

Virtues in Practice



Faith ♦ Hope ♦ Charity

PARENT GUIDE

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Cover image: Photograph of Blesseds Louis and Zelie Martin, parents of Saint Therese of Lisieux. Louis and Zelie are the second married couple to be beatified as a couple. Image courtesy of [Carmel of Mary and Joseph, Varroville, Australia](#). Used with permission.

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Faith ~ Hope ~ Charity

PARENT GUIDE

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF ST. CECILIA CONGREGATION
Nashville, Tennessee

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

VIRTUES IN PRACTICE—GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

Virtues in Practice (VIP) is a program for children in grades pre-kindergarten through eight to grow in virtues and see the virtues as concrete expressions of their Catholic faith. It is set up in such a way that a whole school studies the same virtue each month, to provide a whole-school (and at home, whole-family) focus. The program covers 27 virtues over a three-year cycle. These three years emphasize and are named for the three theological virtues.

- The **YEAR OF FAITH** focuses on Catholic devotions and the idea that “faith works” (Gal 5:6), by a school-wide emphasis on service projects.
- The **YEAR OF HOPE** emphasizes study skills, because in order to fulfill God’s plan for our lives we need to develop the talents He has given to us.
- The **YEAR OF CHARITY** emphasizes community, particularly in regard to students’ interactions with one another, because “he who does not love the brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20).

Each month children in grades PK-8 learn about the same virtue, but primary, intermediate, and middle school students learn about different saints. In this way, students who are in the program throughout their elementary school career will have a basic introduction to a virtue at the primary level with one saint, cover the same virtue again in more detail at the intermediate level with a different saint, and delve into a deeper meaning of the virtue at the middle school level with a third saint. It is a great idea for parents to reinforce these saints as heroes by asking their children to tell them about the saints they are studying each month. Although the virtue is covered with more depth in the upper grades, the same definitions for each virtue are used at all grade levels, so that students become familiar with the particular meaning of each virtue.

Virtue is not something just to know, but to do. *Virtues in Practice* emphasizes role-playing in the classroom so that students can practice how to act when using a particular virtue, as well as monthly projects designed to help students grow in the virtue of the month by practicing it in real situations. These projects rarely involve making a product, but usually entail a discussion and a behavior goal to help the child develop the particular virtue. In grades PK-5, students complete a project each month with the help of their parents. Students in grades 6-8 may complete their projects with parents or with friends. In all grades, a simple form is signed by parents and the student, then returned to school to tell which project was chosen and to reflect on the student’s progress in the virtue for the month. A small completion grade is given to hold students accountable for this assignment.

Since parents are the primary educators of their children, *Virtues in Practice* respects their role by placing individualized conversations about a child’s character in the care of the parent. Home projects are not meant to dictate the role of a parent. Parents may choose to create their own project for any month, or may use the suggested list of projects provided as a resource. *Virtues in Practice* is most effective when parents model the virtue of the month, make references to it, or even choose to do one of the projects themselves. Why is the home component tracked with forms? The strength of any lesson is doubled when it is reinforced both at school and at home, and there is strength in numbers—it is easier for a student to work on achieving a behavior goal when, in one way or another, “everybody’s doing it” because it’s required. For all students, but especially middle school students, the need to sign a form provides parents with

an “excuse” to ask their child to work on certain behaviors or discuss difficult topics. Requiring this form shows that your child’s school values growth in virtue just as it values the many other projects and activities for which the school uses grades and forms. The school may send home a form each month along with a list of projects, or there is a sample form that can be printed from the back of this guide (page 48). Following this sample form are pages for notes which may be completed at the discretion of parents. When children are infants we take delight in noting their physical growth; what a treasure it would be to keep a log of notable moments in their spiritual growth as well!

Age-Appropriate Definitions: What is Virtue?

The following definitions are found in the inside cover of student workbooks and will be used in class:

PK-Kindergarten: *A virtue is a good habit.*

If we listen to Jesus, He will help us to make good choices. If we listen to Him over and over, we get used to making good choices. Then being good is easy, which makes us happy!

Grades 1-2: *A virtue is a good habit.*

A good habit is called a virtue. A bad habit is called a vice. Habits grow by practice. God always gives us the grace to choose and do what is good. If we think about what is right and open our hearts to God, we will make good choices and grow in virtue. Virtues make us free, happy, and holy.

Grades 3-5: *A virtue is a good habit.*

If we practice thinking about what is right and opening our hearts to grace, we make good choices and develop virtues. If we often do things that are wrong we develop bad habits, or vices. Vices can trap us. Virtues free us to be our best selves, which makes us happy and holy.

There are three virtues that are called *theological virtues*. These virtues are given to us by God, lead us toward God, and open our hearts for God to live within us. We receive these virtues in baptism and develop them as we grow in holiness. They give life to all the other virtues. The theological virtues are *faith, hope, and charity*.

There are four virtues that are called *cardinal virtues*. “Cardinal” is from a Latin word that means “hinge”, like the hinge on a door. All the other virtues rely on these. The cardinal virtues are *prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance*.

Grades 6-8: *A virtue is a good habit.*

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

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

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

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

Age-Appropriate Definitions: Who are Saints?

The following definitions are found in the inside cover of student workbooks and will be used in class:

PK-Kindergarten: *A saint is a person who is in heaven.*

All the people in heaven are called saints. If we listen to Jesus and make good choices to follow Him, someday we will be happy with Him forever! The saints in this book are people we know for sure are in heaven.

Grades 1-2: *A saint is a person who is in heaven.*

God wants us all to become saints in heaven. When the Catholic Church tells us we can be sure a certain person is in heaven, that person is a *canonized* saint. These saints loved God very much and led lives filled with virtue. They give us good examples of how to get to heaven and we can ask them to help us with their prayers.

Grades 3-5: *A saint is a person who is in heaven.*

The Catholic Church *canonizes* some saints. "Canon" means list; canonized means someone is added to the list of saints. One of the first steps in the process for canonization is an investigation to see if the person lived a life of "heroic virtue". In the last step of the process, the Church prays for a miracle through the intercession of the person. *Blessed* and *Venerable* are titles for people who are almost canonized. The Church gives us canonized saints as role-models and intercessors, but every single one of us is called by God to be a saint.

Grades 6-8: *A saint is a person who is in heaven.*

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

of people devoted to the cause.

Steps of Canonization*:

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

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

VIRTUES FOR THE YEAR OF
Charity

September: **CHARITY**

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

October: **FRIENDSHIP**

—sharing a mutual love that seeks the good of the other

November: **COURTESY**

—being thoughtful of others

December: **PURITY**

—keeping your soul free of sin

January: **FORTITUDE**

—being brave and strong in face of trials

February: **PRUDENCE**

—making good decisions in specific circumstances

March: **RESPECT**

—recognizing the dignity of all people

April: **FORGIVENESS**

—pardoning those who offend you

May: **RESPONSIBILITY**

—being reliable in your duties and accountable for your actions

INTRODUCTION TO THE YEAR OF CHARITY

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (1 Jn 4:7-8)

"Love is patient, love is kind. . . faith, hope, love, remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor 13)

"'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' [Jesus] said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and foremost commandment. The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'" (Mt 22:36-40)

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn 4:20)

"From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith . . . an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom." (Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, #25)

". . . let us consider the saints, who exercised charity in an exemplary way. . . The saints are the true bearers of light within history, for they are men and women of faith, hope and love." (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #40)



The theological virtue of charity is given to us in baptism. It allows us to love God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. Like any other virtue, we must grow in charity by practicing charity. Saint Paul reminds us that no matter how great or how glorious our deeds, if they lack charity, these good deeds are empty, while Saint John reminds us that the true test of our love for God is how we treat our neighbor.

There is a widespread concern regarding bullying in education today. Cruelty between students is especially distressing in the environment of the Catholic school, in which all are called to love one another in imitation of Christ. Many schools have addressed this problem with bullying prevention programs. Yet these types of programs often place an exclusive emphasis on only one, negative aspect of student behavior, instead of focusing on the development of desired behaviors. Likewise, there is a risk that in focusing on the negative behaviors, students might be given a label that is not necessarily accurate. *Virtues in Practice* avoids labeling children, and focuses instead on behaviors, specifically, the virtues, taking the approach that moral formation is the first means for preventing bullying.

The *Virtues in Practice* Year of Charity seeks to foster love of God and love of neighbor. Scripture and tradition teaches us to protect the weak (virtue of fortitude) and to have respect for every individual. Gleaning the wisdom from contemporary research, *Virtues in Practice* lessons include role-playing, I-messages, assertiveness training (fortitude and prudence), reporting

(covered within the virtue of purity), naming/identifying behaviors (covered under friendship), and other social skills taught in secular bully-prevention programs. Contrary to the popular meaning of the word “charity”, study of *Virtues in Practice* this year is not limited to service projects, food collections, or other social justice outreach. In the Year of Charity, we focus not on loving people on the other side of the globe, but on loving the person next to us—which is usually more difficult! In the Year of Charity, a Love of Neighbor survey may be given to assess relationships between students. Voluntary discussions groups for parents/students/teachers may be held to identify problems and discuss ways to create a culture of charity at the school. Guest speakers may be invited to address students. Buddy programs, peer mediation, or programs inviting older students to present topics to younger students may be initiated.

Developing charity requires divine grace and is best learned by a good example: first, by learning to better know and love the God Who is Love, and secondly, by parents and teachers who model a life of charity. Let us strive together to love our neighbor by speaking of others only in kindness, especially within the hearing of the children. Recognizing that aggressive behavior is, in many ways, a spiritual problem engrained in our culture, members of the school community are strongly encouraged to join together to pray this year for all the school’s efforts to deepen in the virtue of charity. The graces from this prayer are needed to open hearts, to protect leaders, and to beg the healing that only Our Lord can provide. Above all, let us show the children that God is first and foremost in *our* lives, by developing our own habits of daily prayer, weekly Mass, and eliminating any obstacles in our relationship with God.

HOME PROJECTS FOR SEPTEMBER

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

Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Gertrude

1. Discuss performing secret, random acts of kindness. Try to do one each day at home or at school. Tell only your parents about it (unless it's one for them!).
2. Pray the aspiration "Jesus, I love You!" softly or silently throughout the day. Choose a signal to remind you, such as every time a bell rings (to change classes at school, the telephone at home), every time you pass through a doorway, or every time you sit or stand.
3. Practice sacrificing for others. Give up a treat or do a good deed, then close your eyes and pray "Jesus, I love You and I love (name) for You."
4. Practice being the leader for prayers (grace before meals, bedtime, etc at home). Keep your shoes under your bed to remind you to get on your knees and pray before bed and when you wake up!

Grades 3-5—Saint Vincent de Paul

1. Be the first one in your family to be ready for Mass each Sunday this month.
2. Each night, ask other family members about their day.
3. Clean out your closet and donate some items to charity.
4. Commit to offering one sacrifice to God each day. Let your parents help you keep track.

Grades 6-8—Venerable Laura Vicuna

1. Discuss priorities: Is God a clear first in life? Do other people or activities impede your relationship with Him? If so, what can you do to prioritize?
2. Choose a regular time to stop and make a quick visit to the Blessed Sacrament during this month, such as before sports practices.
3. Think of the person who you like least in your class. Don't tell who it is since that would *undermine* charity! Commit to praying for that person every night BY NAME. Ask God to help you love that person and see Him in that person. Does anything happen to your relationship with that person, or even to the way you think of them, during the course of the month?
4. With your friends, choose three people at school who do not eat at your lunch table. Get to know them this month, even if it means some of you have to take turns eating elsewhere. If you're really brave, try to get to know people you find hard to like. Often, you'll be surprised to find out how much you have in common, and by knowing them better, you'll get along better.
5. Rally your friends to be lunch/recess monitors. Make it your personal goal to look after anyone you see being left out, for love of God ("as you did for them. . . you did for Me").
6. With a friend, pledge to show more interest in your brothers/sisters/parents at home this month. What specific goals can you make? Give updates on your progress and keep each other honest!

HOME PROJECTS FOR OCTOBER

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

Grades Pre-K-2—Saints Benedict & Scholastica

1. Practice sharing your friends. Tell someone else how fun it is to play with your friend and invite them to join you.
2. Do you copy any bad things that your friends do? Break that habit yourself and help your friend practice the good habit that is the opposite. Good friends copy good habits from each other.
3. Practice making friends. Smile and ask the other person what things he or she likes to do.
4. Are any of your friends sometimes mean to you? What do you do when they are mean to you? Practice politely telling them, “I don’t like that” and “please stop”.

Grades 3-5—Saints Basil and Gregory

1. Who are your closest friends? What virtues are strengths for them? This month, make a goal of telling your friends which virtues you admire in them the most. This is a great way to encourage them to grow even more in that virtue.
2. Each night this month, pray for your friends by name.
3. Discuss: Who are your friends? Do you talk about important things together, and help each other to do what’s right? Try doing that once per week.
4. How often do you talk to people who do not eat at your lunch table? Set a goal number of times per week and discuss your success.

Grades 6-8—Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

1. Discuss your friendships. Do your friends help you to be yourself, or do you find that you have to act differently when you are around them? True friends will love you for who you are. This month, take mental note of who among your friends most encourages you to be yourself, even if the two of you disagree at times.
2. Would you do something mean to keep your friends? This month, pay attention to whether your friends are habitually kind to each other. How do your friends talk about someone when he or she isn’t around? See if you can raise the bar.
3. How often do you ask/give advice to your friends? Take mental note this month of how often you share advice and whether the advice is based on faith and solid values.
4. Do you feel like you don’t have any friends in your class? Discuss what you have in common with the different kids in your class. Do you really know them? If you really feel that they share little in common with you, is there a club, group, or team you could join? What are your interests?
5. Invite a friend to spend the night on Saturday and join you for Mass Sunday morning. Discuss the homily and how you can help each other to grow in holiness.

HOME PROJECTS FOR NOVEMBER

COURTESY—being thoughtful of others

Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Martin de Porres

1. Choose some of the following courteous phrases and practice using them this month:
 - “Please”
 - “Thank you.”
 - “You’re welcome.”
 - “Excuse me.”
 - “What would you like to do?”
 - “Would you care for any?”
 - “Good morning”
 - “How are you today?”
 - “Let me get that for you.”
2. Practice making eye contact with people who talk to you, and listening to what they say.
3. Practice how to politely interrupt a conversation. Stand nearby and wait; if the person doesn’t speak to you, say “excuse me” softly, then step back and wait until they answer (unless it’s an emergency!).
4. Make a list of things or spaces that are shared by all members of the family. Discuss: what is the thoughtful way to leave it, if you know someone else will use it after you?

Grades 3-5—Venerable Solanus Casey

1. Practice frequently offering to help parents and teachers (and remember to say “thank you” when they do something for you).
2. Practice being on time or slightly early for appointments as a courtesy to others.
3. Choose three table manners to practice this month.
4. Set the table with your best dishes one night, and practice table manners.
5. Discuss the most polite things to say when answering the phone and taking messages. Make it your responsibility to answer the phone this month, even if others are home.

Grades 6-8—Venerable Pierre Toussaint

1. Share your views on courtesy. Is it old-fashioned? What makes some people so courteous? Is it possible to be *too* courteous, or courteous in the wrong way or for the wrong reason? What is the reason for the different courtesies between men and women? How can you live out your views?
2. Interview an elderly friend or relative. Ask him or her what common courtesies they think have been forgotten in today’s society. Choose a few to practice this month.
3. Do you notice a difference between how you speak to people online, texting, etc. and how you speak to them in person? Are you respectful of each person’s dignity, in person or otherwise? Which kind of conversations are better held in person? Which should never be held at all? Make a list of positive and negative ways people communicate on the internet and agree on one improvement. Practice it for the month.
4. With a friend(s), look up a Code of Chivalry. Do any of these attitudes apply today? Write a code of courtesies ideal for a today’s man or woman. Choose at least one of the courtesies to focus on this month.

HOME PROJECTS FOR DECEMBER

PURITY—keeping your soul free of sin

Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Dominic Savio

1. Practice ways to end a fight before it starts.
2. Discuss sin and why we want to avoid it. Pray together and tell God how much you love Him and ask Him to never let you turn away from Him! But remember that God always forgives us.
3. Practice quickly closing your eyes and praying “Jesus, help me!” when you feel like telling a lie, getting angry, or doing something you know is wrong. Role-play using this prayer in some tempting situations.
4. Discuss telling vs. tattling: Tattling is when you are trying to get someone in trouble, but telling is when you know someone is in trouble (doing something that is bad for them) and you are trying to get them OUT. What kinds of things are tattling? What kinds of things are telling?

Grades 3-5—Saint Agnes

1. Plan a special way to celebrate the Immaculate Conception on December 8th. Discuss the purity of Our Lady and how we are called to imitate her by being pure tabernacles for Christ.
2. Discuss what to do if a friend is trying to talk you into doing something you know is wrong (cheating, excluding someone, stealing, etc.) Practice ways to avoid the temptation and save your friend from it too.
3. Praise modesty: For girls, praise modesty in clothing; for boys, praise as “real men” those who protect women and look away when they see a woman who is immodestly dressed. Watch TV together and take turns identifying clothing and actions that are beautiful, and clothing and actions that are disrespectful of the person.
4. If you think God might be calling you to the joy of loving Him with an undivided heart as a priest or a Sister, pray to Our Lady this Advent and ask her to guard your vocation so that you can bring Christ to the world like she did.
5. Discuss the effects of music on our emotions. Listen together to songs that make you happy, sad songs that ease your sadness, sad songs that make you more depressed, and excerpts of songs that make you feel angry or cruel. Can the kind of music we listen to affect our relationship with God? What kinds of music are good for us?

Grades 6-8—Saint Maria Goretti

1. Discuss how men and women are portrayed on commercials, in magazines, in music, in video games. Is it beautiful, or base? Is it realistic? How can you avoid what isn’t good for your soul? How can you change the current culture?
2. Discuss what to do when inappropriate images or messages pop-up on the internet or in email.
3. Discuss qualities to seek in a spouse. What would make someone a good spouse after 30 years?
4. Discuss where TVs, computers, and phones are located in your homes. Can this have an impact on purity? Why?
5. Be *truly* mature: Throw out any music or video games with foul language or “mature” content.
6. Work with a friend to make a list of 5-10 ways you can protect your purity of heart and body during your teenage years. Don’t forget to include some spiritual helps such as prayer and devotion to Mary. Ask Our Lord or Our Lady to show you which practices you should adopt.
7. Choose a practice to help you when you see, hear, or think of something impure. For example: look in another direction and pray “Jesus, Mary, Joseph, give me a pure heart.”

HOME PROJECTS FOR JANUARY

FORTITUDE—being brave and strong in face of trials

Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Bernadette

1. Name some things that make you scared. What small step can you make this month to be stronger when you're afraid?
2. Fortitude means being strong enough to stand up for others. Is there someone in your class who is hurt by others? Describe what happens. How can you be strong enough to help? Talk to your parents about how you can help this month.
3. Are you strong if other kids are bothering you? With your parents, practice saying "please stop" in a way that is polite but strong, and use it this month if someone does something that bothers you. Remember to be kind to everyone; sometimes kids are trying to make friends, and they don't *know* that they are bothering you or hurting your feelings.

Grades 3-5—Saint Joan of Arc

1. Is someone bothering you or hurting your feelings? Be brave enough this month to tell them "please stop" so that they know you don't think it's funny. If that doesn't work, try talking to them about it privately (see the PRUDENT acronym for next month.) If that doesn't work, report it!
2. Talk to your parents about the definitions of passive, assertive, and aggressive behavior. Proper assertiveness is part of exercising fortitude. Can you come up with other words for passive and aggressive? Talk about how both passive and aggressive behaviors are not respectful of others' dignity.
3. Practice using one of the methods in the FORTITUDE acronym to the right to stand up for someone else who is being mistreated.

Grades 6-8—Saints Paul Miki & Companions

1. How would you feel if you found out you were insulted, and one of your best friends just listened, and said nothing? Which of the ideas in the FORTITUDE acronym best fit your age and personality? Use them this month.
2. As you grow older and prepare for high school, the social scene can have higher risks that could change the course of your life. In addition to "just say no" to drugs, what are other things you and your friends don't want to get peer-pressured into doing? Resolve now to help each other to be strong.
3. Is someone pressuring you to do things you don't like, or things you think are wrong? Stand up for yourself this month. Often we wimp out because we feel alone. Look around: are there others who share in the problem? Ask them to rally with you.

FORTITUDE:

ideas of how to stand up for someone else

Fine/Penalty

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

Opposite

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

Report it

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

Take over

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

Investigate

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

Talk about it later

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

Understanding

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

Distract

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

Exclaim

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

HOME PROJECTS FOR FEBRUARY

PRUDENCE—making good decisions in specific circumstances

Grades Pre-K-2—Blessed Junipero Serra

1. Practice pausing to THINK before doing things this month. Is this action or word right and good to do? Is it the best thing to do?
2. Practice using I-messages at home ("I felt ____ when you ____, please ____").
3. Practice thinking out loud about decisions: What are your options? What is good about each option? What is bad about each option? What will happen if you choose this one or that one?
4. Choose a person you think is wise (parent, grandparent, older sibling, neighbor, teacher) and practice going to them once each week for advice on a tough decision.

Grades 3-5—Saint John Neumann

1. Discuss the short and long term effects of decisions. Practice thinking through long term effects when you are faced with decisions this month.
2. Discuss "ripple effect" or how your decisions affect other people's decisions and then their decisions affect still other people. Practice thinking through "ripple effects" when you are faced with decisions this month.
3. Befriend a wise neighbor or relative. Get to know the person. Ask about big decisions he or she has made in his or her life. How did he or she choose? What were the results of the decision? Ask advice of this person when you have a tough decision to make.
4. Pause to pray to the Holy Spirit before making decisions. Throughout the month, discuss whether this habit of prayer helps you.
5. Discuss the P-R-U-D-E-N-T way of addressing a problem with a peer (see below). Practice using it this month and share the results.

Grades 6-8—Saint John XXIII

1. What are your priorities in life? With a friend, write a list of your priorities in order of importance. Is there ever a situation where the order of importance changes? Think of situations where you would have to choose between two of your priorities. What would you do?
2. With a friend, discuss a big decision made recently by an authority figure (family, school, or government). How did the decision affect you and did you agree with it? Try to imagine the point of view of the person in authority and how he or she might have arrived at the decision.
3. Discuss the P-R-U-D-E-N-T way of addressing a problem with a peer (see below). Practice using it this month and share the results.

PRUDENT: *speaking privately to solve a problem*

Plan ahead what to say.

Request a private moment.

Utter a prayer.

Describe the deed.

(*Maintain eye contact.*)

Effect on me

Nothing. Wait for a response.

Terms

Sample:

P: Mentally go through all the steps

R: You see the person alone in the hall; ask to talk.

U: As you lead them aside, pray, "Help me, Jesus!"

D: "When you poured out my beaker in lab today...

E: ...it really embarrassed me."

N: (Pause until the other person says something.)

T: "Please don't touch my things again or I'll have to report it to the teacher."

HOME PROJECTS FOR MARCH

RESPECT—recognizing the dignity of all people

Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Jeanne Jugan

1. Dignity means that every single person is worth more than a *billion* dollars, because each one is made in the image of God and will live forever. Think of someone that it is hard for you to like. This month, pray for him or her and ask God to help you see what is good about that person. Tell your parents some of the things you discover.
2. Jesus said that whatever we do to others, we do to Him. Think of someone that it is hard for you to like. This month, when you see that person, imagine that they are Jesus in disguise, and treat Him well!
3. Ask your mom or dad to teach you about a different culture, and what they like about it. Maybe they will even make a meal for you based on that culture!

Grades 3-5—Saint Damien of Molokai

1. Differences make us unique. Sometimes, everybody wants to dress the same way or listen to the same music just because it's popular. If someone doesn't do those things, should they be less popular? Think of an example among your friends of something everybody does just to be popular, and find someone who doesn't do it because it's not what they like. Congratulate them on being themselves, and ask what kinds of things *they* like.
2. If we respect others, we keep boundaries: we don't make people do what we want, or try to find out things that are private, if we think that person has real dignity. Make a list of boundaries, rules of how you should treat someone if you respect them. Are there some items that you forget with certain people? Work on practicing those items this month.
3. Sometimes we tease and joke around with our friends to show affection and other times we tease in a way that has a mean edge to it, that cuts people like a knife. This month, be careful about "teasing". If a person isn't your friend, and you "tease" them, it is probably mean, so stop it this month. Or, if you only tease with your friends, take a private moment to ask one of your friends if the way you tease hurts his or her feelings. You might be surprised. If they say yes, ask forgiveness.

Grades 6-8—Saint John Paul II

1. How is prejudice related to ignorance? Think of a person or a group your friends have a habit of pre-judging, and work together to learn about them this month.
2. Are all stereotypes wrong? Are they all mean? Ask a friend to list stereotypes they think are mean, and those that they think are complimentary. Without looking at your friend's list, make your own list, and compare. In the light of faith, are there stereotypes your friends need to drop? Should you drop all stereotypes or not?
3. The popularity game is often a cruel one that disrespects others. Be honest and make an examination of conscience. Do you respect others less if they don't dress in the way you think is "right", talk, eat, play, etc. in the way you think is "right"? Who decides what way is "right" when it comes to preferences and styles? From your examination, come up with goal to help you grow this month in respect for the dignity of every person.
4. Lack of respect can be linked to poor boundaries. Is it hard for you to take the answer "no" from someone, or do you respect their right to say "no" to what you want? List verbal and non-verbal ways that people say "no". Notice them this month, and show respect by giving people the right to say "no" to you.

HOME PROJECTS FOR APRIL

FORGIVENESS—pardoning those who offend you

Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Patrick

1. Practice saying “I forgive you”. Look for chances to say it this month.
2. Discuss how grudges split us apart and how Jesus wants us to be one. Pray this month that you and your family members can forgive each other so that you can be united.
3. Practice giving someone the benefit of a doubt. When someone seems mean, could there be another reason? Maybe they are hungry or sad about something, etc.
4. Choose your favorite memory of being forgiven and when someone makes you angry or hurts your feelings, pause and think of that memory.
5. Practice cooling down, walking away, praying, waiting, and when you are calm, using an I-message (see February) to tell how you feel. Then forgive the person.

Grades 3-5—Blessed Margaret of Castello

1. Name a few little behaviors of others that annoy you at school or home. Sometimes prudence tells us to help people to solve their problem, but sometimes the fact that it annoys me so much is *my* problem. Decide beforehand that when this thing happens, you will acknowledge it and move on. Practice telling the Lord in your heart: “XYZ doing XYZ is really annoying me—but I forgive him or her.”
2. Discuss Christ’s desire that all of us be one. Division is often a clever tool the devil uses to weaken the Body of Christ. Think of some local examples of things that divide good people. Could this division be overcome by forgiveness? Pray for a forgiving heart for yourself and others.
3. Is there someone you have trouble forgiving? Discuss why and compare to God’s forgiveness. What would it take for you to forgive that person? Work toward making that happen this month.
4. Read together Matthew 5:38-48. Does it make sense? Why does Christ teach this? Make a resolution about one way you can better live Christ’s teaching during this month.

Grades 6-8—Saint Josephine Bakhita

1. “Offend” means someone has violated your rights. We sometimes think someone has violated a right when they have only removed a privilege. What are your rights? When someone really has violated your rights, why should you forgive the person? Is there a difference between forgiving someone and letting a person walk all over you? Is forgiveness a wimpy option? Resolve one way you can better forgive this month.
2. Read up on Saint Josephine Bakhita, Immaculee Ilibagiza, Corrie Ten Boom or other refugees or concentration camp survivors. How did forgiveness help them to survive? What would have happened if they hadn’t forgiven those who wronged them? Pray this month for those who suffer extreme injustice, and when you are tempted not to forgive, compare their situations to your own.
3. Discuss how to ask for and grant forgiveness. What is the difference between saying “I’m sorry” and asking “Will you forgive me”? Are there things that are better not to say when you’re apologizing? Is the response “That’s okay” or “I forgive you” always true when someone apologizes after hurting you? What other ways could you respond to an apology?
4. With a partner, discuss how important it is to forgive those who have hurt us. How does it free us when we forgive others? Write a forgiveness prayer and commit to praying for each other throughout the month to be able to forgive those who have hurt you.

YEAR OF CHARITY

HOME PROJECTS FOR MAY

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

Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Peter

1. This month, practice saying: “I’m sorry, will you forgive me?” for a few pretend situations. Then, use these words when you have done something wrong or hurt someone.
2. Discuss how it feels when someone hurts your heart or body on purpose or accidentally. How does it feel when they say they are sorry and ask forgiveness? How does it feel if they do NOT say they are sorry? Which way do you want to be? How can you do a better job on it this month?
3. Discuss how excuses and lies multiply and make matters worse. Resolve to simply take responsibility for your mistakes this month by saying things like “I did it” or “I made a bad choice”.
4. Take on an extra chore at home this month.

Grades 3-5—Saint Henry II

1. Review the *Act of Contrition*. What is the meaning of each phrase? Pray it together slowly.
2. Discuss excuses. Why do we make them? Role-play situations where you might be tempted to make excuses, but instead choose to tell the plain truth, apologize, and ask forgiveness. Do you feel differently? Fight the temptation to make excuses this month.
3. Resolve to be more faithful this month to a chore or homework and discuss your progress. Be sure to make practical changes of timing, location, or rewards to ensure your success.
4. Go to confession as a family.
5. Use a sticker chart to track responsibility on homework or chores. Name a goal and a meaningful reward, such as quality time with one of your parents.

Grades 6-8—Blessed Bartolo Longo

1. Make a pact with your friend(s) that each of you will use the OWN UP acronym to ask for-giveness from someone you’ve hurt. Share how it goes.
2. Tell your friend(s) of a duty you wish you were more responsible in fulfilling (such as home-work, chores, taking care of your siblings, packing lunch, practicing for a sport). Decide to-gether on an improvement goal and track your progress.
3. Agree that each of you will offer to take over one of your parent’s responsibilities at home, such as cooking for a night (or a week!), helping a sibling with homework, sorting the mail, or cutting the grass. Discuss the results.

OWN UP:

admitting you were wrong and asking forgiveness

OPINION: Ask God His opinion: “Am I in the wrong?” Listen humbly.

WHO: Who did I hurt?

NEXT TIME: What made me do it? What will I do next time?

UNBURDEN: Go to the person. Name the deed you regret. Explain why you did it and what you will do next time. ASK FORGIVENESS.

PAY EXTRA ATTENTION: Watch closely for small ways to show you like that person over the next few days, to mend the relationship.

+
M

(Student First & Last Name)

(Homeroom)

(Month)

(Virtue)

HOME PROJECT

DIRECTIONS: At the beginning of the month, choose a project. Work on it all through the month in order to grow in the virtue. At the end of the month, think about how the project helped you to grow in that virtue. Write your answers on this form and return it to the teacher at the end of the month.

PK-5: Students complete their monthly project with their parents.

6-8: Complete a project with parents or with friends, but parents should still sign the form.

Note: only a completion grade will be given for this assignment.

Project Number: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Alternative Project (describe below):

Parent comments (optional for grades 6-8):

Student comments (may be transcribed for younger students):

Parent Signature

Student Signature

Notes on Child(ren)'s Progress

Child: _____

Virtue(s): _____ Month/Year: _____

Child: _____

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Acknowledgements

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

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

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

~ The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation
801 Dominican Drive
Nashville, Tennessee 37228
(615) 256-5486
www.nashvilledominican.org

For questions related to the *Virtues in Practice* program,
please contact the Office for the New Evangelization at neoffice@op-tn.org.



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

Act of Faith

O my God, I firmly believe
that You are one God in three divine Persons,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
I believe that Your divine Son became man
and died for our sins and that He will come
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe these and all the truths
which the Holy Catholic Church teaches
because You have revealed them
Who can neither deceive nor be deceived.
Amen.

Act of Hope

O my God, relying on Your almighty power
and infinite mercy and promises,
I hope to obtain pardon of my sins,
the help of Your grace, and life everlasting,
through the merits of Jesus Christ,
my Lord and Redeemer.
Amen.

Act of Charity

O my God, I love You above all things,
with my whole heart and soul,
because You are all good and worthy of all love.
I love my neighbor as myself for the love of You.
I forgive all who have injured me,
and ask pardon of all whom I have injured.
Amen.