a sign that the Holy Spirit can help everyone to understand the Good News of Jesus Christ.

D. An inclusive and missionary attitude – loving, accepting, helping and communicating with everybody

Through the Holy Spirit the apostles became persons with an **inclusive** heart and attitude, because they went out in the square to preach Jesus to everyone. They did not seek out only the Jews to speak to them about Jesus, but they addressed everyone in the square, for the Good News of Jesus is for everybody.



The Good News is that Jesus suffered, died and rose from the dead because he loves us and wants to save us all. This Good News is for all people of all cultures, races and nations – it is for all the world. Therefore, on that day of Pentecost, the Church began its mission of inclusivity – a Church that teaches and helps everyone – *a Church without borders*. The Church is Catholic – it accepts, helps and communicates with everybody.



E. Our Sensitivity as Christians

On Pentecost day, the Holy Spirit gave the apostles a gift, that of speaking in different languages. This means that while they spoke Aramaic, people from different nations understood them in their own languages. Here we notice that the Holy Spirit wants us to be persons **sensitive**

to the needs of others. Being sensitive means being able to feel with others and for others; it means we have to be persons capable of loving. Where there is the Holy Spirit, there is love. Where there is true love, there is sensitivity. That is why the apostles had so much love for Jesus and for the people whom they taught about Jesus and his Good News.

F. Peace and Joy

The apostles were **all together praying and all together joyfully went out** preaching about Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy Spirit helped the apostles to be one united community, all with one thought, all working together for their own good and that of others. Where there is Jesus, where there is the Holy Spirit, there is always joy, peace and unity.

The Holy Spirit shows us that when we pray, especially when we pray together, our hearts and attitudes towards others are motivated by love. The more we love, the more sensitive we become towards others, the more inclusive and the more prepared to share the message with others. We also become persons of peace and willing to promote unity.



2.3 DISCOVERING THE FEAST OF PENTECOST IN THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS



The Feast of Pentecost for the Jews

In Greek, Pentecost means the “fiftieth day”. The Jews of the Old Testament called it “Shouvat”; it was also known as the *Feast of the Weeks* or the *Festival of the Weeks* (Exodus 34,22; Deut 16,10), as well as the *Festival or Feast of the Harvest* (Exodus 23,16), or the *Day of the First Fruits* or, in Hebrew, “Yom ha-Bikkurim”. (Numbers

28,26).

Besides, according to the Jewish tradition, Pentecost commemorates the day when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, fifty days after their coming out of Egypt. (Exodus 20, 1-10). The Talmud calculated the days according to the writing in the Book of Leviticus 23, 15-21.

The Feast of Pentecost to us Christians

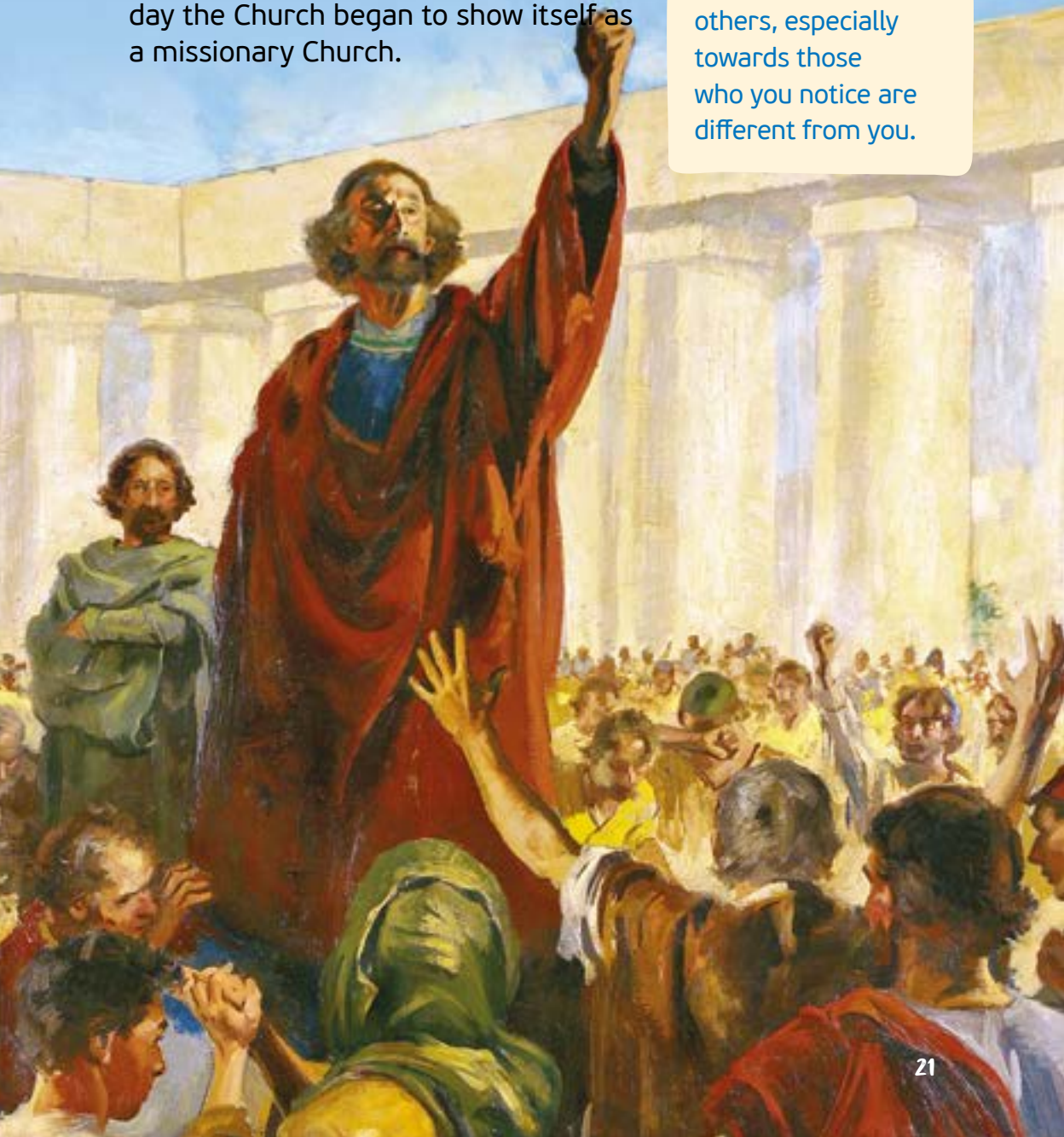
To us Christians, the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection of the Lord, is the day when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and all those who were praying with them in the cenacle.

Easter is a day of faith because as St Paul writes, “..... and if Christ has not been raised, then empty too is our preaching; empty too your faith.” (1 Cor 15:14). **Pentecost is a day of hope** because when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles along with the whole gathering, he filled them with courage to

preach Jesus Christ to everybody. At Pentecost, the apostles together with the small community of Christians, overcame their fear and went out all together to preach the Good News of Jesus. In this way, the newly formed Church went out to meet people who came from different countries. On that day the Church began to show itself as a missionary Church.

CHALLENGE

In the coming days, do your best to pray to the Holy Spirit to help you become a person more sensitive and inclusive towards others, especially towards those who you notice are different from you.



FAMILY CATECHESIS

THEY HAD EVERYTHING IN COMMON

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favour was accorded to them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each person according to his need. Thus Joseph, also named by the apostles Barnabas (which is translated ‘son of encouragement’), a Levite and a Cypriot by birth, sold a piece of property that he owned, then brought the money and put it at the feet of the apostles.”

ACTS 4, 32-37

LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Holy Spirit

strengthen us as a family.

Help each and everyone of us
to be sensitive towards others,

so that we will be persons
who promote peace and unity.

Keep us united as a family
and fill our hearts with the real joy
only you can give.

Amen.

THE THIRD THEME

PARTICIPATING IN OUR CHOICES

One who complains, does this either because one likes doing so or because one is not well informed. Such a person prefers to complain rather than become informed. Lately, this complaint has become popular: "I was baptised without being asked if I wanted to". This complaint is an invitation to discover why we were baptised without being asked about our wishes.

3.1 THE CONTEMPORARY COMPLAINT: I WAS BAPTISED WITHOUT BEING CONSULTED!

STORY:

Elena arrived home after school with a long face. Usually she used to run to her grandmother and ask her what she had prepared for lunch. That day she barely spoke to her gran who inwardly wondered what had happened. "Not to worry..... I will soon know. Let her start to eat," she thought. And that is what happened. As soon as Elena started eating, she turned to her gran and said rather loudly, "Gran, it's not fair that I was baptised without being asked for my consent. Perhaps"

Her grandmother, a very experienced lady, listened to what the girl had to say about her feelings on the matter. Then she answered, "Elena, if there is something that you particularly like, perhaps something which I have given you, like a costly ring, you would want to treasure it, so that you can

leave it to your children one day. Little by little, this ring will become a family heirloom. Elena was quick to answer, "Yes, gran. It will remind me of you and my children will remember me and you." "Do you think that your children will complain that you have left them that gift?" "Certainly not," replied Elena. Her grandmother, who was very intelligent, carried on asking, "Let us suppose that one of your children wants to sell that ring. How would you feel?" "If I am still alive, I would be very unhappy. Yet, if I have given it to him, he can do what he likes with it. After all, everybody is free to do what he likes."

"Dear, let us apply this story, which can easily happen, to understand why your parents asked the parish priest to baptise you. Remember that your paternal grandfather and I are your godparents. As such, it is our responsibility to care for you – not only to feed you, clothe you or give you presents, but also to care for your soul.."

Having finished her meal, Elena continued to listen, with great curiosity, to why she had been baptised without being asked.

VIDEO CLIP:

Now Elena is going to share with you what she learnt from her grandmother. Listen to this story because it is very interesting.





LET US THINK:

It is quite interesting to listen to adolescents like you discussing the fact that you were baptised without being asked whether you wanted to be or not. This may be considered not merely as a complaint but even as an effort to understand better.

When there is something close to one's heart, something one believes in as being beneficial, one would want to pass it on to those one really loves, knowing that these will also benefit from it – of course if they take care of it.

Let us take a practical example. If a parent believes that good and nourishing food and physical exercise are good for health, then he/she will instil in his/her children this same belief.

3.2 LET US UNDERSTAND THE COMPLAINT: YOU WERE BAPTISED WITHOUT BEING CONSULTED

Let us continue thinking for a while:

- » Before being born, were you asked by your parents which country you wanted to be born in?
- » Were you asked what colour of hair or eyes you preferred?
- » Were you asked to choose the parents you wanted?
- » Did anybody ask you what language you wanted to speak when you started speaking?
- » Did anybody ask you which village and which family you wanted to be born in?
- » Were you asked to choose which talents you wanted to be born with?

3.3 WE FEEL MORE RESPONSIBLE ON HOW TO LIVE OUR FAITH:

The truth is that parents, through biological love, together with God, give life to a child. Also through love, they think about giving their child a religion, because they believe that religion is important and necessary for the development of a human being.

Each person, in his life, seeks to have something which is greater than himself, greater than a human being, in which to believe.



Parents realise that without faith, and therefore without religious upbringing, which helps with the teaching and practice of faith, the children's education is not holistic.

In reality, your parents gave you this gift and baptised you as Christians because they love you. Therefore, you were baptised in the Christian faith which is practised and taught by the Christian and Catholic religion. You should thank your parents for this gift. When you were born, you started your natural life; when you were baptised you started your life of faith – your religious life.

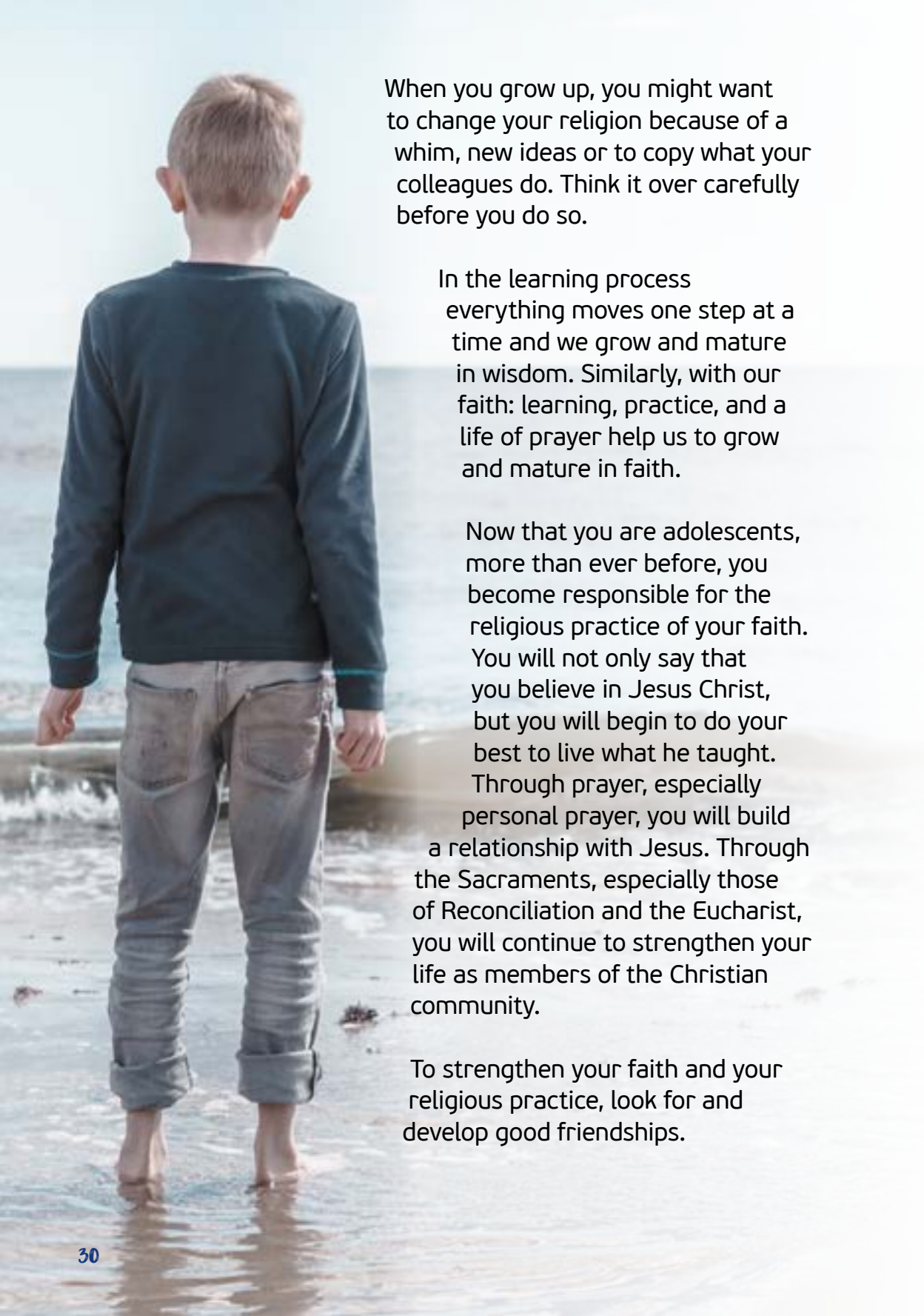
Moreover, your parents chose godparents for you to see that you lead a good life both spiritually and physically.

Therefore, **the day of your Baptism** is a very important day which you should remember, because it is your **birthday** as Catholics.

Ever since you were very little, your parents used every opportunity, especially in everyday life, to teach you how to live your faith. They took you and sent you to centres to continue learning about this faith, along with other children, who also form part of the community of Christians. You, together with children your age, learnt about who we believe in as Christians and how we can live what we learn in everyday life. Above all, you started to learn how to pray so that you would start a beautiful relationship with Jesus Christ.

You have now grown up and are on the threshold of adolescence, So, you are now, more or less responsible for this beautiful gift. There will come a time when you will ask many questions about your faith and about the religious practice. Do not worry. The important thing is that you find competent persons, who wish you well, to share with them these queries and with them try and clear up your doubts.





When you grow up, you might want to change your religion because of a whim, new ideas or to copy what your colleagues do. Think it over carefully before you do so.

In the learning process everything moves one step at a time and we grow and mature in wisdom. Similarly, with our faith: learning, practice, and a life of prayer help us to grow and mature in faith.

Now that you are adolescents, more than ever before, you become responsible for the religious practice of your faith. You will not only say that you believe in Jesus Christ, but you will begin to do your best to live what he taught. Through prayer, especially personal prayer, you will build a relationship with Jesus. Through the Sacraments, especially those of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, you will continue to strengthen your life as members of the Christian community.

To strengthen your faith and your religious practice, look for and develop good friendships.

THE WORD OF GOD: FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF ST PAUL TO TIMOTHY

“ I am grateful to God,whom I worship with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, as I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day. I yearn to see you again, recalling your tears, so that I will be filled with joy, as I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and that I am confident lives also in you. For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.”

2 TIM 1, 3-6

NOTE:

Timothy's mother was a Jew and his father a Greek. Timothy came from Ephesus, today known as the town of Silcuk in the province of Ismir in Turkey. He was one of the first to become a Catholic. He was a disciple of St. Paul and he travelled with him when they visited different places to spread the Gospel.

3.4 PARTICIPATING IN OUR CHOICES

Now that, with your parents or with those who care for you, you have decided to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, it would be opportune to involve yourself in this important phase of your life.

Points about how to involve yourself:

- » Understand that this Sacrament is not a type of graduation or simply a social event. Therefore as a Catholic seek to continue learning more so that you strengthen your faith.
- » Understand that you wish to receive this Sacrament because you want to continue

discovering how to live as a Christian in a holistic way.

- » Realise that you should not receive this Sacrament solely to be able to get married in church in the future. It is good to note, that a church wedding does not make a person Christian. It is the persons who are getting married and who do their best to live the Christian life that feel the need to have a church wedding.
- » Realise that when you decide to receive Confirmation you are confirming: **'Yes, I wish to carry on walking in the footsteps of Jesus, I wish to continue discovering who Jesus is and what he wants from me.'**
- » With your parents, or those who are looking after you, **discuss** the **choice** of a fitting godparent,



who is well adapted to help you grow into a good person. **Your godparent** will not only help you to become a good person, but also a humane person – a responsible Christian citizen. This can be done in several ways: a good word, a good example or good advice while he/she accompanies you in your life.

- » As you are now in your adolescence, very close to becoming youths, you start feeling somewhat more responsible for the practice of your faith as a Christian person. This means that you attend

the celebration of mass, especially on Sunday, that you receive the Sacraments, especially those of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, that you allow yourself time to pray and that you do your best to learn and ask about what the Church teaches.



- » Read more frequently the Word of God and find ways of learning how to understand it better in order to be able to live it better.
- » Do voluntary work every week for a few minutes in your own area – at school, at the place where you learn catechism or at other activities. There are always occasions to help others; thereby being of service to humanity.
- » Understand that now, more than ever before, you are responsible for sharing your faith with others as a Christian.
- » After receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, endeavour to become a member of a Christian group that helps you discover how to grow into a Christian person in today's society. Do your utmost to have good friends.

CHALLENGE

During this week thank God for this gift of faith. Pray for your parents or those who are bringing you up. In your words and actions remember the teaching of Jesus. In this way you will be passing on this gift of faith and living it together with others.

Diary

Write down the date of your baptism. Find out who were your godparents at Baptism. Then, write down or draw a prayer of thanksgiving to God and your family for the gift of life, faith and religion which they passed on to you.

FAMILY CATECHESIS

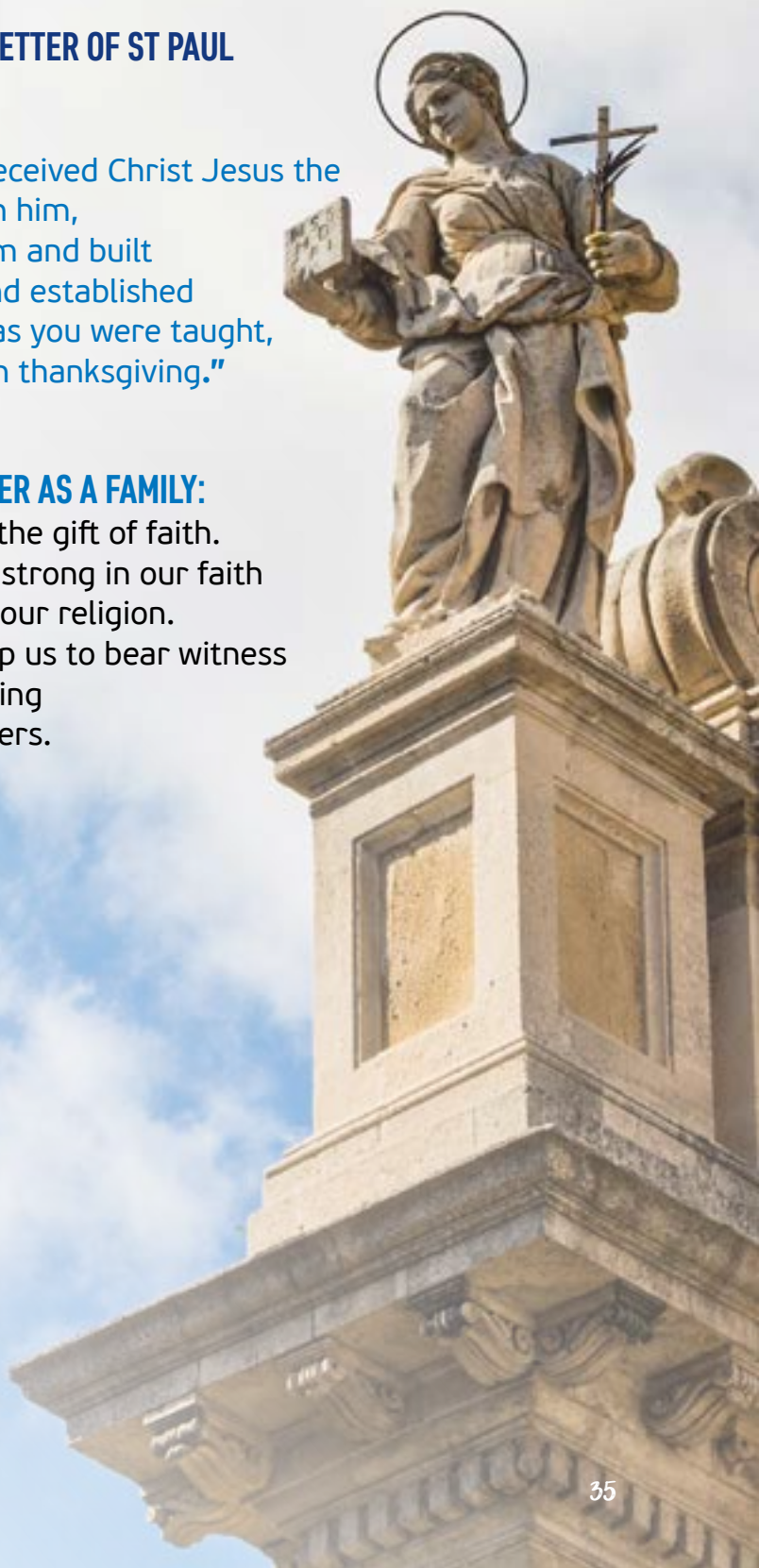
READING FROM THE LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

“ So, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted in him and built upon him and established in the faith as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

COL 2, 6-7

LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY:

Thank you God for the gift of faith.
Help us to become strong in our faith
and in the living of our religion.
We need you to help us to bear witness
to our faith by helping
each other and others.
Amen.



2

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIFE



THE FIRST THEME

New Experiences Ever

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: COMPANIONS DURING LIFE

The word 'gift' means a presentil-kelma 'don' t'fisser rigal. You receive seven gifts from the Holy Spirit at Confirmation; these strengthen those other gifts which you received at Baptism. These gifts accompany you through all your life.

1.1 THE GIFTS AND VIRTUES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The gifts bestowed on you at Confirmation re-enforce the presence of the Holy Spirit you received at Baptism. These gifts are:

*Wisdom,
Understanding,
Counsel,
Fortitude,
Knowledge,
Piety,
Fear of the Lord.*

These gifts help each of you in the choice you have made of following in the footsteps of Jesus and his teaching, thereby being his witness in your life.

Besides, these gifts help you in your everyday life by strengthening the virtues you have. Virtues are the good things that make you a good Christian; they are of benefit to yourself as well as to others.

REFLECT

Some of these virtues are: sincerity, honesty, respect, generosity, wisdom/prudence, courage/strength, justice, self-control, faith, hope and charity.

Every person has good characteristics. Some characteristics, however, need working on to become better. For instance, an honest person does his utmost to remain honest all his life. Another person, who is prone to tell lies, wishes to become more sincere. A lie is always a lie; if lies are not controlled, they can create a lot of trouble. A habitual liar needs to work on this side of his/her character to become more sincere.



St Thomas Aquinas and the Catholic Church declare that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are very important because:

- » They help you **improve your character to become more responsible Christians** especially in the way you behave and in the choices you make, for your own good and that of others;
- » Through these gifts you get to **know better the Holy Spirit**. You appreciate him more, pray to him more and allow him to become a part of your life.

1.2 THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

From the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

*“ But a shoot shall sprout from the stump
of Jesse,
and from his roots a bud shall blossom.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him:
A spirit of wisdom and understanding.
A spirit of counsel and of strength,
a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the
Lord.’*

ISAIAH 11, 1-2

The Prophet Isaiah lived about 800 years before Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament Book, the Prophet Isaiah mentions the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the passage above, the Prophet states that a shoot would emerge from the roots of Jesse, who was David's father. The Prophet Isaiah was here announcing the

birth of Jesus, who would come from the race of Jesse and David.

In the last line, the “fear of the Lord” means respect and love; that is, Jesus, as a human being, respected God, his Father.

We also read, “The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him”. This means that as a man Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and, therefore, had all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



Therefore, every time that Christians receive a Sacrament, they are strengthened by these gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to live a good Christian life.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIFE

Wisdom

This gift of wisdom teaches you that the most important thing in your life is God. You may have pots of money and possess many other goods, but if you do not have God, your heart and your life are empty and worthless.

This gift helps you to understand how important it is to leave each day a space for God, to believe in God and to believe in your need for him. The gift of wisdom helps you to understand, appreciate and strengthen your trust in him.

Do not kid yourself or let others mislead you when they tell you that you do not need God. The wise person knows that God exists and that he is important in life. This gift fills you with a strong faith in God and in yourself. It fills you with trust in God and with peace, which only God can give.

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

"... For Wisdom is better than corals, and no choice possession can compare with it. I, Wisdom, dwell with experience, and judicious knowledge I attain."

PROVERBS 8, 11-12



Understanding

The gift of Understanding teaches you how to be more receptive in your heart and mind to the Word of God. It helps you to understand better the message that God wants to pass on to you through his Word and the teaching of the Church.

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

"Mine are counsel and advice; mine is strength; I am understanding. By me kings reign, and lawgivers establish justice; By me princes govern, and nobles; all the rulers of the earth."

PROVERBS 8, 15-16

The gift of Understanding sheds new light on the importance of giving God the place he deserves in your life; it also helps you to understand that God loves you. This gift enables you to become more sensitive about yourself and others while you are in the process of maturing in age and experience. The Word of God and the teaching of the Church will make it easier for you to understand yourself and others, thus becoming more tolerant, loving, receptive and ready to communicate with others.

Counsel

This gift relates to the way you judge things in order to distinguish the good from the bad and avoid sinning. Temptations always present themselves. How to deal with them is your choice. Do you give in to them or do you do your utmost to avoid them?

This gift complements the gift of Understanding as well as the gift of Knowledge. With these gifts, you are able to understand what you are taught and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you are able to distinguish the good from the bad and understand the reason for your judgement and your choice.

This gift also helps you to defend your faith and your religion as Catholic Christians.

Fortitude

By means of this gift, the Holy Spirit fills you with courage, strength and much self-confidence to overcome your fears and face new challenges in life.

This gift of Fortitude makes you able to defend what is good and just according to God's wish and the teaching of the Church, which is aimed at the good of everyone.

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

"Folly is joy to the senseless man, but the man of understanding goes the straight way. Plans fail when there is no counsel, but they succeed when counsellors are many. There is joy for a man in his utterance; a word in season, how good it is!"

PROVERBS 15, 21-23

FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

"My strength and my courage is the Lord, and he has been my saviour. He is my God, I praise him ..."

EXODUS 15, 2-3



FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

“You simple ones,
gain resource; you
fools, gain sense.
Give heed, for noble
things I speak;
honesty opens my
lips. Yes, the truth
my mouth recounts,
but wickedness my
lips abhor. Sincere
are all the words of
my mouth, no one
of them is wily or
crooked.”

PROVERBS 8, 5-8

Knowledge

Like the others, this gift is very necessary in your life, because through it the Holy Spirit enables you to choose and evaluate well the teaching and information you receive. This is of great value in helping you to decide on your choices in life. In today's society, access to information is easily and readily available. But, what you read and discover is not always beneficial to you. This gift enables you to choose what to see, hear and believe.

When you are well informed with good and correct teaching, which benefits you and others, you are in a better position to make good choices.

Piety

The gift of piety helps you to pray better and to foster in yourself great and sincere respect towards God. It shows you how to adore God and hold no other god, except him.

Piety is very much related to the practices of our religion. A pertinent question is this: do you show respect towards God, especially during prayer and during liturgical celebrations, such as the mass and other functions?

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MATTHEW:

"Take care that you do not perform righteous deeds so that people may see you doing them. Otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father."

MATTHEW 6, 1



This gift invites you to ask yourself whether you are doing something to praise God or for the sake of impressing others.

You cannot say that you love God when you have no respect towards the Church and the Christian community, of which you form part.

As Catholics, you are not only living members of the community, but you also have the duty to pray with the community and for the community, especially during Sunday mass. You are also obliged to participate in socio-religious activities organised by the Christian community.



Fear of the Lord

The phrase “fear of the Lord” does not mean that God is fearsome. God is not someone who is ever ready to punish you. Far from it! God is loving and just; that is, while God loves you, God is also just – good is good and bad is bad.

The words “fear of the Lord” mean to show respect and love towards God. When you love someone, you are careful not to offend or hurt that person. The same applies to God. This gift helps you to make choices and decisions, in which you always and everywhere acknowledge God as being great, merciful, full of love and just. Hence, God deserves respect and love.

This gift helps you to strengthen your hopeful expectations, and is, therefore very important in your life. Hope, based on your trust in God, is full of faith, thus empowering your life in all its aspects.

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

“The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Pride, arrogance, the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.”

PROVERBS 8, 13

CHALLENGE

During this week, make an effort to pray to the Holy Spirit to help you remember and practise, as much as possible, these gifts in your everyday life.

FAMILY CATECHESIS **LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY**

Eternal Father,
in the name of your Son Jesus,
and through the intercession
of the Immaculate Virgin Mary,
fill me with the Holy Spirit.
Holy Spirit, eternal love,
come to us with your vitality
and enkindle our hearts.



THE SECOND THEME

Crawling Up Bit By Bit Every Day: The Fruit Of The Spirit

The fruit of the Holy Spirit consists of the virtues which grow and develop together with your human and Christian formation. Indeed, these virtues are closely related to the formation of your character, with Jesus Christ being the model of these virtues.



2.1 THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The fruit of the Holy Spirit grows inside your heart, your very consciousness. The closer your relationship with God, the richer is the fruit of the Holy Spirit within you. These virtues are considered as fruit because they help you develop your character. Indeed, gradually, you yourself will notice and enjoy a well formed character, from which those near you are also bound to gain.

Like a farmer who works tirelessly to grow good fruit, you should work with God to foster in you good values. These become attitudes; later they turn into principles, and finally develop into virtues. This does not happen overnight! It is a life-long job. You begin in a small way; the more you grow, the more you will mature and become firm in your ideas. The good behaviour that is the result of all this, is the fruit of all the good choices that you have made.

The truth is that when a person lives these virtues, that person is admired by those around him. That person may think that he/she is strange or different from the others, but actually these admire such a person and wish to be like him/her.

When you receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, you take on the responsibility

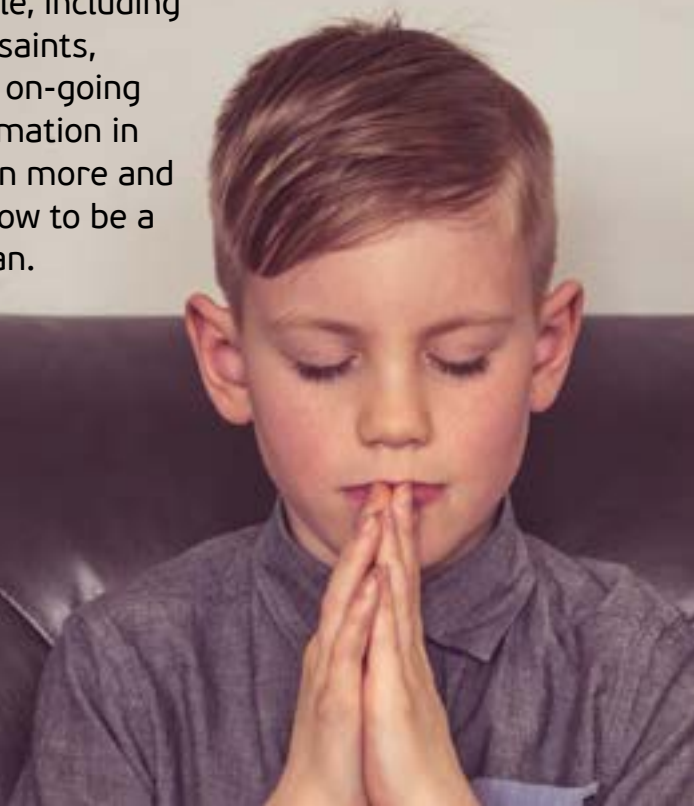


of becoming the witness of Jesus Christ by word and example. You will be able to do this because, through the fruit of the Holy Spirit, you will continue with your growth into a Christian with a good character.

Everybody admires adolescents and youths who have a good character. So, make an effort to remain in a good relationship with Jesus Christ and try to build a good Christian character.

A good Christian character is built and strengthened by:

- » Reading the Word of God, especially the Gospel,
- » Personal prayer and communal prayer together with the Christian community, especially during Sunday mass,
- » Receiving the Sacraments, especially those of Reconciliation and the Eucharist,
- » Following the good examples of various people, including those of the saints,
- » Receiving an on-going Christian formation in order to learn more and to practise how to be a good Christian.



2.2 DISCOVERING THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

LOVE

Nowadays the word “love” is used very commonly. However, being able to really love is not common at all; in fact, it is quite rare. Every person is created to love. If you were asked to say what “love” means to you, the answers given would be various. This is within reason. Yet, love is the thing every person yearns for.



It is a pity that not everyone knows how to love truly. Still, it is a fact that you cannot keep love locked up in your heart; you have to share it with someone. Otherwise, it is not love but selfishness.

True love is not merely a question of feelings; it involves good actions which sometimes require sacrifices from a person. True love does not allow you to look only at the defects of others, but helps you to discover the good in them. True love means sharing with others not only what is beautiful, but

also the challenges and pain that life offers. The person who truly loves, does not love conditionally, how or when it suits him/her, but loves always and for ever. A relationship may change, but love persists and keeps wishing the others well. True love does not make one jealous because others are in a better position. Indeed, one who really loves always thinks of others first.

There is no love without sacrifice. Jesus Christ is a clear example of this. Because he loves us, he wanted to save us. To do so, he gave us himself and has remained with us in the Eucharist.

LOOK UP

Look up the hymn on love which St Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 13, verses 1-8 and verse 13.

There are many attitudes and behaviours which are the products of love. It is impossible to mention them all. But, St. Paul, in his hymn on love, found in his first letter to the Corinthians, summarised the essence of love.

The more you believe that God loves you, the more you are able to love others.





JOY/HAPPINESS

Joy and happiness are different from each other. You can be joyful and happy, but you can also be joyful and not happy. Happiness is external; happiness is acquired from things. A person can be happy when buying something which has been desired for a long time; or when presented with something he/she likes; or when he/she passes an examination or succeeds in a business deal.

One can be joyful even when one does not possess all such things, because joy does not depend on how many things one owns, but on the degree of a good relationship one has with God. Joy increases in your heart according to how much you try to live life to the best of your ability and according to how much you help others, even in small things. Yes, joy comes from your own inside.

Joy is a feeling that a person experiences. The more you are glad for the success of others, the more joyful you feel. There is no joy in the presence of jealousy. When you use your talents and capabilities to do good to others, your joy increases.

PEACE/BLESSING

Peace of mind and of the heart is the result of a good relationship with God. Where there is peace there is justice, because peace and justice can never be separated. The more you put your trust in God, the more at peace you are bound to feel.

STORY:

Sean, an adolescent, had a friend called Kenneth, whom he had known since they attended kindergarten together. Once, Kenneth began spreading rumours against Sean, who became very upset when he heard about the matter. He fretted and even wept as he tried to find a reason why Kenneth was doing this to him. But, he could find no answer.

One day, Sean felt the need to talk to God about the situation. He said to Jesus, "Jesus, I don't know what is happening. I only know that I am hurt. I am leaving the problem in your hands." Although he was in this awkward situation, Sean felt at peace in his heart, because it was not he who had caused all this anxiety.

About six months later, Kenneth approached Sean, apologised and asked to be forgiven. The relationship between them had now changed, but the bad feeling towards each other decreased.



Sean, now at peace with himself, thanked Jesus for his help. Sean realised how important it is for a person to trust in Jesus, because then he/she is at peace with himself/herself and is able to bring peace to others. On the other hand, where there is pride, there is no peace of mind or of heart both in the person himself and in those around him/her.

TOLERANCE/PATIENCE

Tolerance and patience are related to each other but, at the same time, they are a little different from each other. Considering your adolescence, we are going to talk mostly about patience,. We often hear the expressions "Everybody is impatient" or "Everybody is in a hurry and has no patience for anyone or anything." Sometimes, you are not even patient with yourselves.

It is very important to be patient with yourselves because, otherwise, you will become very nervous and have expectations which may be difficult to achieve. Everybody has wishes and dreams, but we must also know our limitations. If these can be overcome, well and good; but when our wishes cannot be satisfied, we have to accept facts and be patient with ourselves.

We cannot have everything we want in life; neither can we grow up all of a sudden ... everything takes its time. Unfortunately, we are living in the push-button age, where we expect things to happen at the push of an electronic button. But life is very different.

When you are on the verge of becoming impatient or losing your patience, remember how, every single moment, God has been very patient with you and everybody else. Try to reflect on how many times you have promised God to amend the way you speak, behave and live, but you have not! God is patient with everybody. Where there is true love, there is patience.

It is not easy to be patient. You need much love and self-control which, however, are not impossible virtues. When you are alone, reflect on this: if God is so patient with me, why shouldn't I be patient with myself and with others? Don't you think that others are patient with you, too? Think! Wouldn't it be better if you controlled your hasty feelings and anger and learned how to be patient?



MERCY

Pope Francis dedicated a whole year to mercy so that each one of us fully understands how merciful God is to us. If we understand this, then we will grow in mercy. Being merciful does not mean pitying yourself or others. It means that, while trusting in God, you do your best to live your life better and help others to do so as well.

STORY:

Once there was a poor man who lived near a river and begged for food every day. Everybody knew him and many gave him some food to eat. One day, a man, carrying two fishing rods, met the poor man and asked him, "Do you know how to fish?"

"No," replied the poor man.

"Come with me to learn. If you learn how to fish, you will no longer beg for food, because you will have enough to eat and may also sell some of the fish you catch. In this way, you will re-build your life."

The poor man was very pleased. He learned to fish and his life changed dramatically. After a few months, the same man again passed that way and saw the once poor man fishing. He was dressed well and looked much better. They greeted each other and the man said, "Now that you are leading a better life, do not forget to be merciful towards others."

This story can take different forms in everyday life.

Mercy is also related to forgiveness. When we remember God's mercy towards us, why cannot we ourselves be merciful towards others? Why do we quarrel about everything? Why do we not forgive? Why do we refrain from teaching others how to improve their life? Jealousy, pride and a

sense of revenge overpower mercy. If you want others to be merciful to you, you must show mercy to others. You tend to be more merciful towards others if you keep in mind God's mercy towards you.

Mercy and forgiveness are very much alike. We often hear Pope Francis saying that God is always waiting to forgive us. Reflect: when you forgive, you are not denying what has happened, as things that have happened cannot be cancelled. It is not easy to forgive, but when you do really forgive, you will feel peaceful in your hearts. Truly, forgiving makes your heart more peaceful. Have you ever asked for forgiveness and been forgiven? How did you feel?

**FROM THE LETTER
OF ST PAUL TO THE
EPHESIANS:**

"Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, as God has forgiven you in Christ."

EPHESIANS 4, 32

Besides, it is important that first of all you forgive yourself and learn from your mistakes. Be merciful to yourselves and then you will be in a position to have mercy on and forgive others with serenity and peace. You can achieve all this with the help of God.



PIETY/GOODNESS

You will spread goodness around you if you are good. Being a good person does not mean letting everyone ride roughshod over you. However, a good person is not a weak person. On the contrary, being good means having a strong character.

To become mature youths and good, gentle adults, you need to keep a good relationship with God, especially by praying, reading the Word of God, receiving the Sacraments frequently, especially the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist and being friends with other good adolescents.

The choice of friends is very important because friends can help you or hinder you. Keep your hearts, eyes and ears clean by not watching or listening to violence. Always do good and it will rebound on you.

FROM PSALM 34

“Turn from evil and do good: seek peace and pursue it.”

PSALM 34, 15

FAITHFULNESS/LOYALTY

If you are loyal, then you are faithful, something which is admirable. You have to be loyal first to yourself and then to others in all your behaviour, in all that you do and say. You need a strong character to be loyal; it is not an easy task but it is not impossible.

Today, faithfulness among friends has become a rare virtue. When you find a loyal friend, one, whom you can trust, you have found a treasure which you should regard as being very precious.

First, however, be true and loyal to yourselves by being honest with yourselves.

For example: if you have made a mistake, accept the fact, excuse yourselves, learn from your mistake and then carry on with your lives. If you have sinned, go to confession and become friends again with God. If you have hurt somebody, try to make amends. In this way, you will have been honest with yourselves and with others. If you have a talent use it, as God gave it to you for yourself and also to share it with others. Being loyal even means being able to praise someone and not make fun of him/her.

Your friends will believe in you and trust you if you are loyal and honest with others. Where there are lies, honesty and faithfulness are absent.

Faithfulness helps you to grow into honest Christian citizens, trusted by everyone, working for the good of society and the Church. St Theresa of Calcutta says, "Do not seek to be persons of success, but to be faithful ones." This means being loyal.

**FROM THE BOOK
OF PROVERBS**

"The trustworthy
man will be richly
blessed..."

PROVERBS 28, 20

Do not forget that God is always faithful to us and will never betray us. Being loyal/faithful to God means giving God the place he deserves in your heart and not merely seeking him only when you need him.



DOCILITY/GENTLENESS

A person shows that he/she has a strong character by being gentle in thought, word and behaviour. Gentleness brings out the best in everybody. A rough person is usually insecure and a coward, capable only of creating trouble. A gentle person possesses a strong character and is educated; his gentleness is revealed in his words and behaviour towards others.

A gentle person weighs his/her words and gestures as these can mean much. All of us are fragile; so, if you want others to treat you gently, you yourselves have to be gentle with others.

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

“A mild answer calms
wrath, but a harsh
word stirs up anger.”

PROVERBS 15, 1

FROM THE LETTER OF ST PAUL TO TITUS

“They are to slander no one, to be peaceable, considerate, exercising all graciousness toward everyone.”

TITUS 3, 2B

A gentle person, who is gentle even with himself/herself respects himself/herself and respects also others everywhere and without distinction. Gentleness requires much control on a person's emotions, especially in difficult moments. A person who is rough in speech and behaviour is always a loser, even when he/she is in the right. The docile person is always a winner.

SELF-CONTROL/TEMPERANCE

Imagine a sportive person. This person makes many sacrifices to reach his/her goal. There is always daily training and strict discipline in various areas of that person's life. In other words, this person must exercise self-control.



This does not refer solely to persons practising sports, but to everyone. Self-control means that you say no, when you have to say no, especially when your self respect and the respect of others are at stake.

It sometimes happens that you start doing something with a good intention, but in the process, things start going wrong. You may be obstinate and carry on regardless, or you may be wise enough to stop. This capacity, of knowing when to stop as soon as things start going wrong for you or for others, is a sign of great maturity and great self-control.

Even when you are doing a good thing, you sometimes need to use control. It may be that the thing is good for you but bothers someone



else. For instance, you may wish to celebrate by listening to some music. There is nothing wrong in this, but you should ensure that only you can hear the music because it may be bothersome to others who may not be in the mood to celebrate like you.

Besides, remember that self-control keeps you away from all forms of addiction. If you can control something from the beginning, you will never become addicted to it. This is relevant not only when the thing is good, but also when it starts as a good thing but later degenerates.



SOME SUGGESTIONS ABOUT HOW ONE MAY DEVELOP SELF-CONTROL

- » Think carefully about what you want from life.
- » Make a list of good rules/values/principles to help you in your life.They should be your road map – guide lines of your life.
- » Be capable of challenging yourselves. When there is the need of saying no, say no; your no is said not out of pride but in the sense of self-control.
- » Think of the consequences if you do not exercise self-control. For example, think like this: What will happen if I do not control my tongue or my anger or any other strong emotion? What will be the consequences?
- » Practise self-control as much as you can.
- » Pray to God to help you.

All these suggestions are a clear guarantee that your life and your environment will change for the better.

If you want more love, more money, more goodness, more docility and gentleness together with a good dose of patience, and if you truly wish to be blessed and have peace, then you need to practise self-control.

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

The man of discretion keeps his knowledge hidden .

PROVERBS 12, 23

CHALLENGE

During this week, practise the fruit of the Spirit on yourselves and with others.

Diary

Write down or draw a fruit of the Spirit which you wish to practise more. If you are already practising one fruit of the Spirit, write about or draw how you are doing it and how your life has changed because of it.

FAMILY CATECHESIS

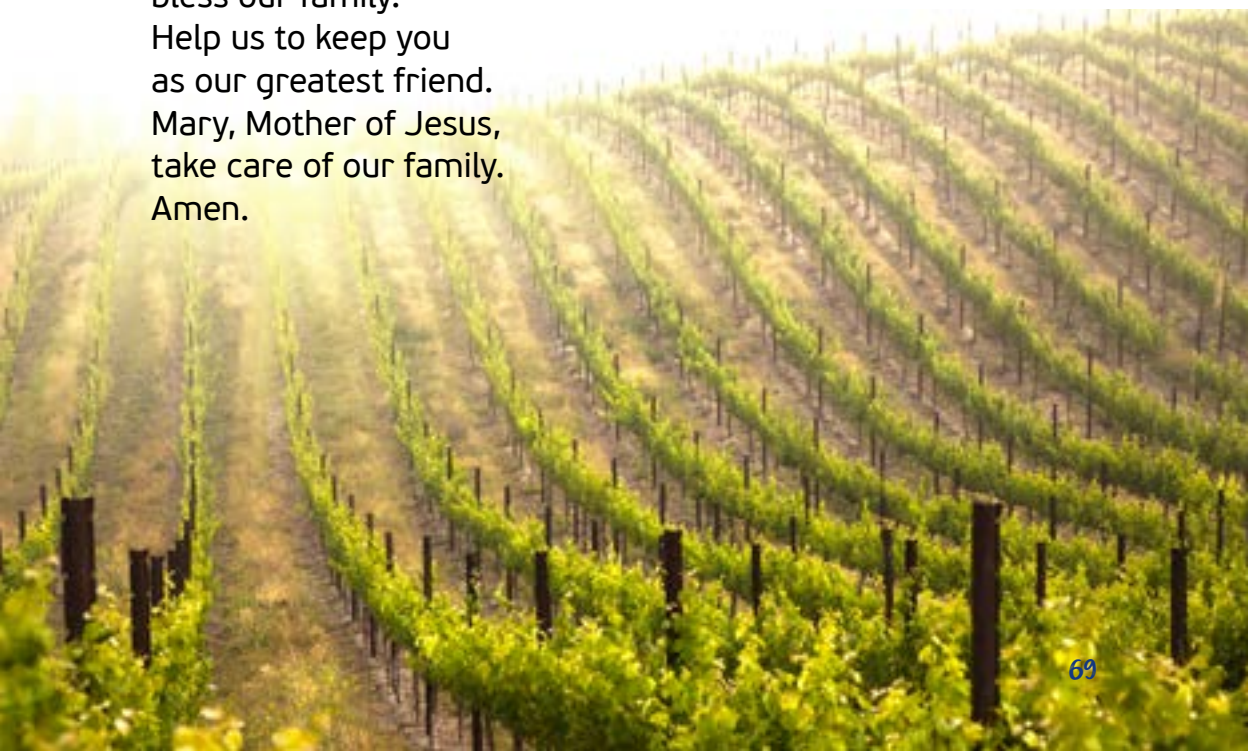
JESUS IS THE TRUE VINE

*“I am the true vine,
and my Father the vine grower.
He takes away every branch in me
that does not bear fruit,
and every one that does
he prunes so that it bears more fruit.
You are already pruned because of
the word that I spoke to you.
Remain in me, as I remain in you.
Just as a branch cannot bear fruit
on its own
unless it remains on the vine,
so neither can you
unless you remain in me.”*

JOHN 15, 1-3

LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Lord Jesus,
bless our family.
Help us to keep you
as our greatest friend.
Mary, Mother of Jesus,
take care of our family.
Amen.



THE THIRD THEME

The Admirable Qualities Of The Holy Spirit (Charisms) For The Service Of Humanity

THE MEANING OF THE WORD “CHARISM”

The word ‘**charism**’ can be compared to the words “talent” or “admirable quality” - a gift that the Spirit of God gives to each person to be used for the service of the community and the whole of creation.



3.1 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GIFTS, THE FRUIT AND THE CHARISMS (ADMIRABLE QUALITIES) OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THREE IMPORTANT PILLARS IN YOUR LIFE

- » **The gifts** of the Holy Spirit may be likened to **companions who accompany you during your life**. They give you the human and Christian energy you need to live your life to the full.
- » **The Fruit** of the Holy Spirit **helps you to build your character** in order to live a human and Christian life as expected of you, The fruit of the Holy Spirit is modelled on the life, character, values and attitudes of Jesus Christ.
- » **The admirable qualities - charisms** - of the Holy Spirit are gifts donated to each person for **the service of the community**. Each person is given one or more of these qualities. Each person is expected to give service to others. The Christian believer gives this service in Christ, through Christ and with Christ.

Therefore:

- » **The gifts** help you to lead a good life in a relationship with God and everybody.

FROM THE LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE ROMANS

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”

ROMANS 12, 6-8

- » The **fruit of the Spirit** helps to build your character.
- » The **admirable qualities - charisms -** are beneficial to the community and the whole of creation.

3.2 DISCOVERING THE CHARISMS AND HOW THEY CAN BE USED FOR THE SERVICE OF THE COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

The Charism of Prophecy

To be a prophet does not mean being able to see the future, because the prophet is not a wizard. The prophet analyses the present situation, prays God to show him what to do about it and then sees that what is decided is beneficial to himself and the community. The prophet is never a selfish person thinking only about himself. On the contrary, the prophet is someone who thinks primarily about others.

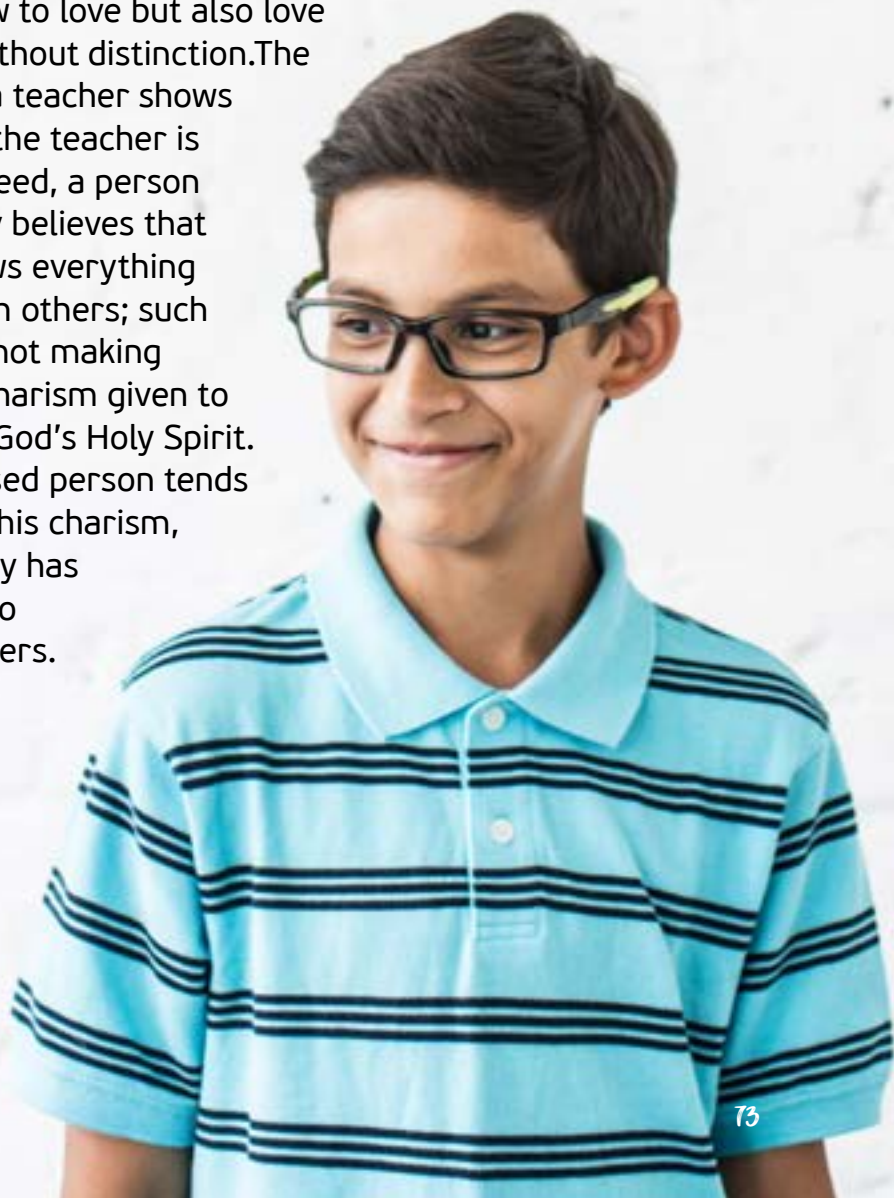
The Charism of the Ministry

This charism refers to the person who is always ready to serve others. In today's world, this service may be given in various ways. Simple examples are: showing by words your acceptance of everybody, giving help when needed, visiting aged people to listen to them, converse with them and make them feel welcome. Even when you pay sincere compliments to another, you are giving service as you are thereby showing love and respect. Making someone feel accepted, welcome, respected and integrated with the rest of the community is a sign of excellent service to

others. There are many more examples of how you adolescents can render a service to others, such as praying for or praying with others of all ages, races and cultures. If you really want to give service, you do not seek to be served first, but very often you actually forget yourself while serving others.

The Charism of Teaching

Everyone can teach by word and example, but, to be a real teacher you must know not only how to love but also love everyone without distinction. The charism of a teacher shows itself when the teacher is humble. Indeed, a person who proudly believes that he/she knows everything cannot teach others; such a person is not making use of the charism given to him/her by God's Holy Spirit. Every baptised person tends to possess this charism, as everybody has something to teach to others.





However, there are persons, who besides this charism, have a great capability to teach others, thus rendering a big service to society and to the Church.

The Charism of Exhortation (encouragement)

This charism is beneficial to the community as it offers hope and encouragement to others, especially when they are going through difficult times. There are those who discourage people who are downcast but, fortunately, there are others who, by the help of God, work wonders by lifting up the spirits of those who are suffering. These people are a gift from God. It is easy to pick out the person who succeeds to exhort people, because he/she understands the situation, showing empathy with the one in trouble, encouraging, praying for and walking with the one in need, so that the latter goes

forward, without losing heart. Very often, these exhorters are persons of prayer and great faith.

The Charism of Contributor

A contributor is a person who is capable of distributing goods, thereby satisfying the needs of others. Such a person believes in divine providence. There are many persons gifted with this charism. Some are well known, while many others work in silence and remain unknown. They are charitable and are always seeking ways how to obtain money and goods to give to the needy. A contributor has great trust in God, can communicate lovingly with others and is ready to make sacrifices for the good of others. In Malta, there are many such volunteers in every area of society.

The Charism of Leadership/Authority over others

This charism is related to leadership. However, not everyone is expected or called to be a leader. A true leader has vision and is able to share it with others, knowing that he/she cannot work alone. A leader must not exclude anyone, for he/she appreciates that each person may be useful. The Christian leader bases his/her vision on the teaching of Jesus Christ and when he/she is about to put it into practice with others, he/she keeps the values and teaching of Christ in his/her heart and work. The true leader has first to follow in the footsteps of Jesus himself/herself and then lead others to follow this vision. Even if the vision is a social one and not religious, it must be based on the teachings and values preached by Jesus Christ. Leadership is very beneficial for the

community, including the Church and society.

The proud and arrogant can never be good leaders because they think that they do not need anyone. A good leader can work with others and for others, excluding no one. He even discusses things with them, while a bad leader never listens to anybody. Finally, a good leader never seeks to be served, but to serve others, as Jesus Christ, who is the best leader, used to do.

The Charism of Mercy: A person who is capable of being merciful (mercy and forgiveness go together)

This is a particular charism, as God gives it to everyone, but not everyone is able to use it. Not everyone is capable of being merciful and forgiving and doing so with joy. The family, the



community, society and the world would be better, if people practise this charism. The world would be a place of peace and joy, like the Lord wishes it to be. We can practise the charism of mercy if we perform the seven acts of mercy - those which deal with the body as well as the others which are related to the soul.

Everyone wants others to be merciful and forgiving, but only those having a good relationship with God are disposed to be merciful and forgiving. Therefore, it is important for a person to have a continuous good relationship with God, in order to use this charism. Mercy and forgiveness are services which show love in action.

CHALLENGE

During this week, try to discover the charisms which the Holy Spirit of God has given you to be of service to the community. Try to use them to the best of your ability. Ask God to help you.



Diary

Write down or draw how you are using the charisms which God gave you for the good of the community. Then, write a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking him to carry on helping you to use these charisms well during your life.



**FAMILY CATECHESIS
EXCERPTS TAKEN FROM “AMORIS LAETITIA:
THE JOY OF LOVE” - POPE FRANCIS (2016)**

**“ If we accept
that God’s love
is unconditional,
that the Father’s love
cannot be bought or sold,
then we will become capable of
showing boundless love
and forgiving others,
even if they have wronged us..”**

PARAGRAPH 108

**“ The family is called
to join in daily prayer,
to read the Word of God,
to share in
Eucharistic communion
and thus to grow in love
and become even more fully a
temple in which
the Spirit dwells.”**

PARAGRAPH 29

3

Truth In Love, Love In Truth



THE FIRST THEME

The sources of Truth on which we Model our Behaviour

When we talk of Christian morals, we mean that our behaviour and decisions are based on truthful teaching passed on to us from reliable sources and not from what is popular, easy, sensational or convenient to us. To live a good moral life, we badly need the Holy Spirit of God – the Holy Spirit.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD “MORALS”

- » The word “morals” is derived from the Latin word “moralis”, which means a set of principles which guide the behaviour of a person so that he/she will do good.
- » Therefore, morals are related to a person’s character, to the choices the person makes and therefore, to the person’s behaviour.



THE SOURCE OF MORAL TRUTH

It is important to understand that **the source of all moral truth is God**. Therefore, we will understand the truth better, both with our mind and with our heart, if we have a good relationship with God.

God passed moral truth to us firstly by means of the **Scriptures** and later through **Jesus Christ** and the **Church**, whose teaching is still being renewed today. This teaching covers a period of more than two thousand years.

Our conscience is formed, built and kept up to date by what God teaches us in the **Commandments**, by what Jesus teaches us in the **Gospels** as well as by what the **Church** teaches us.

Jesus did not come to destroy what is found in the Old Testament with his teaching, but to perfect it and, consequently, help us to understand it better, so that our aims and priorities become clear. For

example, in the Old Testament we find the law, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”, while Jesus teaches us, “Love your God and love your neighbour as yourself. This is the first and the greatest commandment.” All this is explained fully in Matthew 5, 38-42. Jesus teaches us that the law without love is nothing but a set of rules. When rules and laws are intended to help people, they are observed because people realise that the rules actually protect them.



The teaching of the Catholic Church comes down to us through the Magisterium, that is, through the Pope and the Bishops. This teaching involves many years of study by several experts. Even lay people are consulted so that the resulting conclusions are based on the Word of God and the teaching of Jesus Christ. These conclusions respect the Tradition of the Church and the needs of the people of all cultures today.

Moreover, there is what we refer to as the **Natural Law**. St Thomas Aquinas wrote about the Natural Law. He was born approximately in 1225 and died on the 7th March 1274. He was a Dominican Friar and a great scholar, especially of theology. He wrote about the Natural Law which, he says, God placed in the mind and soul of every person so that everyone is able to do good and avoid evil. St Thomas also says that apart from



the Natural Law, a person needs to look for other sources which provide the truth. This enables the person to prefer good over evil and make good choices in life. This Natural Law given by God is universal, because it is given to all people of all races, religions and colour.

To understand better what we are discussing, let us consider two examples:

» A small child, who is still untaught, knows



when he/she has done something good just as he/she knows when the thing done is not good but bad.

- » People, who live in primitive areas of the world where there is no teaching, know how to distinguish good from bad, both for themselves and for those around them, by reasoning and using their feelings.

In each of these two situations someone makes use of the Natural Law which God gives to everybody. In the first instance, there is the child who is too young to learn while in the second one, we note that the people have no means of learning. However, in both cases, those concerned can still make their choices. Of course, those who have opportunities of learning, have other

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST MATTHEW:

"You have heard that it was said 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow."

MATTHEW 5, 38-41

sources, apart from the Natural Law to learn the truth, to learn to do good and to avoid evil, thereby making good choices.

The sources of moral truth for us Christians are:

- » God,
- » The Bible, in which we find the ten Commandments,
- » The teachings of Jesus Christ, which we find in the Gospels,
- » The teachings of the Church which are based on Scripture and Tradition, including the letters and writings in the New Testament, such as the Letters of St. Paul, St. Jacob, etc.
- » The Natural Law that God gives to each person in his/her heart and mind.



In everyday life, we find important people who can help us understand the teachings found in these sources of truth. Among them, we find members of our family, who show us what is right and wrong, and correct us when necessary. There are also teachers, catechists and good friends who point out our mistakes and encourage us to do good, because they wish us well. We must also include the Christian formation groups, which help us to keep a good relationship with God and teach us how to become stronger Christians.

These sources of truth enable us to form and keep updating our conscience.

Personal prayer and the Sacraments, especially those of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, sustain our Christian moral life. The Sacrament of Reconciliation shows us where we are wrong, so that we can mend our ways and when we receive the Eucharist we are helped by Jesus to live as Christian persons in today's society.

CHALLENGE

During the coming week, do your best not to be offended but accept the advice of those who show you that you have done something not morally correct. Remember, anybody who tries to correct your wrongdoing, does so because he/she wishes you well.

Diary

Write down or draw how you feel when you draw a friend's attention to the fact that he/she is doing wrong. Write a prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus for giving you persons, who love you so much that they correct you when necessary.



**FAMILY CATECHESIS
READING FROM
THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**

“ My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands. Keep my commands and live, my teaching as the apple of your eye. He who gains intelligence is his own best friend; He who keeps understanding will be successful.”

PROVERBS 7,2-3. 19,8

LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY:

Lord, help us
to distinguish good from bad.
Deliver us from evil,
bless our family and
help us to do good to everyone.
Amen.

THE SECOND THEME

Discovering And Developing Our Conscience

Conscience is the most secretive thing each person has, because it is something between a person and God only God speaks to each person in his/her conscience. We can define **conscience as a light guiding a person's life. It shows what is good for him/her to choose, what to avoid and what to do.**

2.1 CONSCIENCE

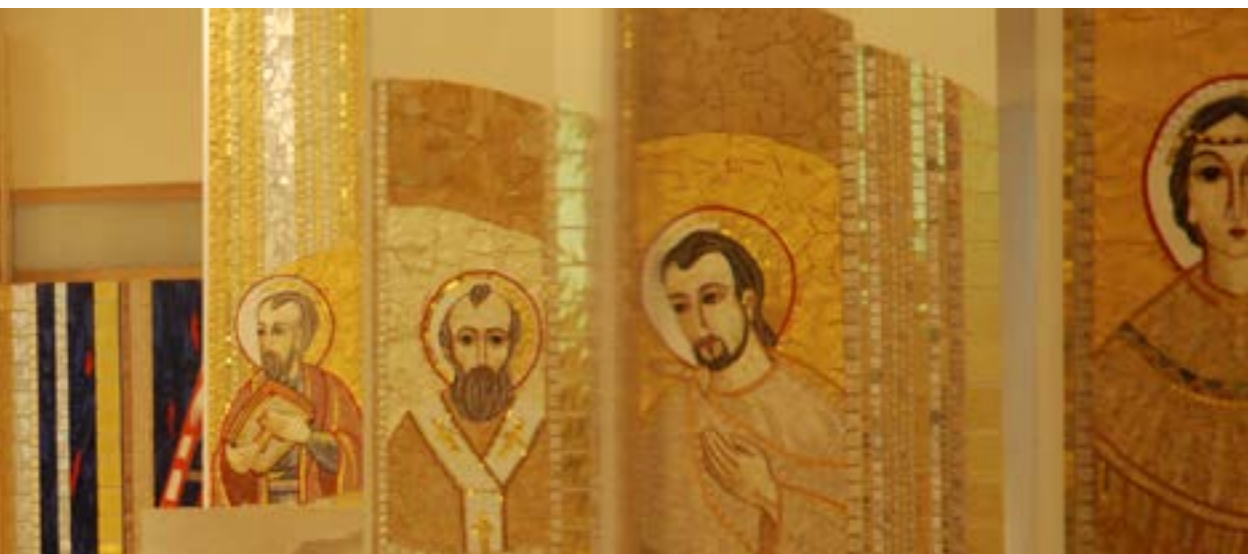
In simple words, we can explain conscience as the **voice of God which is inside each person.** It is not a voice which you can hear like when a person



speaks to you. **It is a silent voice in your heart.** One can compare conscience to the GPS which one uses when travelling. Without the GPS it is difficult to arrive at one's destination. At such moments, the GPS is appreciated as a gift, even as a companion. Similarly conscience; it is a gift given to us by God in our hearts to show us what is good for us. It is a constant reminder that we are not alone, that God is with us, wishing us well. It is therefore important to listen to and heed the voice of conscience, especially when we need to make choices or take decisions.

CONSCIENCE AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Each person is responsible to form his/her conscience and keep it well informed. Your conscience renders you responsible for what you do. If your conscience is good, you do good, but, if your conscience is flawed, you are still responsible for what you do – both the good and the bad.





When we make mistakes or make dubious choices, we feel uneasy in our conscience. This is a good sign, because it shows that our conscience is alive and doing its work. Therefore, we must heed the voice of our conscience, **as a good conscience helps us distinguish between what is good and what is bad.**

On the other hand, **a faulty conscience does not work in your favour**, does not make you feel uneasy when you commit mistakes. This is not a good sign. A person may make many mistakes, including sins, when his/her conscience is faulty. This offends God and is not good for either the person concerned or for those around him/her.

TYPES OF CONSCIENCE

A. A faulty conscience

This occurs when a person's conscience is not well formed or when a person persists in his/her ignorance because he/she believes that he/she knows enough. Such a person refuses to learn any more, does not ask for advice and does not accept it when it is offered.

This type of person prays very little and rarely receives the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Moreover, such a person is easily influenced by those pretending to be friends when actually they are not. He/she fills his/her head with lots of mistaken information and is usually on the look out for that which is popular and sensational. Moreover, such an individual is liable to waste time on seeing, listening to and reading material which, instead of helping him/her to mature by fostering a good conscience, fills his/her mind with filth. If a person's mind and heart are filled with good things, then that person is influenced to do good things to the best of his/her ability. If, on the other hand, the person fills his/her mind and heart with things that are not good, it is very probable that he/she will not grow into a mature and responsible Christian.

B. A lax conscience

This is that type of conscience where all is permissible and where there is no wrongdoing. This conscience is not a mature one, doing things on the spur of the moment, without considering anything. It shows no respect towards God,

towards the person himself/herself and even less towards others.

With this type of conscience, everything is licit, everything is permissible. There exist only grey areas, that is, there are no principles, no standards and very few good values to speak of. With such a conscience, it is difficult to make good choices and, therefore, it is easy for small weaknesses to develop into vices and probably even sins.



One should remember that a bad thing never leads to a good thing. Those, who assume that out of a bad thing some good may emerge, are mistaken. This can never happen.

C. A scrupulous conscience

A person with a scrupulous conscience considers all deeds to be bad, to be sins. He/she has a conscience which sees everything as being either black or white, with nothing in between. It is very difficult for a person with such a conscience to make good choices. A person with a scrupulous conscience finds it difficult to lead a happy life because he/she feels that all is bad. Such an individual needs help both spiritually and professionally from competent persons.

D. A Good Conscience

This is a balanced type of conscience, which is well formed and also well informed with good teaching and healthy advice from competent people. One having a good conscience seeks good role models and learns from the ways these live.

REFLECT

Where conscience is involved, we cannot rely only on what we feel, but we need intelligent thinking and reasoning. A good conscience shows us that we always have to do good to everybody and we should not be embarrassed or afraid to do so.

HOW TO FORM AND KEEP WELL INFORMED YOUR CONSCIENCE AS CHRISTIANS

- » Look for the truth from good sources. Do not try to find the truth from sensational sources or from people who only offer popular opinions. Rather, you should seek information from persons who are experts in the subject you want to learn more about.
- » Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently and try also to receive the Eucharist often.
- » Pray, study and read the Bible.
- » Do your utmost to be well informed about the teaching of the Catholic Church.



- » Reflect carefully about the choices you make daily. Good choices lead to good attitudes and customs, while bad choices lead to vices and sins.



- » The English say, "garbage in garbage out". Keeping this in mind, read inspiring stories, which help you to become good persons. If you fill your minds and hearts with good things, you give out good things. But, if your minds and hearts are filled with things of dubious values, then, your behaviour and the choices you make will not be in keeping with the teaching of Jesus Christ and of the Catholic Church.
- » Every day try to learn from the experiences and from the choices you have made. Keep

on doing the good things, while learning from the not-so-good things and avoiding them in the future. It will be a good thing if, during the day you reflect for some time on the good you have done and thank God for it. Reflect also on the other not-so-good things and ask God's pardon for them. If you have even slightly offended anybody, make amends and learn from such an experience.

- » Before going to bed at night, look back and meditate on the deeds and choices of the day. You will be doing what is called the examination of conscience, that is, contemplating about your thoughts, wishes, deeds and choices. This examination helps you to think more on yourselves (your behaviour and actions) vis-a vis your relationship with God.
- » Look for good and sincere friends who are able to give you good advice and enlighten you when you are doing wrong. You should look for persons who can help you grow into good and mature Christians.

As adolescents, friends are a very important factor in your lives. It is a fact that everybody needs friends. The greatest challenge for you adolescents is choosing good friends who influence you to do good.

2.2 FRIENDS, FRIENDSHIPS AND THEIR INFLUENCE

During adolescence, more than at any other time, friends are very important. Often, they become more important to you than your parents or those who bring you up. Although friends are very important, they should never take the place of the adults who are taking care of you. It is essential that you acquire good friends, but, at the same time, you need to foster a relationship of respect and trust with those who bring you up and those who wish you well in your lives.

Unfortunately, there are adolescents who consider their friends as the voice of their conscience. Friends influence your decisions, the way you think, the way you talk and even how you behave. Therefore, it is very important that you also have a good relationship with responsible



adults, especially with members of your family. Remember that when somebody does not agree one hundred per cent with you, it does not mean that the person does not respect you or does not wish you well. Consequently, think carefully who to trust and what to trust. However, do not feel afraid of trusting – but with caution, thus showing maturity. In your family, there is always someone who understands you and respects you.

A good friendship is a gift from God and you need to strive for it, both on a personal as well as on a group level. The basis of a good friendship is the trust and loyalty towards every member of the group and the relationship itself among the members of the group. In other words, it is important to respect each person in the group. Being loyal to the relationship among you requires no back-stabbing comments.

A good friendship helps a person to mature and get along in life, while a bad friendship leads to the ruin of persons. A person who gets involved in a not-so-good friendship, should move out of such a relationship urgently, learn from such an experience and get on with life.

Pray to Jesus to provide you with good friends. You should stick to good friends as they are very rare to find. As you grow older, you will find that the true and the best friend, you can ever find, is Jesus. He always understands you, wishes you well and if you talk to him seriously in your heart, you will hear him telling you what is good or bad for you.

REFLECT

In the Bible, in the Book of Sirach, chapter 6, verses 14-16, we read that whoever finds a friend to trust, has found a treasure.



FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Some friends bring ruin on us, but a true friend is more loyal than a brother."

PROVERBS 18,24

FROM THE GOSPEL OF ST JOHN

"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

JOHN 15,13

SOME IDEAS ABOUT CHOOSING GOOD FRIENDS

Personality and Character

There is a difference between personality and character: personality is that which shows on the outside and character is that which comes out of a person; that is why it takes many years for a character to be formed. There are persons with a very good personality but with a character which pushes you off. On the other hand, there are persons whose personality is not brilliant, but whose character is very good. Ideally, one should have a good character and a good personality. In the Gospel we read, "by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew

7, 16). Therefore, a person with a good character thinks well, speaks well and does his/her best to make good choices and, consequently, lives well.

Some qualities of true friends:

- » True friends are those who still love a person with all the weaknesses/faults he/she has. They wish the person well to the extent that they help him/her control and conquer such weaknesses/faults.

- » Real friends are loyal; they do not speak about you behind your backs or divulge what you have talked about. Loyalty is a very important quality in friendship.
- » Real friends are not selfish; they share with you what they have, are sincere and wish you well.
- » Real friends pray for each other and give each other good advice.

Some qualities of not-so-good friends:

- » They are jealous of you and do not allow you to develop your talents and capabilities.
- » They speak behind your backs without your permission.
- » They use their influence to make you lie, especially to your family and to people in authority.
- » They are not honest and sincere either in their thoughts and words, or in their choices and behaviour.
- » They do not encourage you to approach the Church or to receive the sacraments, nor to pray or associate with groups which help you to keep learning how to lead a Christian life.

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

“Be not friendly with a hotheaded man, nor the companion of a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways, and get yourself into a snare.”

PROVERBS 22, 24-25

FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

“Do not be led astray, Bad company corrupts good morals.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15,33

FROM THE BOOK OF QOHELETH


“Two are better than one; they get a good wage for their labour. If the one falls, the other will lift up his companion. Woe to the solitary man! For, if he should fall, he has no one to lift him up.”

QOHELETH 4,9-10

STORY:
THE HIKE

Anna and Mariah had been great friends for many years and their families approved this friendship. One day, the school authorities organised an educational excursion. The two friends were eager to go, but on the day of the outing, Mariah felt ill. Anna, at first, was going to stay away as well, but Mariah urged her to go. During the hike, Anna walked with Josianne, another friend who had been their classmate for many years. Josianne had always wanted to be on better terms with Anna and Mariah, but, though they were friendly with her, the two friends had never felt the need to include her in their special relationship.





During the hike, Josianne praised Mariah as being a nice and intelligent girl. Anna was pleased hearing her praising Mariah, but later she heard Josianne saying things which did not put Mariah in a good light. For example, Josianne said that though Mariah was good at Mathematics, yet she tended to show off. Josianne added that Mariah did not speak openly but liked to keep certain things to herself. Anna listened to all this; considering this information she felt that Josianne was warning her to be wary of Mariah.

In the evening after the hike, Anna did not go to see Mariah; instead she phoned her and invented the excuse that she was tired. Mariah believed her, though she thought it strange. After this hike, the friendship of the two girls deteriorated.



STORY:
**FACE TO
FACE WITH
REALITY**

David, an eighteen year old adolescent, had a problem managing his time. He had no regular time to do things, but did what took his fancy at the moment. If he felt like doing his homework he did it: but if he felt like playing with the PlayStation alone or with his friends, he did so. His family often asked him about his homework and studies but he became adept at making up excuses. His friends did not encourage him to study but to spend time on other activities. His family did not know that David was doing this. He himself sometimes felt uncomfortable.

Time management meant nothing to David. Time tables did not exist. He wasted a lot of time with those he considered his friends and then complained to his family that he did not have time for anything.

It was not the first time that he did not do a school project and then he pretended that he had left it at home.

Once, he looked reality in the face. He arrived at school and found that they were having a test, which he had forgotten about. All the other students were well prepared for it, but not David. Two days later he received the second shock: his result of the test. This incident and many others brought him face to face with reality.

Alone in his room that evening, he realised that things were not right. Though he was not a youth who loved to pray, as he only prayed when he needed something, this time he felt the need to open his heart to Jesus and ask for his help. It was not only the case of waste of time, but also the bad habit of excuses he had fallen in. There was no control in his life. His conscience was troubling him and it was time to do something.

David felt that that he needed to make three decisions: one was to place Jesus more into his life, as he only prayed when he needed something; the second was to manage his time well, especially after school and during the weekend; and thirdly, and most importantly, to be sincere with himself and with the members of his family about the time he spent with his friends.



These were tough decisions and challenged his determination. His friends phoned him to spend time playing together, but he told them that he had a lot of study to do, or did not answer the phone call at all. They mocked him but he ignored them for he wanted to take control of his life. He faced many difficulties, one of which was the necessity to change his friends. It was not easy at all, but, with determination and praying to Jesus for help, things started gradually getting better.

In a few months, he got better results in his examinations and also finished his school project. He found new friends with whom he found time to study and play on his Play Station. With them he attended catechesis lessons and went for bike rides at the weekend. There was time for him to study, pray and go to mass on Sunday. As often as not, he was accompanied by his friends, but now there was no reason for excuses and lies. He felt more comfortable with his family and with himself.

Jesus became a part of David's life. He and Jesus became great friends. David put his trust in Jesus and used to pray to him fervently to help him keep his decisions. He even started keeping a personal diary, where he wrote down all that he felt. While jotting down his thoughts, he could reflect about his life. With Jesus in his life, David could take on the challenges that life threw at him. He could face difficulties more calmly.

CHALLENGE

In the coming days, at the end of the day, check about those good things that you have done and thank Jesus for them. Pray to Jesus for help about those things which you could have done better. Pray for a strong character to enable you to face these difficulties and get the better of them, for your own good.

FAMILY CATECHESIS FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

“Walk with wise men and you will become wise, but the companion of fools will fare badly.”

PROVERBS 13, 20

LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Lord, help us as a family
to follow your teaching
and also that of the Church.
Help us to keep
our conscience alive.
Take care of us
so that we can help each other.
We also ask you
to bless our friends.
Amen.



THE THIRD THEME

Living, Loving and Serving

INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF GOD'S LOVE AND THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

Because God the Father loves us, he sent his son Jesus Christ among us to show us his love and save us. Through his mission and his whole



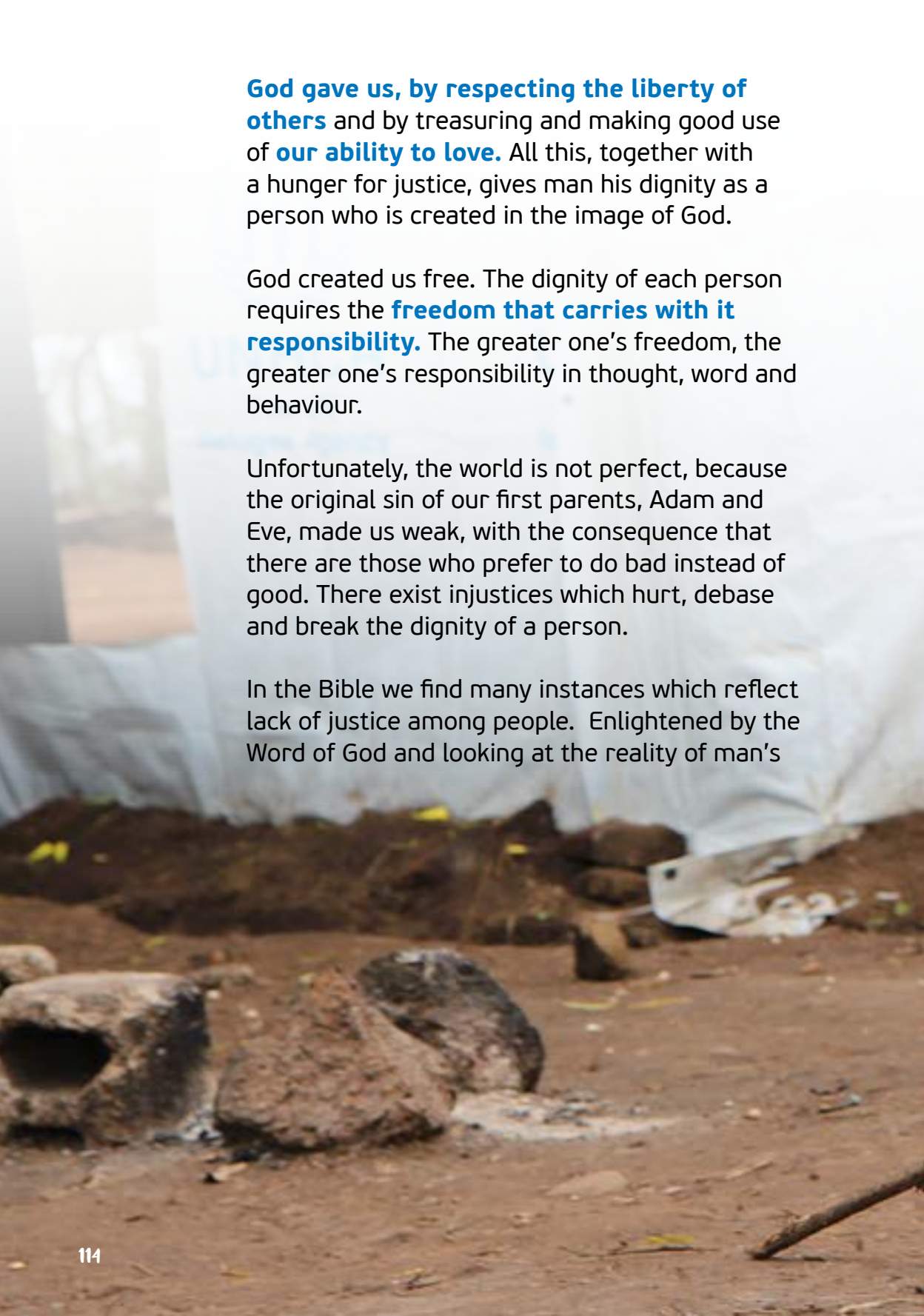
life while among us, Jesus showed us the **social aspect of God's love**. The teaching of Jesus revolves round the love we should have for God and for our neighbours. Moreover, because we have been created in God's image and God is love, we have been created to love universally.

3.1 THE BASIS OF THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

The social teaching of the Church reflects that which God communicated to us by various ways and means along the ages, that is, that God is the Trinity, three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **God, who is one, is a community of love.**

Because we are created in the image of God, we are precious to God. Jesus suffered, died and rose from the dead to save us because he loves us. Every person is precious to God. Therefore, **every person has his/her own dignity and it is expected that this dignity is respected always and everywhere. This respect towards a person's dignity is also social.** First of all this respect is shown towards the whole of creation, including man. This respect includes also service to others. It is important that all forms of life are respected and preserved. **All this is the basis of the Social Teaching of the Church.**

In the Book of Genesis, first chapter, verses 26-27, we find that man is created in the image of God. This does not mean that our faces resemble God's face, but it means that each one of us reflects God. To do this, we have to **be creative**, by treasuring and **respecting the liberty that**



God gave us, by respecting the liberty of others and by treasuring and making good use of **our ability to love**. All this, together with a hunger for justice, gives man his dignity as a person who is created in the image of God.

God created us free. The dignity of each person requires the **freedom that carries with it responsibility**. The greater one's freedom, the greater one's responsibility in thought, word and behaviour.

Unfortunately, the world is not perfect, because the original sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, made us weak, with the consequence that there are those who prefer to do bad instead of good. There exist injustices which hurt, debase and break the dignity of a person.

In the Bible we find many instances which reflect lack of justice among people. Enlightened by the Word of God and looking at the reality of man's

life all over the world, the Catholic Church has always written, taught and put into practice its **Social Teaching**.

This teaching enlightens the minds and hearts of people of all races, colours, cultures and religions, so that there will be more **awareness** of injustices and other offences against the dignity of the person, all over the world.

Moreover, the Social Teaching of the Church is there for all the people of the world. It offers **ideas so that there will be more justice in the world and so that both the dignity of persons and the whole of creation will be respected.**





3.2 3.1 JUSTICE IS THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH IS BUILT.

By justice we mean fairness, where each person merits what he/she deserves, where everybody is treated in the same manner, where there are no preferences.

By justice we mean that every person has that which he/she needs. For example, a man needs more food than a boy. This does not mean that there should be preferences; it means that the needs are different. What is important is that they both eat.

Justice requires that those in authority treat everybody fairly and provide for the human, religious and spiritual needs of all, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.

It is important to understand that without justice there is no peace.

HOW CAN WE WORK FOR JUSTICE?

We can start by **taking action ourselves**. We can do charitable deeds and help those in need to the best of our ability.

We can also work for justice by **becoming interested in and asking about what is happening to others. This shows the type of conscience we have and where our social responsibility lies. Besides, we can offer our suggestions for the presence of more justice in the world.** We can ask, for example, why not everybody has food and water and offer solutions to problems like these.

Everybody can do good; it is important not to be indifferent but to think of others. Let us be persons who care for others.

In the Old Testament, in the Bible, we clearly find what God wants of us in the Book of the Prophet Micah.

“ You have been told, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

MICAH 6, 8

3.3 THE THEMES OF THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH THESE THEMES ARE:

- » Respect towards the dignity and life of each person

- » We are called to live and participate in the family and in the community
- » Rights and responsibilities for each person
- » Preferential choice and love for the poor and the vulnerable
- » The dignity of work and the rights and responsibilities of workers
- » Solidarity among us
- » The duty and responsibility of taking care of our common home – creation

RESPECT TOWARDS THE DIGNITY AND LIFE OF EACH PERSON

This theme demands respect towards the dignity and life of each person, of every race, culture, religion and economic means. This signifies that we should show respect towards a person who is rich, middle class or poor. Each person, whoever he/she is, deserves respect for his/her humanity, culture and religion.

The lack of respect towards the dignity and life of a person, manifests itself when human needs, like education, are not provided. Other basic needs include spiritual and religious needs as well as physical, psychological and emotional needs, which are present, for instance, when a person is submitted to bullying, both of the verbal and physical kind.

Our dignity is there not because we have done something to obtain it or because we own things but because we have been created by God.

WE ARE CALLED TO LIVE AND PARTICIPATE IN THE FAMILY AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Man was not created to live by himself but to live in a community. Man was created to participate

in family life and in the community. On the other hand, he should be helped by both the family and the community to grow and mature and be able to reach his aims responsibly as a Christian citizen, for his own good and that of society.

“For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.”

ROMANS 12, 4-5



EACH PERSON HAS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- » Respect towards the dignity and life of the person asks for various rights. The universal charter of human rights, which was signed in Paris on 10 December 1948 and which was translated into 500 different languages, gives great value to the dignity of each person, whoever the person is, wherever he/she comes from and whichever belief he/she professes.
- » Rights are not enough. There should also be duties and responsibilities. We cannot always be on the receiving end but we should also contribute to the members of our family, to the community and to society. If we really believe in the common good, then we should learn which are our responsibilities and our duties. The more responsible we are, the better we are able to know our rights and those of others.



- » The person who thinks only of rights but not of duties, grows into a selfish and individualistic person. We have been created to live in a family and in a community, which becomes mature when we consider not just our rights but when we take on the responsibility of others.
- » Life is a balance between responsibilities/duties and rights. This balance helps to make things safe for man, society and the country. Thus, every type of discrimination will be eliminated and there will be wider justice.
- » Ever since its beginning, the Catholic Church has been writing, preaching and spreading its teaching about the responsibilities and rights of man. The basis of the Church's attitude is the dignity of the person who has been created in the image of God. Systematically, since 1891, the Popes have published many important documents about the Social Teaching of the Church.

PREFERENTIAL CHOICE OF AND LOVE FOR THE POOR AND THE VULNERABLE

- » In the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament exhort us to give priority to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable.

FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF ST JOHN

"If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?"

1 JOHN 3,17

FROM THE GOSPEL OF ST MATTHEW

"For I was naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison and visit you?' And the King will say to them in reply, 'Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

MATTHEW 25,36-40

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

“He who has compassion on the poor, lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his good deed.”

PROVERBS 19, 17

- » The Catholic Church has always worked and taught in various ways to help the poor and the vulnerable. In our country, the Church was the first to establish institutions to help the poor and the vulnerable. Examples of this are the homes for orphans and children, homes for the elderly, the services of Caritas, centres of rehabilitation, the *Dar tal-Providenza* (a home for the care of the disabled), *Dar Nazaret* and several others.
- » Poverty should be eliminated. Jesus himself said, “The poor you will always have with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them.” (Mark 14, 7).
- » It is our duty as Christians to work in favour of the poor and the vulnerable. We should not do this because we pity them but because this is what social justice is all about.



THE DIGNITY OF WORK, THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORKERS

There is no right without a duty or responsibility.

While it is the duty of the State to provide work for people, workers have the duty and responsibility to do their work well. This means being on time for work, wasting no time during work hours, producing regularly what is asked of them and respecting the material and information involved in the work, as well as showing respect towards their superiors and colleagues.

On the other hand, an employer should feel responsible for his/her employees. It is the duty of the employer to pay the employees the agreed wages according to the law of the State and to pay them on time. The employer is in duty bound to care for his/her workers in such a way that they feel respected by those in authority, there is reciprocal respect among themselves, there is safety at the place of work and they feel appreciated.

It is the workers' right to join unions that protect them as workers.

All this forms part of the respect and justice inherent in the dignity and life of persons, both those who work, as well as those who are part of society in general.

FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

"You shall not defraud a poor and needy hired servant, whether he be one of your country-men or one of the aliens who live in your communities. You shall pay him his day's wages before sundown, on the day itself, since he is poor and looks forward to them."

DEUTERONOMY 24, 14

FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

"The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it."

GENESIS 2,15

SOLIDARITY AMONG US

Solidarity reminds us that we are one family, notwithstanding our nationality, culture, race, colour or belief. We are all brothers and sisters and, therefore, we have a duty to care for each other. The world has become a global village and this makes caring for each other a necessity. We practise solidarity with each other not because we pity each other, but because solidarity is a must for the presence of justice and the dignity of the person.

The need for justice and peace is at the heart of solidarity. **Pope Paul VI said that if we want peace in the world, we should work for justice.** In the Gospel, when Jesus speaks about the Beatitudes, he teaches us to be persons of peace, that is, persons who are just. We can say that the **Evangelical basis of the Social Teaching of the Church consists of the Beatitudes.**



As adolescents, generally speaking, you can show your solidarity by offering money and goods to people in need and also by praying so that there will be peace and justice in the world and so that the dignity of persons is always respected.

You should show solidarity not only at a world level, but especially in the family, with your friends or in the community you live in. There are many other ways, besides donating money, whereby you as adolescents can show your solidarity.

FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

“Now the body is not a single part but many if one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy. Now, you are Christ’s body, and individually parts of it.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12, 14.26.27



FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.’”

GENESIS 1,26

THE DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITY OF TAKING CARE OF OUR COMMON HOME – CREATION

The Church, enlightened by the Word of God, has for a long time been teaching, writing and spreading information about the way we should be taking care of all creation. Many Popes expressed themselves on this subject, but Pope Francis has been very insistent about the matter and has even issued an Encyclical (a letter to the whole world) called Laudato si.

In this Encyclical, the Pope insists that we we have a duty to care for all of creation, including the seas and all marine resources.





Everything is a gift from God and merits to be cared for, not only for ourselves, but also for future generations.

Pope Francis says that creation has been greatly damaged over the past two hundred years. Therefore, there is the need to care better for our environment. Each of us is responsible for creation.

CHALLENGE

During this week, try and show solidarity with a colleague, a friend, a family member or with somebody you do not particularly like. Do this responsibly, both for your own good, as well as for the good of society. You can show this solidarity anywhere: at school or during extra curricular activities..

FAMILY CATECHESIS

LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Lord Jesus,
We pray that you open our hearts
to the needs of others.
Give us the courage and help
not only to believe
in the dignity of persons,
but also to respect such dignity
and work for it.
We ask you to help us
not only to love and cherish
justice and peace,
but to strive for them as well.
Mary, Mother of Jesus,
take care of our family
and help us to be
persons of peace.
Amen.



4

The Holy Spirit A Friend For Ever



THE FIRST THEME

Using Different Ways and Means to Pray

Praying is necessary, as it is part of our life. Prayer helps us to mature and think of others.

Prayer can take different forms and can be used in various ways.

STORY:

A hermit lived by himself, like a monk, in the desert. He had a small room and a tiny chapel, as well as a small field which he worked to supply himself with vegetables. He spent his days praying, fasting and making sacrifices.

One day, a young man approached and begged the monk to teach him how to pray. The monk replied, "When you are walking in the desert and happen to meet someone, pray in your heart, 'How great you must be, O Lord, for creating so many wonderful things!'" The young man queried, "How many times do I pray?" The monk replied, "Every time you draw breath." The young man did as he was told and he realised that the more he observed the beauty of creation, the more he praised God until this prayer became part of his life. He learnt to talk to God and praise him for all created objects, including all human beings.

After six months, the young man returned to the hermit and said, "The prayer you asked me to repeat has become part of my life. Can you now teach me to pray using the Word of God?" The hermit replied, "Find a quiet spot, take the Bible in your hands, collect your thoughts as much as possible and ask God: Lord, what do you want to tell me by means of your Word? Then, be silent and listen. Observe and see what is happening around you."

The young man asked, "How many times do I do this?" The hermit answered, "With every breath you draw, because the words you read in the Bible mean all the moments of the day until man is alive."

That day, the young man realised that the Word of God strengthened his whole life. He also understood that there were many ways how to pray. Most of all, he learnt that prayer not only forms part of a person's life, but it gives life to that person.

1.1 WHAT DOES PRAYING MEAN?

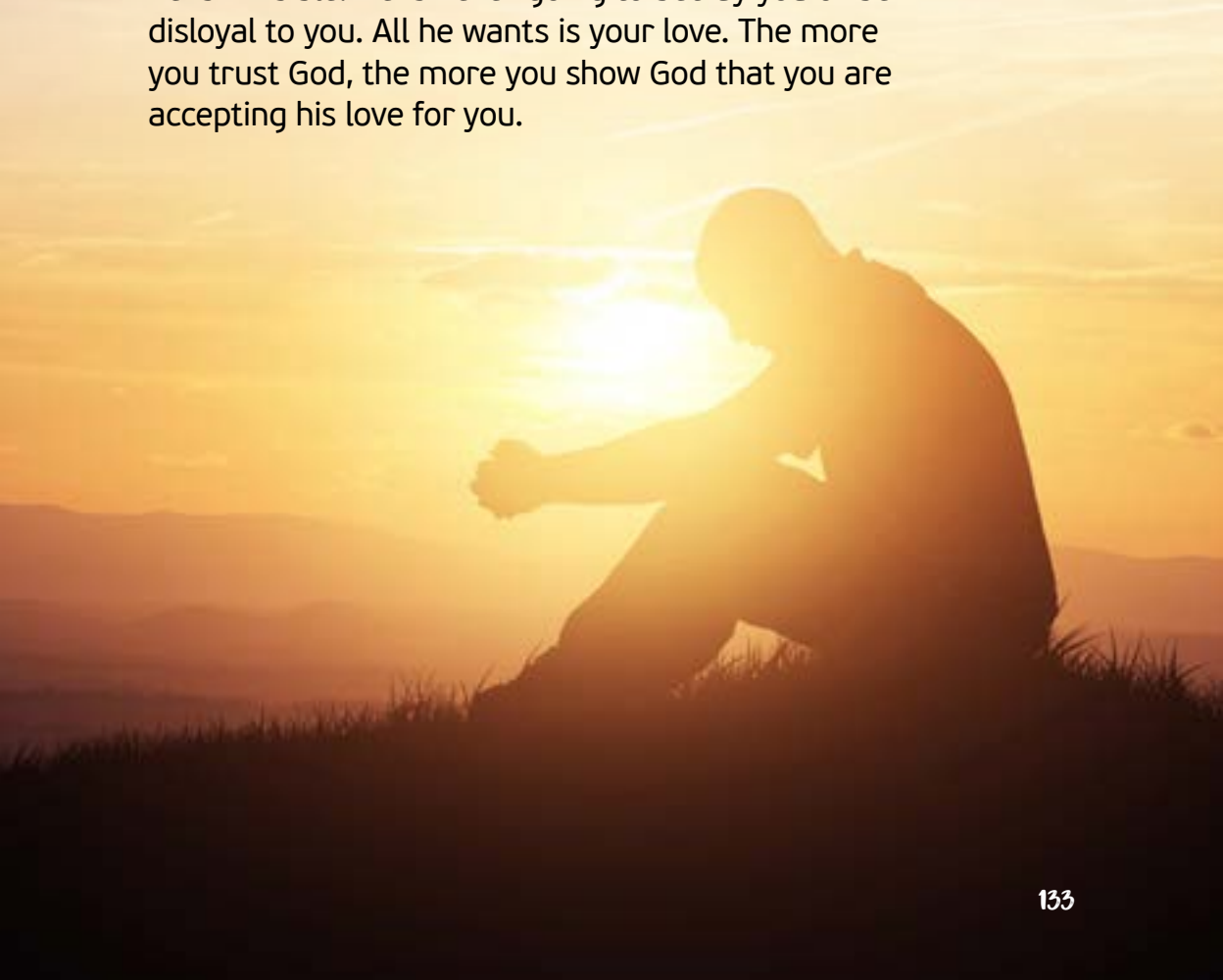
We always start our prayers by making the sign of the Cross; thereby praying in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and also asking their help.

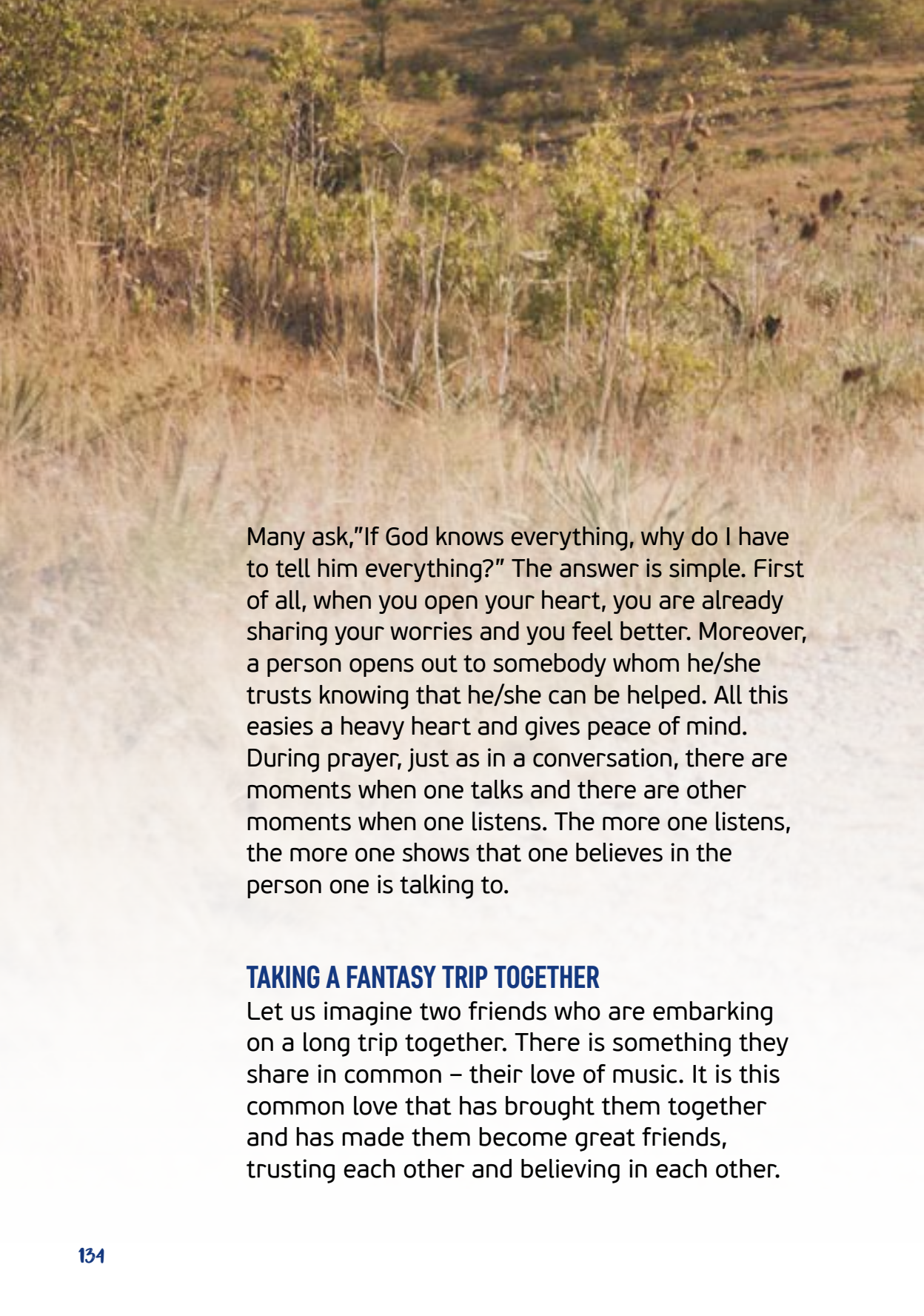
The Holy Spirit, who is the Holy Spirit of love, teaches us to trust in the Lord during our prayers and to pray with pure love for ourselves and for others.

PRAYER AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS PRAYER

To pray properly, we have to foster in ourselves an attitude for prayer. A prayer is not a prayer at all, but only a dramatic show when it is said because of need or as a last resort or to put on a show in front of people.

Prayer is a conversation with God – you talk and you listen. You can talk to God any time and tell him all you want. You can open your heart to God about your happiness, sadness, emotions, fears, anxiety, nervousness and all your wishes and desires. Talk to him as you would to a friend. Better still, you can open out to him more than to a friend, because you do not feel embarrassed as he is invisible. He is never going to betray you or be disloyal to you. All he wants is your love. The more you trust God, the more you show God that you are accepting his love for you.





Many ask, "If God knows everything, why do I have to tell him everything?" The answer is simple. First of all, when you open your heart, you are already sharing your worries and you feel better. Moreover, a person opens out to somebody whom he/she trusts knowing that he/she can be helped. All this eases a heavy heart and gives peace of mind. During prayer, just as in a conversation, there are moments when one talks and there are other moments when one listens. The more one listens, the more one shows that one believes in the person one is talking to.

TAKING A FANTASY TRIP TOGETHER

Let us imagine two friends who are embarking on a long trip together. There is something they share in common – their love of music. It is this common love that has brought them together and has made them become great friends, trusting each other and believing in each other.



Because of their friendship, they talk to each other and listen to each other. They wish each other well and will never betray or abandon each other. Being friends, they are not embarrassed to tell one another their joys and worries, nor are they afraid of asking each other for help. They do their best not to hurt each other, but, if this happens, they quickly forgive each other and move on. Moreover, they do not take each other for granted and care for each other and for their relationship.

If this can occur between two humans, how much more can it happen between us and God, especially during prayers?

Prayer strengthens our friendship with God during our whole lives.

GRADUALLY DISCOVERING THE NEED FOR PRAYER BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING THREE QUESTIONS

Why should we pray?

We may lack certain things and, therefore, we pray to receive them. We pray for ourselves as well as for those around us. We pray for those whom we see and those whom we do not see, but who, however, also form part of humanity. We pray for all of creation and it is important that we cultivate inclusivity in our prayers.

To whom should we pray?

We pray to God who is omnipotent. We pray to God, our Father and also the best friend who will never betray us. We pray to God who is love, but also just. We pray to God who is merciful and forgiving and who is ever ready to provide occasions for man to approach him.

How should we pray?

When we pray we should never lose heart, but always pray with all our hearts and with faith and humility and even with a sense of thankfulness (gratitude). It is a pity that we pray so insistently when we are in need of something but then we forget to thank God when we receive what we have been praying for.

Praying with all our heart

When we pray we should fully open our hearts to God. We should not say prayers by heart or as a routine, without knowing or understanding what we are saying.



We should pray always and without losing heart

During prayer our relationship with God should be like that of two friends, who seek each other not only when in need, as otherwise it would not be friendship but a meeting of convenience. The same thing applies to our relationship with God. We talk to him always, at good times and bad times. There may be times when we are too hurt to pray but we need to talk to someone who is greater than we are. God is there to listen; he will understand. Do not remain closed up in yourselves, go on talking to the Lord. Just the same, go into a prayer mode and be silent. Let your heart talk to the Lord in silence. Do not lose heart. The Lord never lets anyone down.

It is important to remember that God's time is not like ours. God sees much farther than we do. He knows the future, so wait and trust him.



Praying with thankfulness (gratitude)

This means that we pray with an attitude of gratitude for what God has done, is doing and will do for us. There are many things that happen in our life for our benefit but we are not aware of them. God knows how to take good care of us and we should remember to make it a habit to thank the Lord.

Praying with faith and humility

It is important that we learn to leave everything in God's hands and show him that we trust him. During prayer, we cannot tell God what he should do; we have to show that we really believe in God, that we trust God in everything and not in bits here and there. To believe, to love and to trust God, go hand in hand.

A proud person does not pray for he/she believes that he/she is all powerful like a god, and that with his/her own resources can get anywhere. A humble person prays because he/she knows his/her limitations and knows he/she needs God. The humble person prays because he/she believes in God's power, in a benevolent God who is trustworthy.

For what and for whom should we pray?

We should pray for everything and for everybody and for all creation. We should pray for those who respect us and love us, as well as for those who do not respect and love us. It is not easy to pray for these, but we must, so that these persons stop hurting us and others.

1.2 PRAYING, USING DIFFERENT WAYS AND MEANS

A. PRAYING WITH THE PSALMS

In the Bible, in the Book of Psalms we find 150 psalms. The Jews look upon the Book of Psalms as their prayer book. Bible scholars tell us that the psalms were composed by different persons. King David is considered to have written the most psalms. The psalms express every imaginable human emotion – psalms of praise and thanks, psalms asking for forgiveness, psalms begging for help during temptations There are psalms to support us when we are frightened or are losing heart. Other psalms guide us when we seek knowledge in order to take decisions or make choices.

In the psalms we find words expressing each condition of the heart or the life of a person.

EXAMPLE

When you feel lonely, read and pray Psalm 23 or 42.

EXAMPLES OF PSALMS FOR DIFFERENT OCCASIONS IN LIFE

Asking for forgiveness
Psalm 51

Wishing God's help in difficult moments
Psalm 25, 1-8

Wanting to learn how to praise God and asking for his blessing
Psalm 66, 1-7

Praising God's love and mercy
Psalm 103, 1-22

Becoming a good youth by leading a good life
Psalm 119, 9-16

Moreover, the Psalms teach us that thousands of years ago, man felt the need to open his heart to God. It is wonderful to think how so many years ago, the psalmists felt the same emotions and needs, like we do, and they were not afraid to express them by word and writing to the Lord.

The Method

Find a quiet spot – in a chapel, in church, at home in a secluded part or in the country or near the sea.

From the Bible, find Psalm 23 – **The Lord is my Shepherd**. Pray God to help you understand this Psalm with your heart. Read it all. Keep silent for a while. Then read it again and look for the word or words that strike you most.

Keep these words in your mind and heart and ask God to help you understand them. Open your hearts to God and tell him all that you are feeling and what you desire. With total trust in the Lord, ask him to remain with you and give you what you wish for, if it is for your own good. Re-read the Psalm and thank God for everything.

B. PRAYING BY USING BIBLICAL PASSAGES OR PERSONALITIES

1. Young Daniel and His Friends

Let us seek and discover who Daniel was, his story and the context in which he lived. **Let us**

be silent and invite the Lord to help us understand his Word. **Let us read** Chapter 6 of the Book of Daniel. (If this is done in a group, one person is asked to read aloud the chapter.)

The Process of Bible Sharing for Adolescents:

1. **Before** Bible Sharing takes place, either in a group or on an individual basis, research should be carried out about the persons mentioned in the chosen passage, as well as the context in which the passage was written. Knowledge about the author, whether from the Old Testament or New Testament, will be also helpful.

EXAMPLES OF PASSAGES FOR BIBLE SHARING

Mark 4, 35-41 –

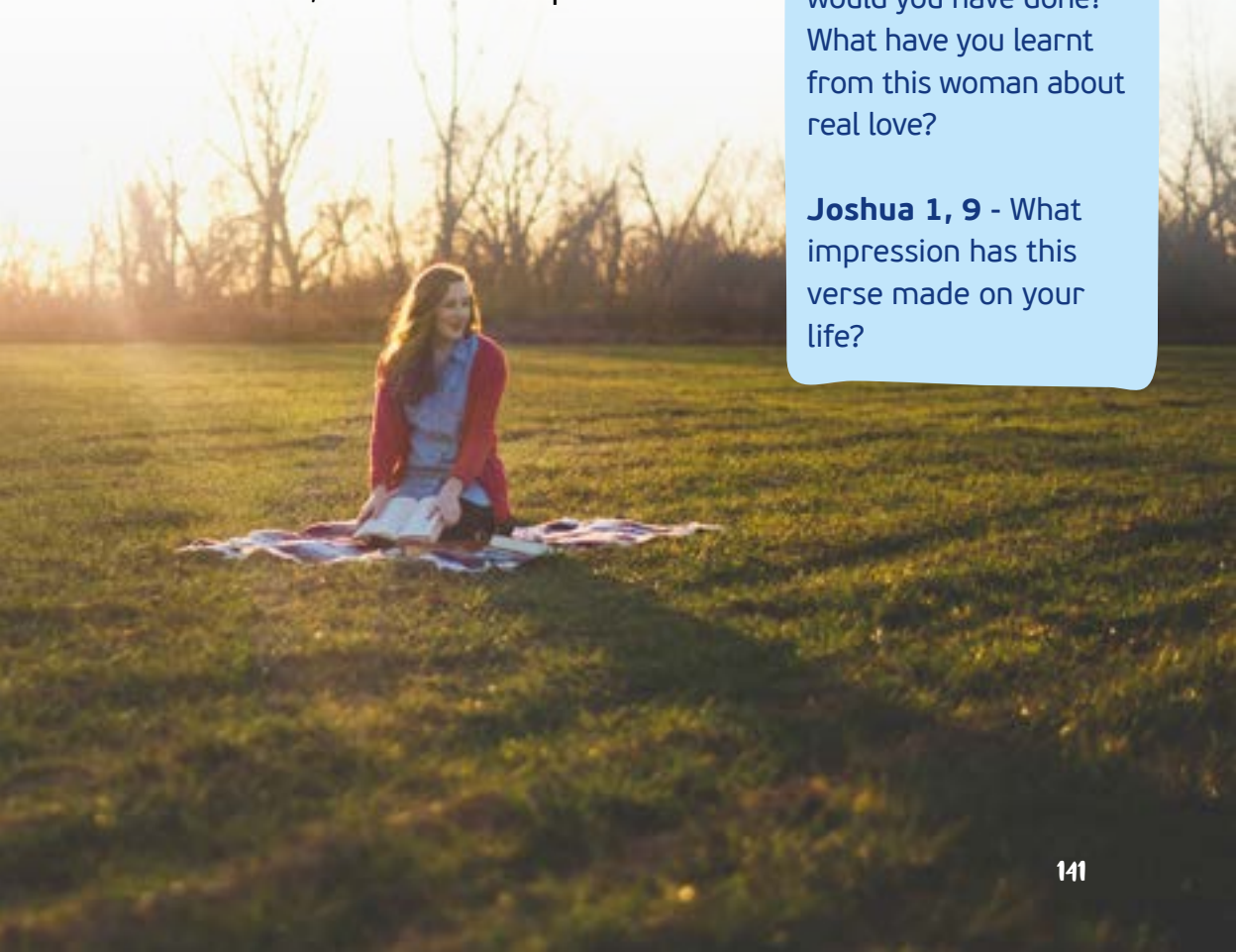
Jesus calming the tempest. Imagine you were one of the apostles on the boat. What would you have done? What have you learnt from this event?

Ruth 1, 6-16 –

The friendship of Ruth and her mother-in-law. If you were Ruth, what would you have done? What have you learnt from this woman about real love?

Joshua 1, 9 -

What impression has this verse made on your life?



EXAMPLES OF PASSAGES FOR BIBLE SHARING

1 Timothy 4, 12 - What challenge do these words of St. Paul offer to Timothy?

Jeremiah 29, 11 - As an adolescent, what do you think about these words of the Lord to Jeremiah?

Psalms 55,17 - Praying often.

Matthew 5, 44 - Praying for our enemies.

Matthew 18, 19-20 - Praying with others.

James 5, 13-14 - Praying for the sick and those in need.

Luke 1, 39-45 - Mary is the model of love (charity).

John 19, 25 - Mary is a model of faithfulness, for she accompanied her son throughout his life and was with him also when he was crucified.

2. **We prepare** ourselves to achieve an atmosphere of prayer and **invite** Our Lord to help us understand his Word.

3. **We read** the text from the Bible. We keep silent for some time to think about what we have read.

4. **We share our thoughts about the passage** with the members of the group and – **we talk** to the Lord about what has struck us most from the Bible reading.

5. **We seek** to learn from this personality (it could, however, be a parable, a Biblical story or some Biblical verses). So we ask ourselves what we would have done or how we would have behaved if we were that character.

6. From what we have thought and reflected, what **challenge** has this personality presented us with? (It could be a parable, a Biblical story or some Biblical verses). Let us take on this challenge on a personal level this coming week.

7. **We end by saying a prayer** to our Lord.

C. PRAYING BY USING THE WORDS OF SPIRITUAL WISE PERSONS

During our meetings, all our



discussions should take place in an atmosphere of prayer.
Here are some examples:

“Never forget the three powerful tools you can use whenever you want to. These are: love, prayer and forgiveness.”

H. JACKSON BROWN, JR.

“To remain alive, we need to breathe; to be real Christians, we need to pray frequently.”

MARTIN LUTHER

“We need to pray more with our heart than with our lips.”

ADAM CLARKE

D. PRAYING BY USING A DIARY

We can also pray, that is, open our hearts to God, by using a diary. This is done daily by simply writing down or drawing what we wish to tell Jesus: the good, the

bad, the daily challenges etc. We tell – draw/write – about our emotions in certain situations such as a tiff with friends, being happy for someone or when we are praised for doing or writing something good.

We tell everything to Jesus and thank him for everything as well. We ask him to take care of us and others, especially those we know who need help badly.

In our writing, we can offer everything to Jesus and tell him that we are ready to leave our life in his hands, because he knows best what is good for us.

Keeping a diary is, therefore, another way of praying, of opening our hearts to Jesus as our best friend. In time, you will realise that this type of prayer is a way of opening your hearts to God and of trusting him; it is also a means of remaining calm. When, after some time, you read over what you have drawn or written in your diary, you will find that, little by little, you have matured in a holistic way, even in your journey of faith and trust in the Lord.

Praying through a Centering Prayer

This means repeating a short prayer in our hearts, several times a day. The more we repeat it, the more it will become a part of our lives. In this way, our friendship with Jesus grows for we

will be thinking of him in our hearts much more often.

Examples of Centering Prayers:

Heart of Jesus, I trust you.

Jesus, take care of us.

Jesus, be the joy of my heart.

Jesus, I love you.

Jesus help me to love others as well.

O Mary, pure lily,
you deserve all honour.

CHALLENGE

During this week, do your best to find time for personal prayers, coming from your heart and not only from your lips.



FAMILY CATECHESIS

LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY:

Lord, we wish to present
every member of the family to you.

Bless us, take care of us
and deliver us from all perils.

Never allow us to lose heart
when faced with life's difficulties.

We ask you this together
with Our Holy Mother Mary who,
like us, lived in a family.

Thank you Jesus.

Amen.



THE SECOND THEME

Discovering The Sacraments

The Seven Sacraments are found only in the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. This does not mean that the Church “invented” them. One can find the basis of the Sacraments in the life, words and actions of Jesus, when he was still among us and even after he rose from the dead, before ascending into heaven.

2.1 WHAT ARE THE SACRAMENTS?

The Sacraments are visible signs of invisible things, that is, the graces of God. These visible signs which we can see, hear, touch, smell and



taste with our senses, stand for an underlying meaning. The symbol is something we use in every day life, but its meaning is profound for man to understand. For example, a ring, which we can see and touch, may mean a wedding ring to some but it may mean a sign of friendship or an engagement ring to others.

We, as a Church, as a community of Christians, celebrate the love of God for us when we receive the Sacraments or participate in them. When we say that we receive the graces of God, we mean that we believe that God, who is full of love for us, is present in the world. We receive these graces through Jesus Christ, who suffered, died and rose from the dead to save us. Jesus Christ is truly present in each Sacrament. Moreover, the Sacraments help Christians to achieve salvation.

EXAMPLE

Let us consider bread and wine. These are symbols that we see and taste as well. But, by a miracle that we cannot understand, they become the real body and blood of Jesus at the words of the priest.

The Sacraments are very important in the lives of Christians, helping them to become saints, that is, to make them better Christians. They help them to improve their lives both as individuals and as members of a community at the social level.

2.2 JESUS AND THE SACRAMENTS

We find the basis of the Sacraments in the life, mission and actions of Jesus. Through the Church, the Sacraments continue what Jesus started in his ministry, that is, the work or mission he was engaged in when he was among us, even after rising from the dead and before ascending into heaven.

After he rose from the dead, Jesus entrusted the apostles with the task of carrying on with his mission. When the apostles received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they were able to do what he had taught and shown them, thereby continuing the mission and orders given to them by Jesus.

The Holy Spirit helped them to understand and interpret well the words, gestures, actions and work of Jesus, so that they could pass them on to the Christians who made up the first community of Christians.

Therefore, the Sacraments are not an “invention” of the Church. The Church is only an instrument administering them and delivering them to Christians. In time, after much prayer and study, the Church structured the Sacraments better, so that they would be better understood by Christians, who would recognise their greatness and recognise the need of these Sacraments in their lives as Christians.



2.3 DISCOVERING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SACRAMENTS IN THE LIFE OF CHRISTIANS

1. BAPTISM

Through Baptism, Jesus introduces babies, as well as adults, to a new spiritual life within the Christian community – the Christians. Baptism is the first Sacrament and, therefore, opens the way to the other Sacraments. We find clear references to Baptism in the Gospel of St Matthew.

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age..”

MATTHEW 28, 19-20

IL-MAGHMUDIJA FIL-#AJJA TAN-NISRANI

Through Baptism, the baby or adult:

- » Is spiritually born again, with a new identity, as a brother/sister of Jesus Christ.
- » Is welcomed by and forms part of the community of Jesus Christ – becomes a Christian.
- » Begins the spiritual pilgrimage of faith and the Christian religion which, through maturity, enables him/her to accept readily God’s plan for his/her life. This pilgrimage lasts a lifetime.

- » Starts to participate and to shoulder the responsibility of living; also helps others to live the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ as well as the teaching of the Catholic Church.
- » Receives the Holy Spirit who fills the person with love, thereby understanding more how much God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – loves him/her.
- » Can receive the other Sacraments.

The three sacraments – Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist – are the **three sacraments of initiation**. They are so called because through them a person becomes a full member of the Christian community. The word “initiation” means “a beginning”. In this case, persons begin their Christian life within the Catholic Church.

The initiation into the Christian life occurs through the three sacraments together:

- » **Baptism** is the beginning of a new life, when we become Christians. We start to **belong to Christ**.
- » **Confirmation** strengthens this life. We become more responsible for our faith and for our lives as Catholic Christians. **We are confirmed in Christ**.
- » The **Eucharist** sustains us as Christians – imparts to us the spiritual strength to be disciples of Christ – so that we can grow in faith and in the Catholic religious practice. **We are strengthened in Christ and through Christ**.



2. THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

The word “confirmation” means “anointing” with oil (chrism). This oil is used for the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Orders, besides Confirmation. This oil is consecrated by the Bishop during the morning mass on Maundy Thursday.

The Sacrament of Confirmation reminds us that Jesus shared with others the strength of the Spirit which was within him.

“ Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

JOHN 20:21-22

CONFIRMATION IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

The Sacrament of Confirmation helps a person to mature in his/her personal and Christian life. Consequently, when a person accepts to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, he/she will be improving in his/her Christian maturity.

Through Confirmation, you take on more responsibility as Christians, not only for yourselves, but also for other Christians, as well as non-Christians. This happens because, through your words and behaviour, these will understand what it means to be a real Christian. This new responsibility will induce you to ask for and to seek the truth of what it means to be a Christian and to live like a Christian.

It would be a pity and a show of immaturity, if we look at the life of a Christian as a set of rules which should be obeyed and things which should be believed. In every religion, one finds things of faith, rules and practices of communal prayer and certain attitudes that help believers to live that religion wholly.

- » The Sacrament of Confirmation is also called the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit because through it, **you receive special graces** from the Holy Spirit, which enable you to bear witness more responsibly, by word and example, to Jesus and all that that you believe in as Christians.

- » The Sacrament of Confirmation **helps you to confirm**, that is, to strengthen with more responsibility, what you received at Baptism,

namely, your belief in Jesus.

- » Through the Sacrament of Confirmation your wish to **follow Jesus Christ** is re-enforced and you demonstrate this by the way you live your life, by your words and the good examples you give to others. The Holy Spirit is the source of all this.
- » When you were younger, you started learning and discovering what a Christian is; now you are growing up and maturing. Now you are adolescents and you can **understand better** what it means to be a Christian and how to **live as Christians**, following the teaching of Jesus.

We can receive this Sacrament only once in our lives.



3. THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus reminds us that he gave himself to us because he loves us.

The account of when Jesus instituted the Eucharist (during the Last Supper) is found in the Gospel according to St. Luke, as well as in the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians. Here, the account is according to St Luke:

“Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you’.”

LUKE 22, 19- 20



In the Gospel according to St. John, we find the words of Jesus referring to the Sacrament of the Eucharist. These words show that Jesus is really present in the Host we receive – he is the living Bread.

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world’.”

JOHN 6, 51

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

This Sacrament of love is a mystery of faith. We cannot understand it with our small minds, but we can believe it. Every time we receive Jesus, he becomes part of us. Jesus wishes that we live this Sacrament by really loving each other.

Therefore, when we receive the Eucharist, we get nearer to Jesus and nearer to each other.

Through this Sacrament, you will start sharing in the meal of the Lord. The Eucharist is the food which strengthens you spiritually so that you will be able to live a good life. This Sacrament is a gift to us from Jesus. The word “Eucharist” means “thanks” – thanks to Jesus for being among us, thanks to him for deigning to come inside us and thanks to him for this gift of himself. When, as a community we receive the Eucharist, all of us together will be saying Thank You to Jesus for his love for us. The Eucharist is a celebration of

gratitude - of thankfulness as a community. The central message of Jesus is love. Consequently, every time you receive the Eucharist, that is, every time you receive Jesus, you will be receiving the Sacrament of love, because Jesus is really present in the Eucharist. He is present with his body, blood, soul and his divinity. Jesus can give only love; so, every time we receive him, he fills us with love and wishes that we share this love with others.

We can receive this Sacrament frequently, even daily.

4. THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (CONFESSION)

The Sacrament of Confession or Reconciliation reminds us of God's great mercy; he never gets tired of forgiving us. We read in the Gospels that during his stay in this world, Jesus forgave the sins of various persons.

Many times Jesus asked people to repent and become converted. This call of Jesus for the conversion of sinners and the fact that Jesus can forgive sins form the basis of the Sacrament of Confession.

JESUS HEALING A PARALYTIC MAN

MARK 2, 1-5;
OTHER
PASSAGES
MATTHEW 9, 1-8;
LUKE 5, 17-26

"Some days after Jesus returned to Capernaum, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on

which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'My son, your sins are forgiven!'

After rising from the dead, Jesus said to his apostles,

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

JOHN 20, 21

In these words which Jesus said to his apostles, we find the mission which Jesus gave to them and, therefore, to the Church, to teach God's love and forgiveness of sins.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

Many ask, "Why do we have to go to a priest in order to confess? Can't we confess by talking directly to God?"

In the Catholic Church the Sacrament of Confession is administered by a priest, through whom God forgives us. The priest is a bridge between God and us. It is God who forgives through the beautiful words the priest says: "I forgive you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." With these words and at the moment of saying these words, the priest delivers forgiveness in the name of God.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a Sacrament of **healing** in every aspect. After we confess to the priest

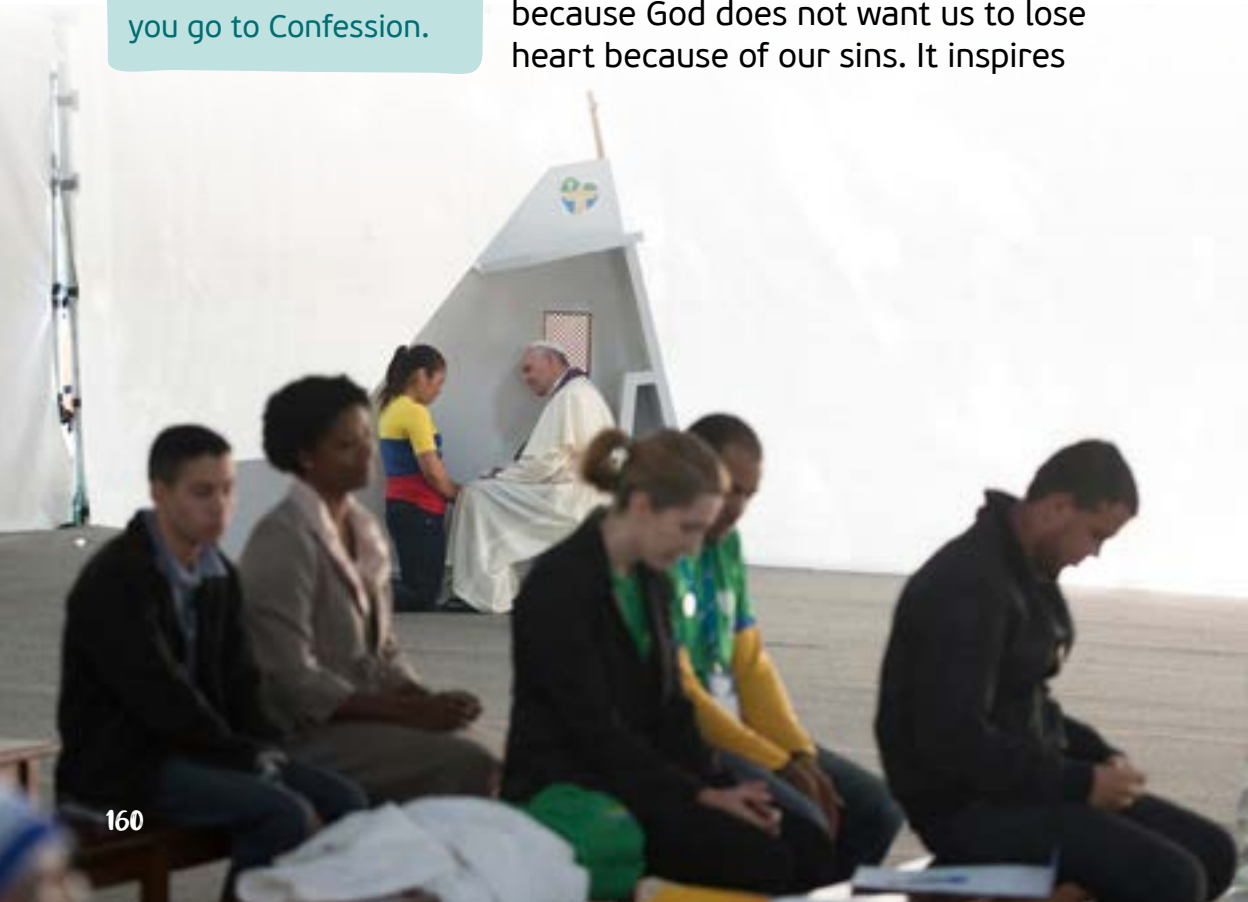
what is making our life a burden, he forgives us by the grace of God and by the authority given to him by the Catholic Church.

It is also a Sacrament of **joy** because forgiveness renews the relationship with ourselves, with the Lord and with others. This is why we feel happy. God always forgives us but, sometimes, we find it very difficult to forgive ourselves. It is important to learn to forgive ourselves, because it is only then that our happiness is complete.

REMEMBER

Even the priest goes to confession. He also needs forgiveness, mercy, love, hope and growing more in faith. Therefore, there is no need to feel embarrassed when you go to Confession.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one that gives much **love, hope and faith** because through it we feel how much God loves us. God never tires of forgiving us. It promotes hope because God does not want us to lose heart because of our sins. It inspires



faith because this Sacrament helps us believe in God's love and great mercy towards us, which are transmitted to us by the priest.

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE AND DURING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Prepare for a good confession by **reflecting well upon your sins**, that is checking your conscience properly.

Repent your sins, that is, you should feel sorry that you have committed these sins.

You should feel sorry, because first of all you have offended God, secondly because you have broken your relationship with God and thirdly because you have offended others. Even if you have sinned privately without anybody seeing you, you have spiritually broken off your relationship with others, because we are one family, united spiritually with Christ.

When you sincerely repent, you would be saying to yourselves, "I do not want to continue committing these sins in my life." If you fall again, then again go to confession, since you are on a voyage towards maturity. You should be on the alert so that, as far as possible, you do not commit the same mistake/sin many times.

Confess all your sins. Do not confess only what you fancy, but be sincere with yourselves and tell the whole truth.

You show that you are really sorry for your sins by **reciting the Act of Contrition** during Confession.

During absolution, the priest forgives you your sins by making the sign of the cross, looking at you and saying, "I forgive your sins in the name of the Father, of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit.”

Do your penance, that is, the priest suggests that you say a prayer or make a small sacrifice so that you yourself may show to others the same love that God has just shown you.

We can receive this Sacrament more than once; in fact, it is good that we go to Confession frequently.



5. THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

In this Sacrament we are reminded of the many times, Jesus in his work and mission on this earth healed the sick. The work and actions of Jesus are the basis of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

“Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness

MATTHEW 9:35

In the early days of the Church, the apostle James, strengthens and explains clearly the need and greatness of this Sacrament in chapter 5 of his letter.

“Is any one among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.”

JAMES 5, 14-15

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

The Catholic Church offers this Sacrament to the sick, but not necessarily to those who are on the point of dying. For this Sacrament to be administered, the person should still be alive. The dead do not receive it, although the priest prays upon them.

It is called “the anointing of the sick” because the priests anoints indicated parts of the body with oil, which is blessed on Maundy Thursday. While he is anointing a sick person, that is, making on him the sign of the cross with oil, the priest prays for the spiritual and physical healing of the person.

This Sacrament shows the Christian that:

- » God loves him/her even when he/she is sick and suffering.
- » God heals the spirit of the person through the prayers of the priest and of those around him/her.

God fills the person with courage, peace and patience so that the sick person bears what he/she is undergoing with a Christian attitude and does not rebel against God.

- » The rising of Jesus from the dead, fills us with hope that our lives do not end with death; rather, after death we begin a new life with Christ, for after this life there is another one. At the end of the world, we will rise in Christ, not in this body which rots, but in a glorious body which never decays.
- » Similarly to Confession, this Sacrament is a Sacrament of healing, because it forgives sins.

We can receive this Sacrament often, according to our needs.

From the sacraments of healing – Confession and the Anointing of the Sick – we now proceed to the **Sacraments of Vocations**. These Sacraments are **Marriage and Holy Orders**. These Sacraments are part and parcel of a person's vocation or mission.

In marriage this mission is accomplished in the relationship between the couple and their offspring, whom they bring up. In case there are no children, the couple may be of service to others.

In Holy Orders, this mission is achieved in the service of love towards everybody, without distinction.

6. THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

In this Sacrament we are reminded of Jesus who cared for the people around him, especially in spiritual matters. Jesus instituted this Sacrament when he said the words:

“...Do this in memory of me.”

LUKE 22: 19

The Bishop is compared to a shepherd who takes care of his sheep – his flock – who are the Christians. The Bishop’s mission is also that of ensuring that those who are not Christians live with the respect and dignity deserved by people created by God.

In the Acts of the Apostles there is a reference to the work both of the priest and the Bishop.



“Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the church of God that he acquired with his own blood.”

ACTS 20, 28

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

Through Baptism, we all received what is known as the common priesthood for the baptised, which means that through Baptism we are all called

and have the mission to help people **to love and be reconciled with God**. We can do this by word and by example.

Moreover, we can all be **prophets** by teaching the truth about God and spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are all called to be **leaders who in the name of God serve** all of creation. As leaders, we should do our best to live as Christians just as Jesus wants us to. We should also live in such a way that others follow our example and copy us. These three roles are called the ministries of all the baptised (Christians). We have to remember that leaders do not command but serve. Therefore, we Christians are called to live and be of service to others in various ways and without any distinction.

When we talk of Holy Orders, we are talking about a Sacrament whereby men, who are called by God, are consecrated by the Bishop. They are endowed with holy powers by Jesus Christ through the Church, for the service of God's people, the whole Church and society.

This authority given to priests goes back to the time of the apostles, when Jesus himself ordained them as priests and bishops during the Last Supper. In the Catholic and Orthodox Churches the Bishops are the successors of the apostles and, therefore, only they can ordain – consecrate – deacons, priests and new bishops.

In the Sacrament of Holy Orders there are three important stages: the diaconship (when one helps the priest), the presbyterate (when one becomes a priest) and the episcopate (when one becomes a bishop).

The work of the Bishop is mainly:

- » **To take care of and direct liturgical functions**, to bring the people of God to the liturgy and to administer the Sacraments. In all this, we see the Bishop **as a priest**.
- » **To teach** the people of God about God's truth and about the teaching of the Church and to apply all this to the time in which the people of God are living. Here we see the Bishop **as a prophet**.
- » **To take care of the pastoral needs of God's people**. Here we see the Bishop **as a leader who serves**.

Besides these roles, the Bishop takes care of his diocese and the spiritual needs of the persons in this diocese, while communicating with civil society and with persons of other religions, cultures and races. A diocese is made up of a number of parishes, containing a number of families in towns and villages.





THE WORK OF THE PRIEST

The priests are the collaborators of the Bishop; together with the Bishop, they are responsible for directing the liturgy and administering the Sacraments (except that of Holy Orders). It is their responsibility to teach the people of God and to serve in parishes. If the priest is a parish priest, then he has to see to all the needs of his parish.

THE WORK OF THE DEACONS

Deacons are directly connected to the Bishop. They collaborate with the Bishop and the priests; they can explain the Gospel, preach, help the priest during mass, direct funerals, baptise, marry people, work in areas of charity and show mercy to all, especially the weak. They do their best to serve the people of God. One can remain a deacon and not become a priest. In this case, one is called a permanent deacon.

7. THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Jesus was loyal/faithful to God, his Father, whom he called “Abba Father”; he was also faithful/loyal to the mission entrusted to him by God. In the same way, Jesus expects those whom he chooses to follow the vocation of marriage, to be loyal/faithful to each other and to their relationship.

St Paul among his many writings, wrote this about marriage:

“Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church ...”

EPHESIANS 5, 25

A SHORT NOTE:

What St Paul wrote about men applies also to women.

Jesus Christ gave his life for the Church. Likewise, married persons should be faithful to each other and to their relationship and give their lives to each other.

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

Let us try to understand in a very simple way how a friendship grows by taking an



example. Quite often two persons become friends because they have something in common. It may be that they like the same type of music or they like the same football team.

In this example, it is the music or the football team, more than anything else, that keeps them together. Even if they quarrel, there is something that unites them. This common factor causes them to forget their egoism and to concentrate on what is common and permanent between them, thereby motivating them to stay together and to keep trusting each other.

TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Two persons feel that they have a vocation to marry. Both love God very much and both ask God to find a good and fitting person with whom to share a married life.

Rather mysteriously, two persons meet at a certain place and at a certain time and feel attracted towards each other. Each one loves God. God, therefore, is the common and permanent element between them. The more that God – who is love – remains their common element, the more they become attracted to each other, the more they seek to discover each other, to respect each other, to love each other and to trust each other. Little by little, they move on to seal their love by receiving the Sacrament of a Christian Marriage. Naturally, difficulties will arise. But, as long as God remains the common element between them and, as long as they continue to treasure him in their lives, both as



individuals and also as a couple, then, they can together face the challenges that arise.

So long as God remains present in the life of the couple, their love becomes stronger, even during difficult times.

A Christian marriage is a **human experience and a symbol of faith, love and hope** of the married couple towards God, towards each other and towards society.

Above all, a Christian marriage is a **promise** and not a just a contract between the couple. A contract stipulates a period of time and many conditions for the deed to be valid, and if something happens to one partner, the contract becomes null.



The model of a Christian marriage is the promise of God with his people. This pact means:

- a. **the total giving** of God in his Son Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind;
- b. **loyalty**, because God will always love his people;
- c. God's love **given with great freedom** for the salvation of everyone;
- d. the great love of God who, because he loves his people, remains with them to care not only for them, but even **for future generations and for the whole of creation.**

In a Christian marriage, the love of a couple for each other in this pact, is the voyage of God with his people. Therefore, their love should be:

- » **Totali:** love which is not conditional but real;
- » **Loyal (Faithful):** loyal to each other and to their relationship. Even when the persons are not present, they should still be respected;
- » **Free:** both the marriage and the relationship should be free and not conditioned by anybody or anything;
- » **Fruitful:** Children are the fruit of the love between the couple: in case there are no children, love can be deployed in a service to society and to the Church. Real love cannot be self-centred.

These four very important stages of a Christian marriage continue maturing within the life of the married couple and are strengthened by God's grace, given through the Sacrament of a Christian marriage and through the prayers and encouragement of the Christian community.

The marriage will remain strong if the couple keeps God in its life, both individually and as a couple. Keeping God alive in the family by praying together and frequenting the Sacraments will overcome the many difficulties and sacrifices a married couple faces and will actually strengthen the marriage.

2.4 THE SACRAMENTS WHICH LEAVE A “CHARACTER”

Have you ever heard that there are three Sacraments that leave a character? These Sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders.

Character or spiritual seal means that these Sacraments graft us with Jesus Christ for ever, spiritually and in a special manner. They also make us share in the work and mission of Jesus.

No sin can eliminate this seal. It is a seal, character and mark that remains for ever. That is why a Christian can receive these Sacraments **only once** in a lifetime.

BAPTISM

Baptism seals a Christian with a spiritual seal or a mark in the soul which is never erased (character) and shows that **that person belongs to Jesus Christ.**

A baptised person is baptised for life and remains baptised even though the person leads a bad life. No sin can erase the spiritual character which has been given to a person at Baptism. A baptised person **belongs to Jesus for ever.** If the person leads a life of sin **away from Jesus,** the latter still waits for him/her. If the person wishes to return to Jesus, he/she can do so by confessing his/her sins. A person can be baptised only once and cannot be baptised again.

CONFIRMATION

Through Confirmation, this spiritual character/ seal is strengthened and, at the same time,

strengthens the person who receives it, so that that person can keep following Jesus and live his/her life as a Christian more responsibly, especially as a witness to Christ.

If, for one reason or another, the person who receives Confirmation does not live a good life, the seal – character - is not cancelled; the person remains confirmed, that is renewed in Christ. If he/she wishes to lead a Christian life, then he/she must go to Confession. Though a person leaves Jesus to lead a bad life, Jesus keeps waiting for him/her. A person can receive the Sacrament of Confirmation only once.

HOLY ORDERS

A person becomes a priest for ever. This Sacrament can be received only once.

If for some reason, a priest does no longer function, that is, he does not do his duties as a priest, he still remains a priest. He has **only stopped working as a priest.**

Let us take an example. There is an emergency, say an accident, and someone who “has been a priest” is present; he is in duty bound to assist the injured person, hear his/her confession and bless him/her. This can only be done in case of an emergency.

CHALLENGE

During this week, try to receive the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist. Be more respectful when receiving the Eucharist. Make an effort to live the Eucharist by really loving your neighbour.

FAMILY CATECHESIS

“ Beloved,
let us love one another,
because love is of God;
everyone who loves
is begotten by God
and knows God.”

1 JOHN 4, 7

LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Lord, bless
each and every one of us.
Help us to love each other
and share this love with others,
especially those who are in need
and those who have nobody
to love them.
Amen .



THE THIRD THEME

Come Holy Spirit

I LONG FOR YOU, I WANT YOU, I NEED YOU

Holy Spirit, I long for you, I want you, I need you. Come, Holy Spirit. Do not allow that I feel this longing only while preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation, but will last my whole life. It is therefore important that I understand well the greatness and the necessity of this Sacrament and of the Holy Spirit of God.



3.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION AND ADOLESCENTS

The Sacrament of Confirmation can be **celebrated by the Bishop or a priest** delegated by the Bishop.

The principal actions, that is, the principal signs made during the rite, are **the laying on of hands and the anointing with the oil of the Sacrament of confirmation**. This oil, which is often called chrism oil, is consecrated on Maundy Thursday, during the mass celebrated in the morning.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

The Bishop prays so that the Holy Spirit comes down and showers each adolescent with his gifts.

The prayer said by the priest or Bishop during the rite (celebration) of the Sacrament is a prayer to God so that the Holy Spirit strengthens the adolescents in their lives as Christians. This prayer shows the strong and deep relationship between God and adolescents.

The Prayer:

*Dear children (or Dear brothers and sisters),
Let us pray to God our Father,
who is all powerful,
for these adopted children of his,
who at Baptism
have already been re-born
to eternal life:
we pray that in his goodness
he will give them the Holy Spirit,
to strengthen them with his numerous talents,
and with his anointing will give them a full likeness
to Christ, the Son of God.*

THE ANOINTING WITH THE CHRISM OIL

When the Bishop (or priest) makes the sign of the cross with oil on the forehead of the candidate who is going to receive the Sacrament, he says, **“Take this seal.”** This means that the person now belongs to Jesus Christ and is marked for ever as a witness to Christ.

A SHORT NOTE:

The godparent can be a male for a female adolescent and a female for a male adolescent.

THE GODPARENTS

The role of the godparent is to accompany the adolescent and help him/her in his/her life in all its human and especially Christian dimensions. With the help of the godparent, the adolescent grows into a good Christian youth and adult as well as a responsible citizen.

The godparent is a witness when the adolescent is receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, that is, when he/she is renewing the vows of Baptism and while the Bishop or priest is sealing the adolescent with chrism oil, that is, when the adolescent is being confirmed.

Godparents are not only witnesses but also responsible to accompany the adolescents throughout life, especially by the way they themselves live their lives as responsible Christians.

WHY ARE THE VOWS OF BAPTISM RENEWED?

They are renewed because there is a connection between the Sacrament of Baptism and that of Confirmation. At Baptism, you became Christians, while at Confirmation at your own free choice and

together with that of your parents or those who bring you up, you show your wish to be confirmed in the Catholic faith.

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, you renew what was promised at Baptism. This time, however, instead of having your godparents speaking for you, **you yourselves speak**. Individually you yourselves renew the vows taken at Baptism.

This indicates that now as adolescents you are going to make an effort to be more responsible about your journey in the footsteps of Jesus and about living as Christian citizens.

You renew these vows with your replies to a few questions you are asked by the Bishop or priest.

RENEWING THE BAPTISM VOWS

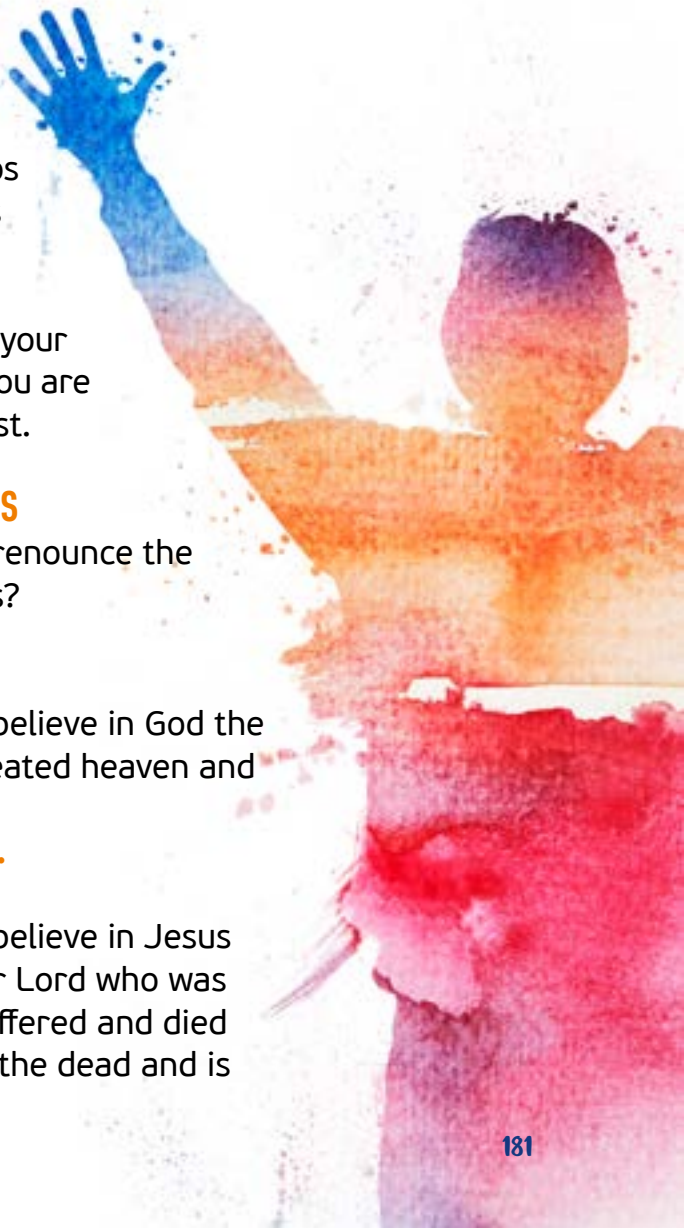
The Bishop/priest: Do you renounce the devil and all his evil actions?

You answer: Yes, I do.

The Bishop/priest: Do you believe in God the Father omnipotent who created heaven and earth?

You answer: Yes, I believe.

The Bishop/priest: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son and our Lord who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered and died and was buried, rose from the dead and is



on the right hand side of God?

You answer: **Yes, I believe.**

The Bishop/priest: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord who gives life and who, today, in a special way, is going to be given to you in the Sacrament of Confirmation, like he was given to the apostles at Pentecost?

You answer: **Yes, I believe.**

The Bishop/priest: Do you believe in the Holy Catholic Church, in the community of saints, the forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection from the dead and in life everlasting?

You answer: **Yes, I believe.**

The Bishop/priest: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church, which we confess in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Everybody answers: **Amen.**

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION CONTINUES TO STRENGTHEN YOU TO BEAR WITNESS TO JESUS

Through Confirmation, the Holy Spirit descends upon you and strengthens you by his graces to be the witnesses of Jesus wherever you are. This means that you will do your best to be real Christian citizens.

Being witnesses of Jesus means:

Keeping **a good relationship** with Jesus, especially by praying as an individual and also as a member of the Christian community, participating actively (not just sitting and merely observing) in the Sunday mass.

Continuing **your Christian formation** by keeping on learning what the Catholic Church is teaching today. Thereby, you will be able to know better what the Catholic Christian religion expects from you; moreover, you will be able to talk about it with others, especially persons of other religions. Obviously, **you cannot talk about or discuss something if you are not well informed about it.**

Respecting and loving everybody like Jesus does and like he asks us to do. You should love everybody, without any distinction of race, colour or religion because we are all brothers and sisters, children of one Father – God.

Looking for the good in others and doing good to everyone. Thus, you will be practising what each Catholic should foster. You will also be putting into practice both the Commandments and the Beatitudes.

CHALLENGE

In the coming days, frequently say a prayer to Our Mother Mary so that you prepare yourselves, as adolescents, for the coming of the Holy Spirit in your hearts.



Diary

Write down or draw what you are feeling as an adolescent, now that you are preparing yourself to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Explain what this Christian Catholic step in your life means to you as a Christian adolescent.

FAMILY CATECHESIS
LET US PRAY TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Holy Spirit,
eternal love,
come to us
with your ardent love and
enkindle our hearts.

Glory be to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
who was in the beginning,
is now and always
and will be for ever and ever.
Amen.



