

St. Francis de Sales
Religious Education Program 2010-2011
K-5
General Outline, Themes, Suggestions

Week One

August 22, 23, 25

- Opening Prayer/Attendance
- Welcome / Introduction
- Always begin with the Sign of the Cross! Explain that it is a very old prayer and that we will always begin with it because it shows who we are and Who we belong to.
- Introduce yourself. Be sure to tell them why you are here teaching. You can include a bit about your family and your interests, pets, hobbies. While you are not going to be their “buddy,” you are an important part of their life.
- Explain how important each person is and that we are all brothers and sisters in the family of God. We are here to learn more about God, His love for us and how we are to respond to God. Have (or make) “name tags” and work really hard to learn each students’ names asap. Discuss how important names are. Discuss where their names may have come from. (For example: named after parent, a favorite saint, etc.) Our name is something that identifies us as a member of a family, perhaps an ethnic background, birth order – junior, the 4th, etc. Names do matter and are to be respected!
- Have one or two “Icebreaker” games to help the children remember names. The “Name Game” – an adjective or adverb that starts with the same letter/sound as your name like “Marvelous Maureen,” “Kicking Chris” for a soccer player, “Dancing Diane,” “Terrific Takiya,” “Super Susan,” “Adorable Ann,” “Rambunctious Russ”-to give you an idea. Please remember that all adjectives & adverbs must be positive. Have some ready to help your children out. A list of words that they would be familiar with and would be comfortable with. (Jumping, Passing, Funny, Climbing, Swimming, etc.) Another game might be one of “Introduction” – pair them up and have them interview their partner and then introduce partner to the class. Then see who can remember the most names
- Talk about the class rules, dress code, and your hopes and expectations for the school year. While discussing the dress & behavior code, be sure to explain the *WHY* for the rules. **(There are copies to be sent home with your students.)**
- Please discuss the “Family of God” Project that will go on all year! It is a continuation from last year – but let’s make it even better this time around. Explain that each class will have a box. Every little bit helps! It is very important that goods are contributed on a regular basis – the box is “to inspire.” The reason it is ongoing is to illustrate that our brothers and sisters are hungry and needy every day – not just one or two times a year. Please stress that what is contributed must be in “good condition” – not worn out/out of date, etc. We want our young people to grow up living the Works of Mercy!
- Brainstorm what your class wants to accomplish with their box. Decorate your class box. (Wrapping Paper, drawings by students, whatever you want.) The contents of your box will be collected each week.
- Before they leave this week, please remind them about the articles for the “Family of God” Religious Education Project!
- Closing Prayer

Week Two

August 29, 30, Sept. 1

- Opening Prayer/Attendance
- Ask if they have anything for the “Family of God” project. Remind them about it.
- Follow instructions for proceeding to “Assigned Area” for our Annual Compliance Class.
- Closing Prayer

Week Three

Sept. 5, 6, 8

- LABOR DAY WEEKEND – NO CLASSES

Week Four

September 12, 13, 15

CCC Part Four-Christian Prayer / Matthew 6:5-13 / Matthew 26:44 / Luke 18:13 / 1 Corinthians 13:4-13 / 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 25 / 2 Thessalonians 1:11, 3:1 / Romans 15:30 / Colossians 4:2-3 /

It is important for you to have a good prayer life. This will help you to share this joyful gift with them.

- Opening Prayer/Attendance
- We will spend time at the beginning of each class during the month of September “in review.” We have “flash cards” to identify the people and articles around St. Francis de Sales Parish. This will help them to learn, remember who and what people and “things” are in *their* Parish. Assess the “Prayer Knowledge” of your students. The “quiz” is in your folder. Please leave them in your folder so that I can assess them! This will be accomplished in varied ways according to Grade Level. This is to help us know what we need to stress. Let’s be sure ALL levels know these “Basics”!
- Each week, Third through Fifth grades will review how to properly receive the Eucharist. Again, stress to your students the awesomeness of this gift! Be sure to use “Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity”, the “Body of Christ”, the “Blood of Christ” when you are discussing the reception. Go over the “rules” – give them the pamphlet to bring home. Make sure to tell them to consume the Host when they receive it – and NOT to carry it back to their pews. Make sure their “posture” is correct. By that we mean that they approach the Eucharist prayerfully. (No hands in pockets, at their sides, etc.) The same is true for their return to their seats. We have a truly golden opportunity to help instill proper reverence for the Eucharist.
- Prayer is very important! It is communicating with our very BFF! Prayer has been defined as the lifting of mind and heart to God in praise, petition, thanksgiving, and intercession; communication with God in a relationship of love. Prayer means a deepening awareness of a person’s relationship with God. It helps the “prayor” to live in harmony with the will of God. Wow – what an amazing gift to give to our students! We could spend the entire year on this – and in a way we will because we will incorporate prayerful lessons throughout the year.
- We will be talking about the various “postures of prayer” – sitting, kneeling, standing, etc.
- Prayer is NOT magic.
 - We don’t go to God and ask Him for straight A’s if we never study or pay attention in class. (The Lord helps those who help themselves!)
 - We can, of course, tell God what we want. But we have to realize that what we want may not be the best thing for us. This is an important concept – and we have an opportunity to help shape the prayer lives of our students. Our influence may be felt for decades after we “are gone”. – And whoever said that this ministry wasn’t an amazing gift in many ways?

- Our students may have some pretty big things to talk with God about. Perhaps Mom & Dad are splitting, maybe Grandpa is very sick, maybe their team is playing for a championship, maybe they want the sun to shine on their birthday party – all sorts of things are of major importance to children. We get to help them understand that **EVERY** prayer is answered – in the way that is best for us.
- Discuss the popular prayer posture in their home. (Also share the most popular in your home.) As long as the posture is respectful, it is correct. Do they think someone is more holy when they are kneeling or standing? Sitting or lying down? Why are there so many different ways?
- The mechanics of prayer are important for us. We show our love, Faith, trust, etc., by how we pray. When we focus on God (prayer) we are living our Faith. When we pray in petition, thanksgiving, whatever, we are demonstrating our trust in God. With the children list things that we are thankful for – and Who is responsible for us having these things?
- Have them write and/or illustrate the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Sign of the Cross, and the "Glory be".
- Closing Prayer

Week Five

September 19, 20, 22

- Opening Prayer / Attendance
- Family of God Collection
- Again – review for the first section of the class. Make it interesting for the students. (If there is/are children who need "extra" attention, let me know right away.)
- After the opening review, this week and next we will be discussing the most universal prayer of the Church – the Mass. Last year we discussed the Mass in detail. This year we will be bring their weekly experience of the Mass into focus. Mass is a communal prayer. It is necessary to nourish us as a community of God. We will be focusing on what we do (literally) to participate and hopefully they will have a better understanding of the "why".
- Every Sunday is a Holy Day of Obligation. Our job is to instill in the students what an amazing privilege it is to attend Mass. Throughout the centuries, people have lost their employment and even their lives because of their love for the Mass. (*How would those people feel about the very feeble excuses offered in this age for missing Mass – like "a soccer game," "my only day to sleep in," etc?)* A theologian in the last century said "at every Mass, we lift the cross out of its hole in Golgotha, carry it across the centuries, and plant it in our midst that we might benefit *now* from its infinite benefits." We are called to help our students prepare better for and appreciate the beauty of the Mass. One way they can get more out of Mass is to participate – take part with their mind, body, heart and senses. This can be done from a very young age. (For "us old folk" – if we just focus on the action of a few drops of water poured into the wine and let it remind us that the inexpensive water is us, mingled with what will become the priceless blood of Christ!) Mass is not like a video game or some other modern sound bite – it is the greatest act of worship on the planet. So let's help them walk through and get a better sense of this prayer.
 - When we first arrive at church, if we have the need to visit the rest room, NOW is the time. (We should never leave for this – or a drink – once we have gone into the pew. Mass is only an hour long. Usually even shorter...)

- When we go into the church for Mass, we usually spot some friends. At this gathering time we quietly say “hi” and maybe a few other words of greeting. One of the first things we do is make the Sign of the Cross with holy water. Remind them the reason that this is done. **(Romans 6:3-4)**
Following this we walk the aisle to the pew chosen. Before we enter the pew, we genuflect to the Tabernacle. **(Philippians 2:10)** We are genuflecting to the presence of Jesus in the Tabernacle. Note that the altar is also a symbol of Christ and is here with us because it is where the most important event of the Mass takes place! If they are physically unable to go down on their knee, a reverent bow is also correct.
When we get into our pew, we kneel down, say a prayer and when done, make the Sign of the Cross and then sit properly in our seat. We are getting ready for the beginning of the celebration.
- Explain what the numbers on the brown board in the front of the church mean. Show them where to find the songs and when we sing them. (This is a good time to familiarize them with the missal. All should know where the Mass of the day, prayers, songs, etc., are located. – the date is located on the bottom of the page!)
- When the “commentator” stands up and announces the Mass, it is time to sit up and pay attention! From this time on until the end of the last song, we should be paying attention. That person will welcome and announce where we are on the liturgical calendar, who the celebrant is, the deacon of the Mass and what the opening song will be. The priest is commissioned by the Sacrament of Holy Orders to lead us in the celebration of the Mass.
- Part of participating in the Mass is really taking an active part. I know that sounds redundant, but how else to encourage them to sing and pray along? The commentator tells us what the opening song is and when we stand we should find it in the book and sing along. Singing is praying! The Entrance Song serves a specific function – it sets the theme for the Mass and it is the first thing we do all together. Stand up straight! When the celebrant invites us all to begin, (“Collect”-ing all of our prayers and intentions and offers them to God, if you will.) he is reminding us we are there as a community and we will be praying together! How awesome is that. (Make sure that your class knows that people of all ages all over the world are doing the same thing! Ours is a Universal Church!)
- If we understand what is going on and play an active part in it, Mass will begin to grow into an activity that is loved.

Week Six

September 26, 27, 29

- Opening Prayer/ Attendance
- Family of God collection
- Review---this can - and should - be fun.
- This week we conclude our look at the universality of our “biggest community prayer” – the Mass.
- Now that they are familiar with the Missal, let’s make sure they understand the correct postures of prayer that we assume when we attend Mass. (the Order of the Mass goes from page 3 - page 30 in the missal.)
We stand for the Entrance Procession and the Greeting. (This is when we all make the Sign of the Cross.)
We continue to stand during the Penitential Rite. (This is when we celebrate the mercy of God. “... Lord, have mercy...”) We remain standing for the Gloria, and for the Opening Prayer. There is a special Opening Prayer for each Sunday! Listen!

Now we sit down for the beginning of the **Liturgy of the Word**. (When we have large family “get-togethers,” our relatives tell the stories about Grandpa, Nanna, Uncle Fred, and so on. That is what we are doing at the Mass during the Liturgy of the Word! We are hearing our story - the story of our family of God! The *lector* is the person who usually reads the first two readings from the Bible. *Please note that the priest doesn't tell everyone to pick up their missals and read and then let him know when you are done.* (We can read along if we like, but it is better to listen and focus on the story.) It is like when we have a story read to us---we can read along if we like, but it is better to listen and focus on the story. It is easier, more understandable and more fun to *hear* the words. We have the **Reader/Lector** speak to us and tell us our story. We listen as though we were at the synagogue with Jesus (**Luke 4:16-20**). These readings are read from a special book called the “Lectionary.” That word comes from the Latin meaning “Book of Readings.”

There is a quiet time after each reading and the Responsorial Psalm. The Responsorial Psalm is “between” the first two readings and it is either sung or “spoken.” It is located in the missal. The first reading is generally from the Old Testament. The Responsorial Psalm is usually from the Book of Psalms. The second reading is from the New Testament. We sit properly and listen. (Discuss what it would feel like if they were reading an important message to the whole church and people were talking or goofing around!)

The Gospel is very special. There is also a special book for the Gospel called the “Book of the Gospels.” That is the one the deacon holds up and processes to the ambo with. It is read by a priest or deacon. If we always pay attention at Mass, we will hear all four Gospels read to us over a period of three years! The Gospel is the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is very important! The Gospel is the *Good News* that we are to proclaim to the entire world! Because it is SO IMPORTANT, we stand for the Gospel. The posture of standing is a form of respect and reverence. We stand to honor the presence of Christ in the Gospel. (We sing a Gospel Acclamation – usually the *Alleluia*)

We sit down to listen to the “homily.” This is a talk given to us by a priest or deacon to explain the readings and prayers of the day. He tries to help us to understand what they mean and how to put them to use in our lives.

Next we stand up for the Profession of Faith. This is a prayer that was put together for us in the mid-300's to state our beliefs. It is our “credo” – our creed. This is a statement of our beliefs and we could spend the entire year on it alone. The Nicene Creed was written to combat heresies that had cropped up. It was written in a place named Nicea. (If it were written in a place called Tucson, the prayer would be called the Tucsonan Creed.) *What the students need to hear at this level is that it – the Nicene Creed – is a Profession, statement, of what we believe and we are “standing up to be counted” as a community.*

The Prayers of the Faithful (General Intercessions) find us standing and praying for our needs and the needs of the world. Again, standing is a posture of reverence during communal prayer.

Now we begin the **Liturgy of the Eucharist**. The Gifts are brought to the altar. The “Gift Bearers” represent all of us in the “Pilgrim Church.” While the gifts are brought up and the altar is being prepared, we sit and sing a hymn. On the altar there are special linens – the table is set for the Eucharistic Banquet. (This is just like when we use special linens for special dinners at home.) The white cloth that the chalice and paten are placed on is called the corporal. There is a special white cloth called a purificator used to wipe up any drops that might spill and to clean the chalice and vessels after Communion. The Sacramentary Book is arranged on the altar.

The collection is taken up during this time. The money given is not just a function of getting money to pay the bills; it shows a commitment on all of us to be a part of the Church.

The priest holds up the bread and says, “Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation...”

And we say “Blessed be God forever.” When the priest raises the wine, he says, “Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation....” And we answer, “Blessed be God forever.”

We stand to show our reverence for the Prayer over the Gifts that begins when the priest says: “Pray my brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice may be acceptable to God...”

The Preface is next – the priest says, “The Lord be with you.” And we respond, “And also with you.”

Then the priest says, “Lift up your hearts” and we respond, “We lift them up to the Lord.” The Preface continues with the priest saying “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” and we respond as a family, “It is right to give Him thanks and praise.” Then all together we say or sing the “Holy, Holy, Holy....”

We kneel for the Eucharistic Prayer. The priest will say one of the many Eucharistic Prayers prescribed. Show the students where they are located in the missal. (Kneeling at this part of the Mass is a posture which began in the Church during the Middle Ages. Kneeling was a sign of reverence for a nobleman or a king – so we do it to honor the King of the Universe. The bishops of the United States decided that the custom of kneeling would be kept throughout the Nation.) The bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ at the Consecration. Christ becomes present to us in yet another way!

We now remember all that Jesus has done for us when we pray the Memorial Acclamation (priest - “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith”: people- “Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.”)

The Eucharistic Prayer ends with the Final Doxology and the Great Amen

Now we stand up and prepare to receive the Eucharist. This is the greatest expression of our unity with God and one another! There are four parts to this – The Our Father, the sharing of a Sign of Peace, the Breaking of the Bread and the receiving of Holy Communion. (The meaning of the term “Holy Communion” is very clear at this time!)

We all recite the Lord’s Prayer together. We are standing for this. We can hold hands with those next to us, but we do not have to hold hands. The important thing is that we are praying in unison – in community.

Next is the Sign of Peace. At this time we can shake hands with those around us or offer some sign or gesture of peace. Discuss this with your students. Again it is not mandatory that we shake hands or hug those around us. *This Sign of Peace is more than a friendly howdy – it is recognizing that all around us are members of the Body of Christ just like us!* Hopefully, when the students think about all of this it will make the Mass special for them.

After we offer a Sign of Peace comes the Breaking of the Bread. This is one of the oldest gestures that we have at Mass. Jesus did it at the Last Supper! The one loaf was divided and shared – just as His Body was broken and given for our salvation. (This should be a recognizable gesture for all of us. Think about sharing one birthday cake. On a very human level, the sharing of the one bread and one cup is an expression of love and care.)

Next is Communion. When we process (walk up) to receive the Eucharist, we must be in a respectful and prayerful posture. This means hands folded/clasped in front of us in prayer. When we get to the minister, he/she will hold up the Host and we then bow to recognize our King. (Stress that we should bow when we approach the Host or chalice, not after the ministers say “The Body (Blood) of Christ.”) The minister says, “the Body (Blood) of Christ” and then we say “Amen.” (With the children in K-2, practice crossing arms and receiving a blessing.) Those who have made their First Eucharist will receive and consume the Eucharist and then process prayerfully back to the pew. We then kneel prayerfully until the Eucharist is put into the Tabernacle. When the minister reverences and closes the Tabernacle, we may be seated.

Some Announcements may be read at this time. Sometimes you might think they are boring or unimportant – but they are a reminder that following Jesus is more than attending Mass, that there are things that are available for us to do during the week that show we are a community. (**Matthew 25:34-35, 37, 40** -illustrates some things to do for community.)

The Concluding Rite is next. The priest invites us to stand. He leads us in prayer and then he blesses us.

The Dismissal comes when we are told to “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” We stand and the priest says “The Lord be with you.” And we answer: “And also with you.” Then the priest blesses us and the priest or deacon invites all of us to go in the peace of Christ.

It is important that the students – and all of us – appreciate the prayer that is the Mass! It is important that the postures are known and done as a community. This is a very public sign that we are ONE.

Week Seven

October 3, 4, 6

Opening Prayer (Hail Mary) / Attendance / Family of God collection

This month we will be studying Our Blessed Mother.

(Also, at the “review section” of the class, let’s be sure the students know that the Bible is SACRED SCRIPTURE. Grades three-five will learn how to find things in the Bible. Attached is a “Scripture Scavenger Hunt” (grades 3-5) and coloring pages (grades K-2) for “Bell Work” this week or next. Following are some Scripture passages for reference.

Exodus 25:11-21/Luke 1/ Luke 3:16 /Mark 3:31-35 /Mark 6:3/Matthew 1:18-2:15, 12:46-50 / John 1: 14, John 2:1-12, 19:27. CCC 411,437,456, 484-493

I am attaching information FOR YOU to the class synopsis. The students are not expected to get deeply into Mariology – but the “extra” is for your benefit.

Opening Prayer / Attendance

- Family of God Collection (and discussion/cheerleading, if necessary!)
- Please spend a few minutes in review. This is to bridge it all together!
- Begin discussion of Our Blessed Mother. Because of her unique position in our salvation history, it is important that the students know and appreciate her. The Blessed Virgin Mary is known by many names. Some of them are: Blessed Mother, Immaculate Conception, the New Eve, Theotokus, Ark of the New Covenant, Most Pure, Mary, Most Holy, Queen of Saints, Our Lady of the Angels, Our Mother of Sorrows, etc. There are literally countless names. We want the children to recognize at least the better-known names.
- Mary is the Patron Saint of the United States of America under her title of Immaculate Conception. The National Shrine is named for her.
- Mary has appeared on the cover of Time magazine more than any other woman! (As of the late 90’s) There are many celebrations scattered throughout the year to honor her. This week we will talk about some of them. It is very, very important that the students understand that we honor Mary. We DO NOT worship Mary. Our worship belongs to God alone! Throughout the centuries, people have venerated (honored) and loved Mary. When we think about Mary with love and honor, it shows that we love and honor Jesus.
- Mary was pure from the instant of her conception! (...when she was conceived by her mother, St. Anne.) This means she was free of Original Sin. She is the only one besides Jesus who was born without Original Sin. We celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8 (Pope Pius IX in 1854).

- Read **Exodus 25:11-21** to Grades 4 and 5. This will illustrate how special, revered, holy is the Word of God. Then read **Luke 1:28**. Explain that Mary (“Theotokos” – means God-Bearer) was to carry and bear the Word of God (another title we use for Jesus), so she had to be more pure, more perfect than any other person. She IS different from any other woman who ever lived!
- Mary is the “prototype” for a disciple. She is the most perfect disciple. Read Luke 1:28, 31, 38 to the students. Explain that because Mary had extra graces to help her have the strength to obey and accept His will for her.
 - What does it mean to be a disciple? *Definition: a disciple is one who accepts Jesus’ message to follow Him. A disciple shares in the life of Christ – in His mission, His joy and His suffering.*
- Mary was very young when the Angel Gabriel visited her and told her she was going to be the Mother of God. It was an extremely big deal to be with child and not married! St. Joseph could have divorced her – or worse.
- “Mary days” and what they mean. Listed here in chronological order: (These are for your information – the students need not memorize them. It is good to mention them as another way of showing how important she is in our salvation history.)
 - January 1 – Mary, Mother of God (solemnity) This is the oldest and most important feast of Mary. Because it is so close to Christmas, it really helps to focus on her as the Mother of God.
 - February 11 – Our Lady of Lourdes (memorial) This is one of the two days on the calendar that Commemorate two of the reported many apparitions of Mary. These two (and many others) apparitions have the approval of the Church. Belief in Apparitions is not mandatory.
 - March 25 – Solemnity of the Annunciation of our Lord (solemnity) This celebrates the conception of Jesus accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is actually the real “Christmas,” when Jesus was born in the womb of his mother! This is the first time Mary appears in the Bible.
 - May 31 – Feast of the Visitation (feast) This celebrates Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth; the words of Elizabeth greeting Mary make up the second half of the first part of the Hail Mary.
 - June 12(2010) – Immaculate Heart of Mary (memorial) The date varies according to Easter. It usually takes place on the Saturday following the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
 - July 16 – Our Lady of Mount Carmel Tradition says that Mary appeared to St. Simon Stock on this day in 1251 & gave him the brown scapular as a sign of her love and protection. Carmelite Priests are at Salpointe HS here in Tucson.
 - August 5 – Dedication of St. Mary Major (memorial) The Basilica of St. Mary Major is located on one of the seven hills of Rome. This date celebrates Mary as Mother of the Church.
 - August 15 – the Assumption (solemnity) This day celebrates Mary being taken, body and soul, into heaven. Pope Pius XII defined this as dogma in 1954.
 - August 22 – Queenship of Mary (memorial) This feast was created by Pope Pius XII in 1954. She is honored as Queen of heaven because of her role in redemption and because she is first among Saints.
 - September 8 – Birth of Mary (feast) The actual date is unknown, but this has been celebrated on this day since the 7th century. The date was determined by counting back nine months from the Immaculate Conception. Her birthday is one of only three celebrated on the Christian calendar! (Jesus, John the Baptist and Mary) - these days celebrate the dawn of salvation.
 - September 15- Our Lady of Sorrows (memorial) Celebrated especially in Latin America. People identify with her being a refugee, a widow, a mother of a murdered child.
 - October 7- Our Lady of the Rosary (memorial) Date was originally “Our Lady of Victory,” but changed to Our Lady of the Rosary. People of Rome prayed the Rosary while the battles with the Muslim Turks in the 16th century were going on.

November 21 Presentation of Mary (memorial) As a Jewish child, Mary would have been brought to the Temple on the 40th day after her birth. (No biblical record of this.)

December 8 – Immaculate Conception (solemnity) Celebrates Mary being completely pure from the instant of her conception in St. Anne's womb.

December 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe (feast) This is celebrated especially here in the Southwest. The story is about an apparition of Mary to St. Juan Diego.

Week Eight

October 10, 11, 13

Opening Prayer (Hail Mary) / Attendance

Gather goodies for "Family of God" project.

- The Hail Mary. Please explain the prayer to the children so they will be able to know what they are saying and why. (Attached "Hail Mary")
- October is the month of the Rosary. The Rosary is a beautiful devotional and the "older" children should know how to pray the Rosary. (Yes, there are handouts! One is attached.)
- When we pray the Rosary we honor Mary as the Mother of God.
When praying the Mysteries of the Rosary we are contemplating/meditating on the life of Christ. We studied the history of the Rosary last Spring. (If you need an additional copy of that material, let me know.) Kindergarten and First – should be able to recite the Hail Mary and know the "parts" of the Rosary – Crucifix, Lord's Prayer beads, Hails Mary beads, Centerpiece. They should also know what a "decade" is. Grades Two and Three should be able to pray an entire Rosary. Grades Four and Five should be able to recite the Mysteries of the Rosary. Grades Two – Five should be able to write the prayers of the Rosary correctly.
- Apparitions: *The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines "apparition" as an appearance to people on earth of a heavenly being. (Christ, Mary, an angel, or a saint).* - The apparitions of Jesus occurred between Easter and His Ascension.
 - There are several "approved" apparitions of Our Blessed Mother. (Fatima, Lourdes, Guadalupe, Medjugorje, Knock, to name a few) Church approval means that the apparitions have been investigated and have been found worthy. The investigation involves, but is not limited to, the conditions of the apparition. These conditions would be things like where it took place, the person who "received" the apparition, the message delivered in the apparition. While the above noted apparitions have the "approval" of the Church, it is NOT mandatory to accept them.
 - Throughout our history, people have shown great love and veneration for Mary. People have called upon her to intercede for us with her Son. Any time we (the Church) praise/honor Mary, we are drawn closer to her Son. When we honor her we are honoring and acknowledging Jesus, her Son. During the apparitions, she has thought to have delivered a message from her Son. All of the messages from the "approved apparitions" have been in complete harmony with the beliefs of the Catholic Church. It is okay to believe in them, but it is also okay not to believe in the apparitions. The folks to whom she has appeared have been faithful in their love for Christ. Her messages come from HIM!

Week Nine

October 17, 18, 20

Opening Prayer (Include Hail Mary)/ Attendance

Family of God collection

- This is the week that the First Communion Candidates will begin their “special” study with the booklets. Please do these at the beginning of the class – and be sure they take their booklets home with them.
- We now are aware that Mary is the perfect prototype of a disciple. Now we will learn how we can be the best disciples we can be. We have the love of God always and unconditionally. We have Our Blessed Mother to help us know how to return that love to God.
- Discuss discipleship. Are there different kinds of disciples? What might they be?
- God created His Blessed Mother especially the way she needed to be in order to be a part of our salvation. God created each one of us. It is very important for the children to understand that they are very special and unique creations of God; God loves them and knows them completely.
 - Have them “look around” at God’s creation. All around us are things of beauty created by Him! (flowers, the moon, stars, dogs, cats, horses, lions, lakes and oceans, etc.) All things – all people – come from somewhere/someone – and that Someone is God!
 - God is our Creator! He made all that exists and He did it all by Himself. He did not have -or need- any help.
 - God is a pure Spirit Who had no beginning and has no end. He is eternal!
 - God knows everything. God can do everything.
 - God is all good, all holy and all lovable.
 - God wants **me** to be with Him forever in heaven! He gives us what we need to be with Him!
 - There is One God. God exists in Three Persons: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.
- The way to be with Him forever in heaven is to live the kind of life that Jesus wants – the kind of life that Mary lived. How do we do that? By being good disciples!
 - What does it mean to be a disciple? Once again: *a disciple is one who accepts Jesus’ message to follow Him. A disciple shares in the life of Christ – in His mission, His joy and His suffering.*
 - We will be discussing how to be a disciple. Know what the “rules” are. – Like the Commandments, the Works of Mercy, etc. We learn these from our parents and at Religious Ed class.
- A Commandment is defined as a norm of religious or moral action; the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God are a super example.
- The Ten Commandments are to be known and understood. (We can obey them without completely understanding them, but if we have an idea about what they mean, they make sense and we are more likely to live them!) These Ten Commandments (*not “Ten Suggestions”*) are complete instructions for a good, happy and peace filled life. They deal with how to love God and how to love our neighbor.
- Please discuss rules, laws, and commandments and why they are necessary. Discuss why having laws is a good idea. Discuss speed limits, red lights, personal property laws, family rules, team rules, etc.
- Giving us the Ten Commandments was a very loving thing for God to do. And – even better, He lets us decide whether or not to obey them. That is why it is critical that they see law as loving, good, and beneficial. (Example: Obeying our teachers keeps us from having detention; obeying traffic laws keeps us from getting tickets and paying fines – and it keep us safer; keeping holy the Sabbath helps our relationship with God to be stronger; etc.)
- Obeying the rules keeps us safer, happier, and more at peace. (Who likes to get into “trouble”? Grounded? Not me, for sure!)

Week Ten

October 24, 25, 27

Opening Prayer (Include Hail Mary) / Attendance

Family of God Goodies

Luke 10:25-28 / John 13:34-35 / Matthew 22:17-21, 22:34-40.

- First Reconciliation Booklets for Candidates!
- Discipleship and the Ten Commandments
- Remind them that we are striving to be like the best disciple ever – Our Blessed Mother.
- The first three Commandments have to do with our relationship with God.
 - 1: I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods before me. This means that nothing is as important as God. We have to nourish our Faith and protect it. *Idolatry* is breaking this Commandment. Relate this to their lives. Sports, money, vacations, clothes are not as important as God and should never be put before Him. He is the most important! (Fortune tellers, Ouija boards, astrology, crystal balls, superstition, etc. all are “little gods” – and if we believe in them, that puts our God in second place. These things are all make believe!)
We have to treat holy objects and places with respect. (Not doing this is sacrilege.) That means respecting the church buildings and contents, sacramentals - (like a Crucifix, a rosary, etc.).
 - 2: Thou shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain. This one tells us to be reverent/respectful when we speak about God and holy things. It also tells us to keep our vows and oaths made in His name.
(“...so help me God” means that we are saying – with God as our witness – whatever we are swearing to.)
It tells us to use the Name of God properly. – Never say His name in a curse. Always be aware of Whose power you are invoking!
 - 3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day. This in tells us that we must go to Mass on Sundays and other Holy Days of Obligation. (Obligation means we have to do it!) We cannot miss Mass through our own fault; we should not skip Mass because we are on vacation, tired, are going to a concert or game, etc.

Week Eleven

Oct. 31, Nov. 1, 3

Saints

Ephesians 4:1-6 / Colossians 3:15 / Romans 8:35-39, 12:5, 10 / CCC 823, 946, 828

First Reconciliation Booklets!

Lives of Saints, Dictionary of Saints

Since November 1 is All Saints Day, we will talk this week about Saints!

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines “Saint” as a “holy one” who leads a life in union with God through the grace of Christ and receives the reward of eternal life. The Church (capital C) is called the “communion of saints, of the holy ones.” This communion is made up of the living (“Church militant”), the souls in Purgatory (“Church suffering”) and those in heaven (“Church triumphant”).

All Saints Day is November 1. That is a day when we honor all holy men and women. It is a Holy Day of Obligation. That means we **are obliged** (we have to go) to attend Mass! This year it “falls” on a Monday. November 2 is All Souls Day. That is a day set aside to honor all of the Holy Souls. It is not a Holy Day of Obligation. Make sure to tell the children to respectfully ask their parents to take them to Mass on the Holy Day. If they do that and their parents refuse to make arrangements for them to go, it is NOT a sin for the child. (Different case for the parents – but do not get into that, please.)

(There is a tradition in the Hispanic community called Dia de Los Muertos – “Day of the Dead.” In that culture they especially honor their deceased loved ones in traditional special ways. I mention this only because a student might ask about it.)

Saints:

- Not only those persons in heaven, whether or not canonized, who lived lives of great charity and heroic virtue, who live now forever with God and share His glory, but also those who have been transformed by the grace of Christ and who reside in full union with God in heaven. Those persons, according to St. Paul, who follow Christ.
 - We DO NOT *worship* Saints! We can pray to them, ask them, to help us to follow Jesus Christ as faithfully as they did. Jesus Himself is the one – and the only one - we worship. He is the “most important” One to whom we pray. He is the One who will always hear us. He is the One who won salvation for us. *We can pray to the Saints and ask their help in following Jesus, but they or any other human being can never take the place of Jesus Himself. Perfect prayer is to the Father, with the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ.*
- A Saint is a person, just like us, who lived an ordinary life and had to do ordinary things. They had the same things to put up with that we do. (Some examples are teasing, school work, temptations, etc.) They did put up with those things in a loving and Christ-like manner – and that shows us that we can, too.
- Patron Saints: there are “Patron Saints” for just about everything! Countries, occupations, health problems, Dioceses, Parishes, - you name it! (The Patron Saint of our Diocese is Saint Augustine and the Patron Saint of our Parish is Saint Francis de Sales.) The day you were born even has a Saint “assigned” to it. There are Patron Saints for Mothers (Gerard, Nicholas of Tolentino, Monica) Students (Thomas Aquinas, Gabriel Possenti), Nurses (Camillus de Lellis, John of God), Athletes (Sebastian), Television (Clare, Gabriel the Archangel), lost things (Anthony of Padua) just about anything you could think of! God gave these “saintly” people to us to be our special examples and models. They are special friends, who we are sure are in heaven with God, to whom we can relate and who can help us follow Jesus.
- We *venerate* Mary and the Saints. (*Veneration* means honor. Honor is different from worship and/or adoration. – this is a very important fact to get across to the students). **We worship and adore only God!**
- Canonization: the official proclamation by the Church that a deceased member of the Church is to be recognized as a Saint and may serve as a model of the Christian ideal for all believers; also the name of the process by which one is found worthy of such recognition. (The Pope, who makes the formal declaration for the Church, can dispense from the usual procedures: two miracles are required for canonization but not in the case of martyrs.)
 - The process for canonization begins in the local Diocese. There is an official stream the process must follow. The person must be deceased for at least five years. (The Pope can “do away with this” if he likes.) The persons’ life and writings are examined to be sure they were, in fact, holy and revealing a Christ-like life. The Church is very careful to make sure that before a person is named a Saint by the Holy Father, his or her life is found to be worthy of veneration and public imitation. (This public imitation is a reason why we can take a Saint’s name when we are Confirmed – because we want to imitate that person!) There are many, many Saints to read about – we can each find one that has had the same type of things that we have.
 - In January of 1983, Pope John Paul II simplified the process the Church uses to recognize someone as a Saint. He put into place an academic-historical procedure that has “Theological Consultors” as the principal figures in the process of canonization. A group called the “College of Relators” has the responsibility for determining the truth about a Candidate’s life. They do this by supervising the production of a critical, documented biography called the “position.” The procedure begins with an interested party (or parties) approaching the local Bishop. Then a report is sent to the Congregation for the Causes for Saints. Then additional research is done to ascertain that the person led a virtuous life or died a martyr’s death. Then, if the person is recommended and the Pope accepts, the person is officially given the title of “Venerable.” The following lengthy procedure is a process of scrutiny by the Advocate of God who examines the life, virtues,

writings, reputation for holiness and reported miracles associated with the potential Saint. If there are objections, they are raised now. There must be two miracles credited to the person's intercession with God.

- This new procedure was implemented to make the process swifter, less expensive, more scholarly, and more collegial (local Bishops now have the entire responsibility for assembling all the relevant data on a Candidate). The system is geared toward producing results. The ideal is to identify what was distinctive about a life, and trust the skills of historical scholarship to ensure that what was distinctive was also authentically Christian.
- The first formally canonized saint was St. Ulrich of Augsburg (by Pope John XV in AD 993) Beatification allows veneration – canonization requires it.
- Seven honors are attached to the canonization:
 1. Inscription in the catalog of Saints and public veneration,
 2. Inclusion in the Church's public prayer,
 3. Dedication of churches in the saint's honor,
 4. Inclusion in the Mass and Liturgy of the Hours,
 5. Day assigned in the Liturgical Calendar,
 6. Pictorial representation,
 7. Public veneration of relics.
- Relics: **(For catechists' information in case questions arise...not to be dwelled upon in class.)** A relic can be an actual part of the body. They are NOT magic – we do not believe in magic! They (relics) are used to remind us of the holy person and their strength when faced with the situations in life. There are different "classes" of relics. A relic is a sacramental.
- For example (first class), article of clothing or some article used by the Saint
 - First Class – a piece of bone
 - Second Class- any object touched to a first class relic

Week Twelve

Nov. 7, 8, 10

Opening Prayer (Hail Mary) / Attendance

Family of God collection

Sirach 7:27, , Jeremiah 1:5, Job 10:8-12, Psalm 22:11-12, Romans 13:7 /CCC 2196-2257/ CCC 2401-2463

- First reconciliation Booklets!
- Back to the Commandments...We continue to focus on the Commandments as directions for discipleship.
- Again, let's ask Jesus to help us be like Our Blessed Mother. Keep relating obeying the Commandments to being a good disciple – like Mary!
- The 4th-10th Commandments focus on our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- 4: Honor your Mother and Father.
 - This Commandment lays the foundation for the social doctrine of our Church.
 - This commands us to respect, obey, and care for our parents, teachers, policemen, superiors and all others. This is the one that tells us to respect all and treat all with the respect of a child of God! It tells our parents and superiors to love, respect and care for the spiritual and worldly needs of children. In a nutshell, it tells us to see the Christ in all of our brothers and sisters throughout our lives.
- 5: You shall not kill.
 - This is an example of the Natural Law that God puts into our heart. All life is sacred- every human has eternal value! Everyone is made in the image and likeness of God – no exceptions! Living this is truly loving our fellow humans. Not always an easy task – but with God it is possible. And if we ask Him, He will guide us and help us to love even

those who do not love us. This means we have to safeguard our own life and welfare and that of others. We must honor all life “from womb to tomb”. There is so much to cover in “this one” – everything from the unjust ending of lives to fist fighting, healthy living-taking care of our body, holding onto anger, seeking revenge, etc. *(We certainly do not want to nurture scrupulosity here – just make the children aware of these things on an age-appropriate level.)*

- 6: You shall not commit adultery.
 - This commands us to be pure in thought, word, and deed. Treat our bodies and every body with respect. Introduce them to the virtue of chastity. Male and female are both made in the image and likeness of God, each with the same God-given equal dignity. Adultery is having sex with someone other than your spouse. PLEASE lovingly get the point across that divorce is NOT a sin. Divorce is a civil matter - it is not our job to judge. If you want /need me to speak with a student regarding this, do not hesitate to ask. There are many “broken” families.
 - Don’t watch “bad” stuff in movies, TV or Internet.
- 7: Thou shall not steal.
 - This is respecting the property and rights of others. Obviously, taking someone’s pencil, bicycle and so on fall under this one. Also, cheating on tests or in games is stealing someone else’s work. Being a good steward of the earth – taking care of the environment and animals and not taking what those creatures (creations) need for survival.
- 8: You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
 - Discuss who “your neighbor” is.
 - Always tell the truth. Never gossip or spread rumors. Always be mindful of another’s reputation, etc
- 9: You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.
 - This and #6 are clearly linked. This gives us the opportunity to awaken the expectation of respect for the truth, and the moral and spiritual dignity of all.
- 10: You shall not covet you neighbor’s goods.
 - This covers jealousy, envy and greed. (Admiring or wanting what somebody else has does not break this Commandment. But this is a good time to plant the seed regarding natural vs. unnatural attachment to the goods of this world.) When the jealousy or desire for what someone else possesses becomes excessive or leads to action is where the sin comes into play.

Week Thirteen

November 14, 15, 17

Opening Prayer/ Attendance

Family of God

Matthew 9:2-8, 18:18 / John 20:23 / CCC 385-87, 978, 1849-50, 1779, 1868, 2858, 761, 431

Reconciliation (With Advent as a time of preparation)

- Let’s really stress the Family of God – doing this is an awesome way to “prepare the way of the Lord”! This coming Sunday is the Feast of Christ the King. It is the last Sunday of our Church year. Next week begins a whole new year! (And Cycle A also begins!) We have this week and next to review the Sacrament of Reconciliation and introduce the season of Advent. We will focus on the Sacrament and then concentrate on Advent in December.
- First Reconciliation Booklets!
- Reconciliation-the Sacrament which, through the mercy and forgiveness of God, a sinner (us) is reconciled with God and also with the Church. It is an awesome Sacrament and we want to really drum up enthusiasm and “drum down” any fear, anxiety, worry.

- Please review what a Sacrament is. A Sacrament is something made by Jesus and given to us so that we are able to “touch and feel” him, be closer to Him, and receive grace. A Sacrament is a real way to share in the love and the life of Jesus. Grace is getting a share in God’s life and love. OR the old fashioned but still appropriate: “A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.” Please reinforce the fact that each Sacrament is a very special meeting with God. We get to experience Him in a very special way when we receive Sacraments.
- Rules: Briefly review our discussion of the Commandments as guidelines for good discipleship and rules of right and wrong; refresh the idea of having rules in our lives. (Discuss rules in school, family, on teams, clubs, in Religion Class, etc.) How do we feel about these? Are they good or bad? Are they necessary? Why or why not? When we do something wrong, how does it feel? Is it possible to do something wrong without knowing it? How?
- When we do something wrong and we know it is wrong, how does that make us feel? Prepare and discuss some scenarios.
- What do we do after we have done something wrong?
- Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience. Sin is a failure of genuine love for God and our neighbor. Sin is a division - it is a break in the unity of our Church! Sin is putting ourselves before God. There are many different kinds of sin. There are spiritual sins and carnal sins.
- Sin is a personal act. Sin affects everyone around us. We have a responsibility for the sins of others when we cooperate in them, by not stopping the sinful act or approving the sinful act.
- *Bearing the above in mind, please realize that your students may have trouble distinguishing between mistakes and sin. Children often act without thinking – so we must try to remind them to stop and think before they do things. Ask them “why” they do things and “what” they think the results will be. This will help them to eventually realize that the intent to do wrong is essential to a sinful action. Please help them to understand that thinking about – intending – something and then doing it is different from mistakes. Give your students an example of something you did by accident. Explain that you did not want it to happen; it was not your choice. (Like spilling milk, breaking a window while playing ball, taking your friends crayons when you thought they were yours – these are all “accidents” and, therefore, are not sins. If you dump the milk on purpose, throw a rock through the window, take crayons knowing they are not yours - well, this shows intent.) Remember, there must be intent; you must know something is wrong and with that knowledge and intent go ahead and do it. *We want to inform our students – not scare THEM TO DEATH.* But we must try to get the point across and instill a “sense of sin.” This will help them develop morally for the rest of their lives! God loves us unconditionally and always wants us with Him. Our job is to help them know the difference between right and wrong, to realize that accidents are not sins, that when we deliberately choose to do what is wrong and turn away from God, we sin.*
- God loves us so much that He gave us free will and we get to choose whether to accept Him or reject Him. That is why it is so critical to develop the sense of relationship with Him. When we know Him and His love, we will want to be with Him. This will help us always to develop a right conscience!

Week Fourteen

Nov. 21, 22, 24

Opening Prayer/Attendance

Is 43:25 / Ps 103:12 / John 1:29, 20:21-23 / Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36 /James 5:16

(all of the references from last week apply.)

Explain the “Living Nativity” and send home information / permission to participate packets

- First Reconciliation Booklets.
- Review the concept of sin. When we sin – do something wrong intentionally – it has an effect on everyone around us. For instance, if one of our friends says something mean to us it makes us sad or grumpy. When we are sad or grumpy, we are not as happy and pleasant to those around us and

that makes them sad, etc. – and so it goes. Sin really does have the ripple effect! ***The gift given to us by God to help us know right from wrong is called conscience.***

- Explain Contrition (sorrow) – When we do something wrong we hurt our relationship with God. When we do something mean to someone, it hurts that person, God, and many others as well (the above mentioned ripple effect!) It hurts us, too. Our conscience is that little voice inside that lets us know that something is wrong – or right. When we do something wrong, we should be sorry. When we are sorry we have *contrition*. When we apologize to whomever we have hurt, we “make up” with them. In other words, we reconcile with them!
- Forgiveness – STRESS THAT GOD WILL ALWAYS FORGIVE US IF WE ARE TRULY SORRY!
- Explain Examination of Conscience (Perhaps write one as a class. Be sure that they look at the good things they do as well as the not-so-good!) Help them to develop the habit of doing this every day – a great thing for all of us to do. It helps us to see where we need to improve and it also helps to reinforce, on a regular basis, the things we are doing properly! Examples: When I make choices, do I think first about what God wants me to do? Have I used the name of Jesus in respectful ways? Have I obeyed the grown-ups who take care of me? Have I been a GOOD FRIEND TO OTHERS? Have I treated others fairly? Have I always told the truth? Have I shown kindness by what I say and do? Have I helped people in need? (I also have a number of “Conscience Exams” for various age levels – just stop in to look through them.)
- Review Examination of Conscience. Discuss what a Penance is for. Attached is a possible example worksheet. It can be adapted for your age group. Discuss what penance they think would be appropriate for various sins.
- Review the form for going to Confession. Role play! Have the students be teacher, penitent, priest. Make sure they understand that going to Confession is a good and positive activity! (Bear in mind that at Religion Class we usually experience “Communal Penance”. Explain what that is – AND WHY.)
- Have them practice their Act of Contrition and going to Confession. Remind them that the “penance part” is part of the Sacrament and must be done to complete the Sacrament. (A good way to review the prayers on each level may be a prayer relay.)
- Discuss the possibility of using the Family of God project as a Christmas gift sort of thing. This can vary by class. Perhaps fill some stockings; maybe bring in the goodies for Christmas dinner, etc.
- Wish them a Happy New (Church) Year. Wish them a Happy Thanksgiving. Remind them there is no class next week. We will see them again on December 5, 6, and 8.

Week Fifteen

Nov. 28, 29, Dec. 1

Thanksgiving Break

NO CLASS THIS WEEK!

Week Sixteen

Dec. 5, 6, 8

Reconciliation

Opening Prayer / Attendance

Family of God Project.

First Reconciliation Booklets. Reminder Flyers to go home with students!

Follow Directions for your class to receive the Sacrament.

Grades K, 1, and 2 will discuss what is going on with the older students. Stress the happiness of “making up,” setting things right,” etc.

Begin the discussion of Advent.

Please give Grade 2 students the Reconciliation Reminder Flyer.

- Grades 3-5 discuss their experience of Reconciliation. Celebrate being “back with the Church”!
- Others grade will have a “Reconciliation Festivity” to mark the happiness.

Week Seventeen

December 12, 13, 15

Opening Prayer / Attendance

Family of God Box! (Award for the “Best” (most prolific!) Family of God Box.

Bar 5:1-9 / Phil 1: 4-6, 8-11 / Luke 3: 1-6

- Advent. This season has a double meaning. It is a season to prepare for Christmas when God’s first coming to us is remembered. It is at the same time a season when that remembrance directs our mind and heart to the waiting for the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time. The word “advent” is taken from the Latin word for “the coming,” and has some pagan origins. According to some religious practices, one of the pagan gods came to dwell in the temple at a certain time each year. The feast that honored their god was called “adventus”. The temple was normally closed, but on “adventus” it would be opened. Sometimes a statue of a god would be moved to a larger place than the sanctuary where it was usually kept. The “adventus” feast time was an anniversary of the god returning. In yet another context, the “adventus” referred to the celebration of the anniversary of the coming of the emperor. So it was very convenient to use the word “advent” in another context – the context of the coming of the Son of God into the temple of a human nature for His visit. The word gradually became limited to describe what was considered the only real coming – the coming of the Lord!
- The actual season of Advent came into being around the mid sixth century. The orientation of the season was completely different from the season of Lent. (Lent was already an “established” season at the time.) At first, the Advent season was determined to be the six Sundays leading up to Christmas. Pope St. Gregory the Great (591-604) changed the time to the four Sundays leading up to Christmas – maybe in an attempt to clearly mark a difference between Lent and Advent. At the time, Christmas was more of a secondary feast, especially in Rome. As time moved on, Christmas began to take on more and more importance. Advent evolved in the same manner, becoming more solemn, and its orientation changed from being a time to prepare for Christmas to a time of preparing for the Second Coming. In our time, the season of Advent embodies both – a waiting for the glorious return of our Lord (first and second Sundays) and also the immediate preparation for the feast of Christmas (third and fourth Sundays). CCC teaches that when the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, it (the Church) makes present the ancient expectancy of the Messiah because by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for His second coming.
- The most popular symbol of Advent is the Advent wreath. It traditionally has three purple or blue candles and one white or pink. The differently colored one signifies the mid-point; it is the “rejoice” candle because the waiting is almost over. Using the color blue helps to clearly show that Advent is different from Lent!
- The season of Advent marks the beginning of a new Church year. So begins our study of this new Liturgical Season. Good time to introduce “our “calendar. (The idea that we as Church have our very own calendar is cool!) The different seasons have different colors and celebrate special and unique times. This will help them to understand why there are differently colored banners, vestments and accoutrement during different times.
- Liturgical Year / Seasons: The celebration of the mysteries of the Lord’s birth, life, death, and Resurrection throughout the year in such a way that each year becomes a “year of the Lord’s grace.”
- The Seasons:
 - Advent: Approximately four weeks before Christmas.

- Christmas: From Christmas until the Sunday after Epiphany.
- Lent: From Ash Wednesday until the Triduum.
- Easter: From Easter until Pentecost.
- Ordinary time: All of the rest not included above.
- Colors of the Church (Liturgical) year:
 - Red: Used for Feasts of the Holy Spirit and Martyrs; Passion Sunday, Good Friday, Feasts of the Apostles and Evangelists (Except John).
 - Purple (Violet): Used during Lent and Advent, except for the middle Sunday of each... *Laetare* in Lent and *Gaudete* during Advent.
 - Rose: (NOT pink!) Used on the third Sundays of Lent and Advent .
 - White: Used on major Feasts of the Lord (Except His Passion), and of Mary, for Feasts of Saints who did not die as martyrs, for the seasons of Christmas and Easter.
 - Green: Used on all not included above.

Optional: Black or Purple can be used for Masses of the dead, however white is commonly worn. The USCCB's Committee on Liturgy has no official stand on this color. Here at St. Francis de Sales, blue is worn during Advent to distinguish it from the season of Lent. (This is a very old idea – nothing new or radical here! It has been done for some 700 years.) (The color purple signifies repentance.)
- The Season of Advent – this is a time of anticipation and preparation. Explain the Advent Wreath and what the different colored candles mean.
- Advent is a time to celebrate the ancient sense of expectancy of the Messiah. Early Church was expecting the Second Coming with great fervor. So when we spend this period of time in 2010 preparing to celebrate the birth of Christ, let's try to renew /refresh – or perhaps begin – a whole-hearted, enthusiastic desire for the Second Coming! Talk about how important the season is because it helps us to get ready for the great gift of Jesus on Christmas. Make/hand out the Advent Calendars and talk about using them every single day during the Advent season. Keep one for yourself. You will refer to these during every class before the Christmas break. Let the children express their thoughts, feelings, etc.
 - Hand out Living Nativity Reminders!
 - If your class has “special plans” for the Family of God box – remind them that next week is the last class before Christmas!

Week Eighteen

December 19, 20, 22

Opening Prayer / Attendance

Family of God

Advent / Incarnation

- Finish “last week” – review the Liturgical Calendar, Seasons, etc.
- We are preparing for a very important Feast. (While it is extremely “BIG”, Christmas is not the most important day of the year. Easter is!) Discuss a Savior who loves us so much that He became one of “us.”
- **Incarnation – the Word made Flesh!** The CCC defines *Incarnation* : *the fact that the Son of God assumed human nature and became man in order to accomplish our salvation in that same human nature. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, is both true God and true man, not part God and part man.* (461,464)
- Jesus is fully human and fully divine (Hypostatic Union). This is a hard concept to understand. Reassure them that they will understand this completely when they are with God in heaven. Jesus is 100% divine and 100% human. He is Eternal. He has always been! He always will be!
- Discuss the fact that Jesus was a person like them in every way but sin. He knows what it feels like to feel how good a hug can feel. He also knows what it feels like to get picked for the team

– or to not get picked. He knows what it is like to have friendships. Because of His humanity, He knows how we feel about things. That is why we can talk to Him about anything – and He understands!

- As we see all of the “signs of the season” like Christmas trees, wreaths, and get excited about the secular parts of the season – let us stress the importance of the true meaning of this holiday! Jesus loves us so much that He became one like us...What an incredible gift! Let us try to give Jesus a gift – the gift of our love. Discuss ways to do this. How can we be more loving? What can we do for Jesus this Christmas?
- Please review Discipleship/Commandments and how living the way the Lord wants is the way to have the best Christmas ever!
- Merry Christmas – and we will see them back on the ninth of January, 2011.