



**Discover!**  
Finding Faith in Life

The logo is set within a yellow banner with a blue outline. The word "Discover!" is in green, with a magnifying glass icon over the 'o'. The magnifying glass has a blue handle and a yellow frame. The words "Finding Faith in Life" are in black below it.

# Online Director's Manual



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# Welcome

**Welcome to *Discover! Finding Faith in Life*.** This exciting program is designed to help children fully engage in the process of discovering and growing in the richness of their Catholic faith, making deep faith a central part of their everyday lives.

The lessons within the *Discover! Finding Faith in Life* program are designed to foster a clear understanding of the concepts presented through an active-learning approach. This method brings lessons to life in a fun and memorable way through experiential and interactive processes. Core principles of faith are introduced in a manner that allows children to discover meaning and develop understanding while being immersed in solid Catholic teaching and in the prayers and practices that build Catholic identity.

*The Catholic Children's Bible* is the core text of this program, rooting the key concepts of each chapter to important Scripture passages. This serves to promote biblical literacy and an in-depth familiarity with and knowledge of key Scripture stories throughout the Old and New Testaments, including their meaning for us today.

*Discover! Finding Faith in Life* is a program like no other. This Online Director's Manual offers many useful articles that will help you discover, explain, and clarify the riches of this program for catechists and parents. We are confident that by using this program, you will experience faith coming to life for children in a truly exciting way. May we all continue to discover more deeply the riches of our Catholic faith and so help others find the message of the Good News at the center of their lives.

With hopes and prayers for every blessing,  
The Publishing Team at Saint Mary's Press

# Program Highlights

## **The Bible Is the Primary Text**

*Discover! Finding Faith in Life* immerses the children in Scripture by anchoring each chapter in a particular Scripture story. The children use *The Catholic Children's Bible* for each chapter in each grade, and the Bible is the core text of this program. This unique feature promotes biblical literacy and an in-depth familiarity with and knowledge of key Scripture stories throughout the Old and New Testaments.

## **Based on Principles of Engaged, Active Learning**

The lessons are designed to foster a deep understanding of the concepts presented through an active-learning approach. Experiential and interactive processes create energy and excitement for both the teacher and the children, and activities and activity options throughout the program help teachers build a meaningful lesson in a creative and fun way.

## **Child-Centered Design**

Information and activities are presented using the language and experiences of the child to create an ideal environment for real, engaged learning. The program relays core information through activities and discussions that will make sense to the learners in their everyday lives, thus conveying deep meaning and touching their hearts and minds in a significant way.

## **Rooted in a "Discover" Approach**

The name of this program speaks to an energy and excitement that are infused in the learning process. The content helps the children make connections with previous experiences and knowledge and invites them to deepen both as they discover new concepts and practices in the Catholic tradition. Core concepts are structured in such a way that the children can discover meaning for themselves while being immersed in solid Catholic teaching and exposed to the prayers and practices that build Catholic identity.

## **Clear and Practical Structure**

Each grade level is structured in the same manner: four units with five chapters in each unit. Each grade has twenty core chapters plus eight liturgical season lessons, which can be incorporated into the flow of the catechetical year according to each particular program's schedule and needs.



Each grade level has a generalized area of focus (Grade 1: God; Grade 2: Jesus; Grade 3: Church; Grade 4: Covenant; Grade 5: Sacraments), while at the same time spiraling core concepts and foundational understandings throughout each grade level to introduce and deepen meaning for the children at age-appropriate levels.

Of the five chapters in each unit, four of them focus on the four pillars of the *Catechism*. A fifth chapter introduces children to a foundational concept related to one of the seven Catholic social teaching principles.

The unit structure for all grades is as follows:

First chapter	<b>Believe</b> (First <i>Catechism</i> pillar)
Second chapter	<b>Celebrate</b> (Second <i>Catechism</i> pillar)
Third chapter	<b>Live</b> (Third <i>Catechism</i> pillar)
Fourth chapter	<b>Live: Catholic Social Teaching</b> (Third <i>Catechism</i> pillar / Catholic social teaching)
Fifth chapter	<b>Pray</b> (Fourth <i>Catechism</i> pillar)

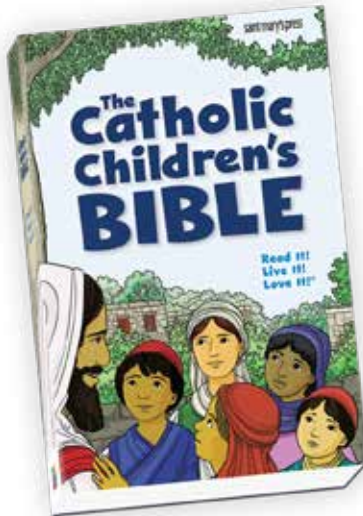
## Family Support

This program is designed to extend beyond the classroom and into the home. Each activity booklet across the program includes a family page that helps families follow along with the Scripture story and the core concepts presented in the current lesson.\* In addition, this program offers home guides for catechetical programs in which parents or guardians are responsible for a portion of the direct teaching of content. These easy-to-use guides are structured to ensure success in relaying key concepts of faith.

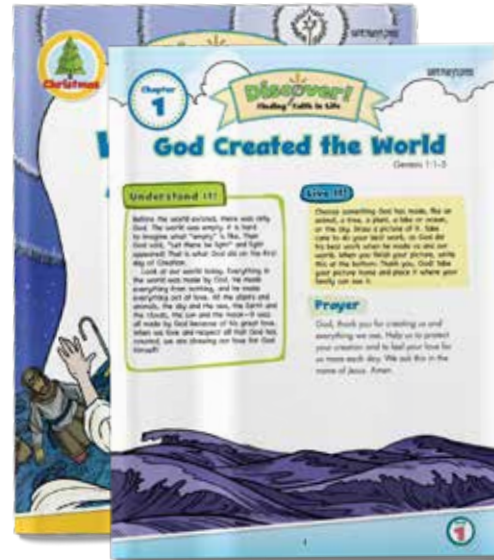
\*Spanish versions of all family pages are available as part of this Online Director's Manual and in the online resources for each teaching guide.

# Program Components

## Grade 1



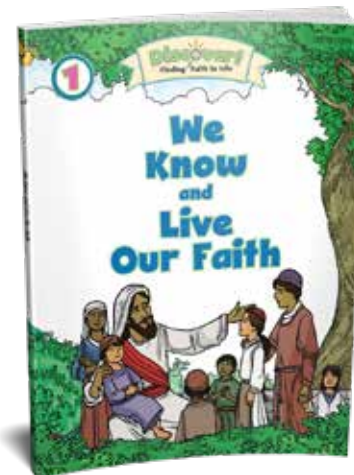
*The Catholic Children's Bible*



Activity Booklets



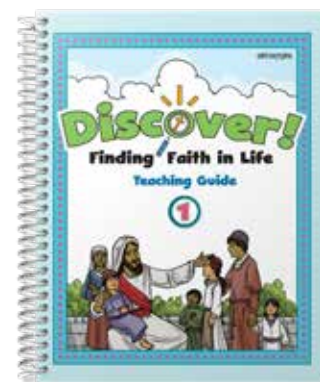
Special Feature



*We Know and Live Our Faith Resource*

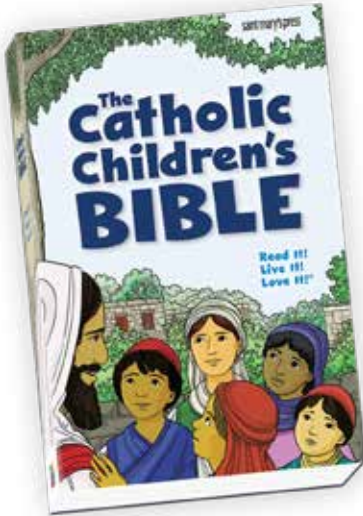


Backpack

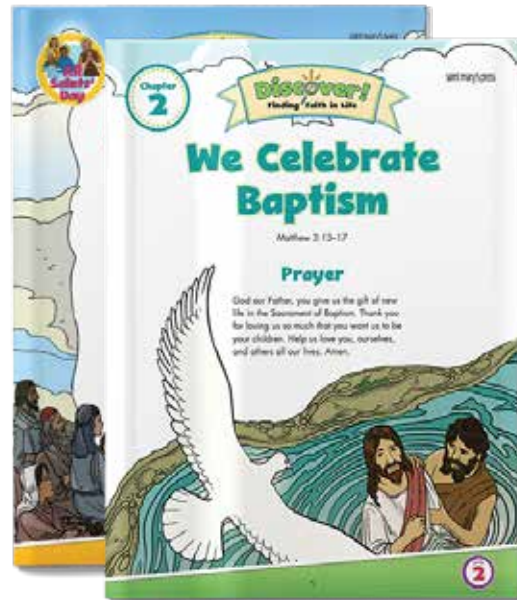


Teaching Guide

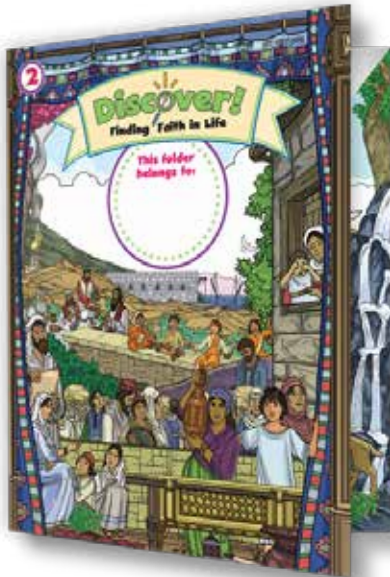
## Grade 2



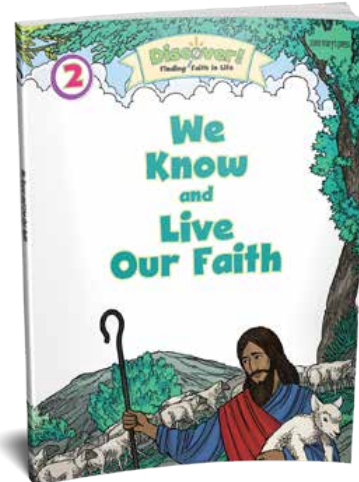
*The Catholic Children's Bible*



Activity Booklets



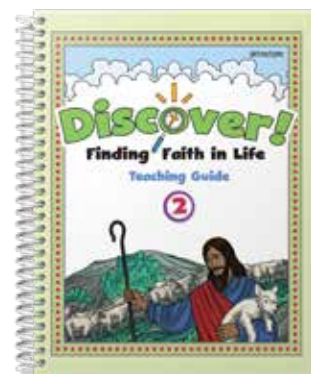
Special Feature



*We Know and Live Our Faith Resource*



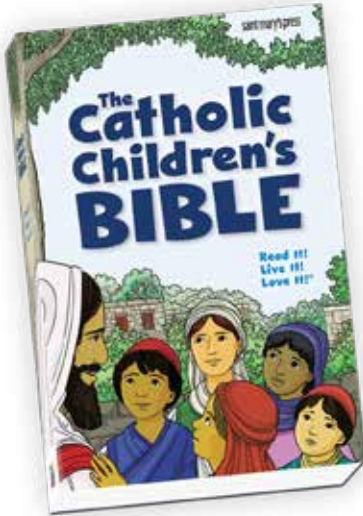
Backpack



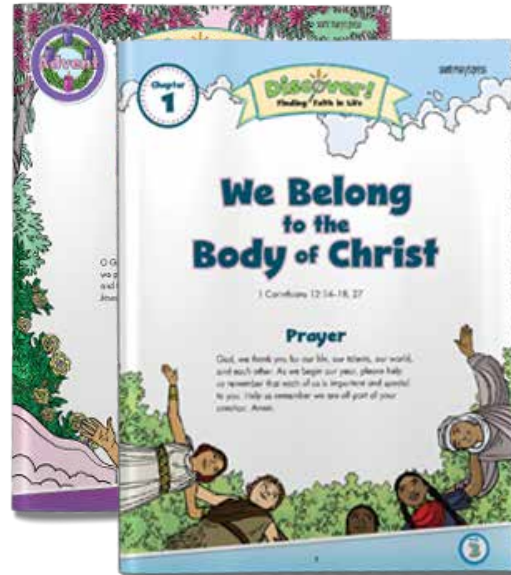
Teaching Guide



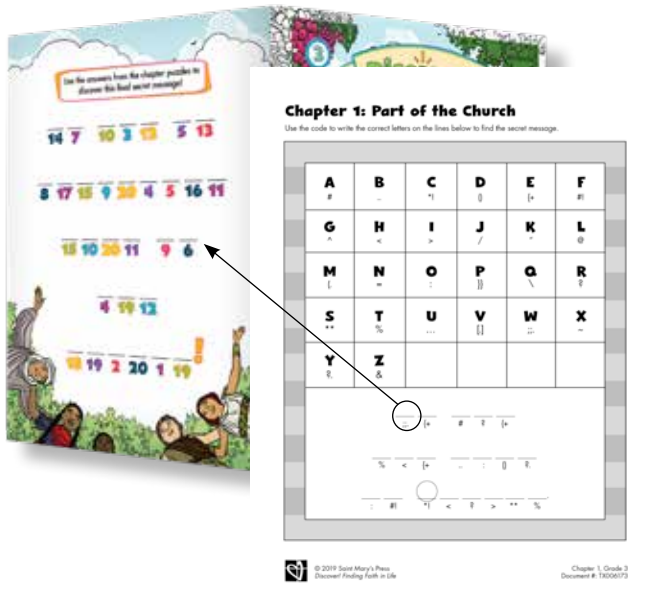
## Grade 3



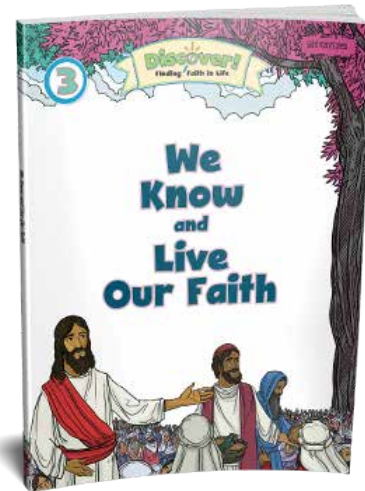
*The Catholic Children's Bible*



Activity Booklets



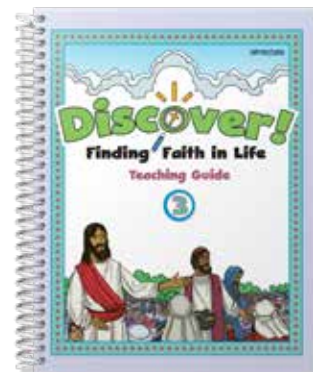
Special Feature



*We Know and Live Our Faith Resource*

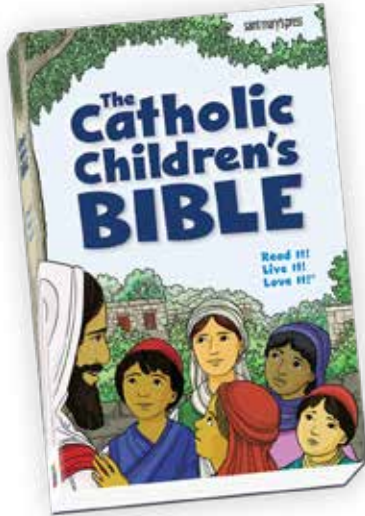


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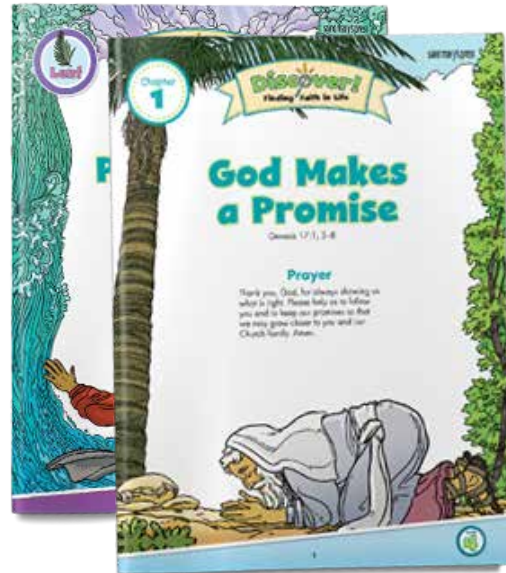


Teaching Guide

## Grade 4



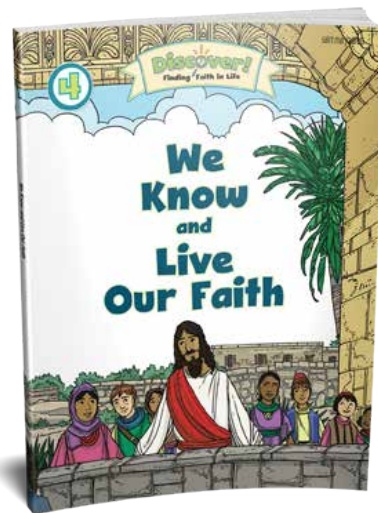
*The Catholic Children's Bible*



Activity Booklets



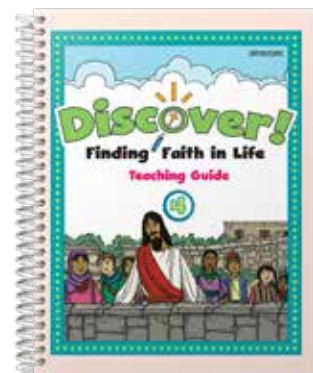
Special Feature



*We Know and Live Our Faith Resource*



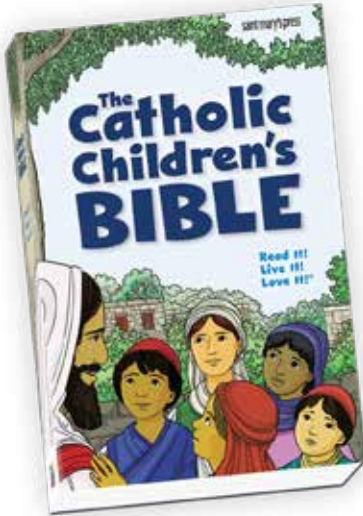
Backpack



Teaching Guide



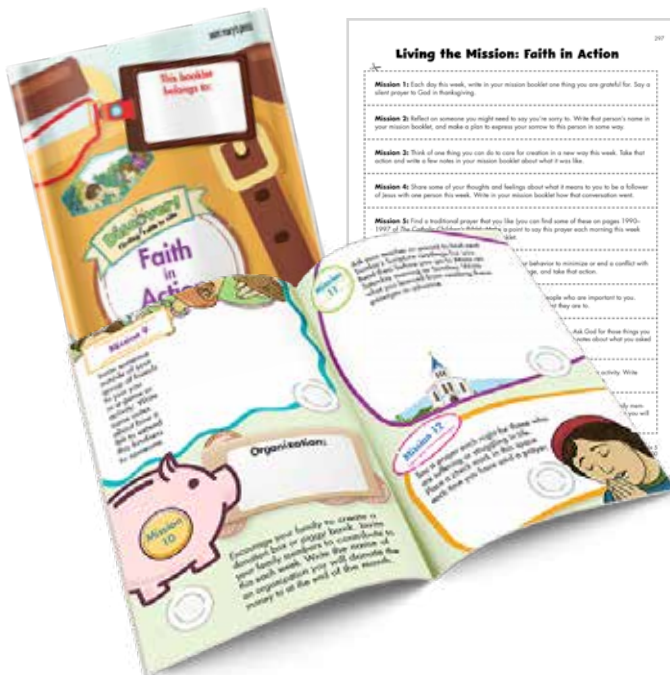
## Grade 5



The Catholic Children's Bible



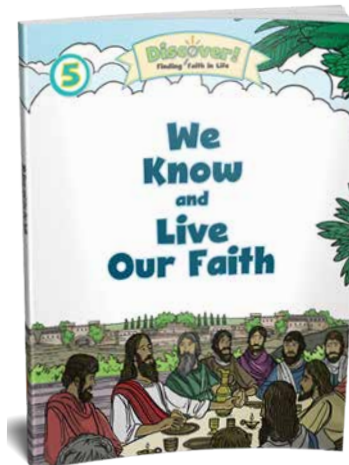
Activity Booklets



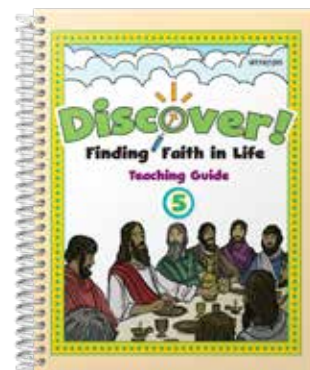
Special Feature



Backpack



We Know and Live Our Faith Resource



Teaching Guide

# Understanding the Components

## Teaching Guide

The **Lesson at a Glance** page provides key information for lesson preparation.

**Scripture Focus** identifies the Bible passage used for the lesson.

Two **Music Suggestions** are offered for possible use with the lesson.

**Lesson Goals** shows the key desired outcomes of the chapter.

**Catechism Pillar** identifies the pillar of the Catechism focused on in the lesson.

**Catechism References** provides background support for the teacher.

### Lesson at a Glance

#### Scripture Focus

Genesis 1:1–5

#### Lesson Goals

- to recall that God created all things
- to identify that God created everything out of love
- to state that it is important that we respect all of God's creation

#### Catechism Pillar

Believe

#### Catechism References

279–301

#### Key Words

creation, respect

#### Music Suggestions

- "God of Wonders," by Catholic Children Worship (Catapult)
- "All Creatures of Our God and King," by Sing 'Em Again, *Favorite Vacation Bible School Songs for Families*, vol. 7 (Group Publishing)

#### Materials Needed

- *The Catholic Children's Bible* and chapter 1 activity booklet
- a board or poster to write on
- a piece of paper for each child
- crayons or markers
- materials for any of the additional activities you choose

**Materials Needed** lists all items that will be used in the lesson.

**Key Words** identifies the terms that are introduced in the lesson.

#### Background Reflection

The best gifts we receive are often handmade and not store-bought. Handmade gifts are unique and hold significance both to the giver and the receiver. The love of the giver's heart is revealed in the special care taken to create the gift. These tangible gifts of love we receive from another are only a small reflection of the gift of God's love revealed in creation.

Each Sunday at Mass when we pray the Nicene Creed, we proclaim God as "maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible" (*Roman Missal*). Everything we see in creation came into existence through God. And just like the gifts we give and receive show love and care, everything God creates reveals his amazing love.

This chapter focuses on God as creator of all things. God brought everything into creation as an expression and a sharing of his infinite love. The more we can see God in creation, the more we can help children to know God as creator of life and giver of love.

**Background Reflection** offers quick, easy-to-read insights about the theme of the chapter.



### Get Ready! (10 minutes)

#### Opening Prayer

- Invite the children to turn to page 1 of the chapter 1 activity booklet.
- Take time to review how to make the Sign of the Cross.
- Begin prayer by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross. Then say, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." Allow about 10 seconds of silence.
- Read the prayer on page 1 of the activity booklet to the group. Invite the children to say "Amen," and then close with another Sign of the Cross.

#### Engage Activity

- Invite the children to share some of their favorite things in nature. You may need to give them examples, such as flowers, animals, water, and trees.
- Encourage the children to share their favorite things, and write them (or draw a quick picture of them) on the board or in another place where the children can see.
- Ask the children if they know who created all of these wonderful things. (God)
- Explain that today's lesson is about God's creation. Tell them that when we speak of creation, we are talking about all of the things that God has made.



### Dive In! (15 minutes)

#### Scripture Focus

- Invite the children to find Genesis 1:1–5 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (page 21). Point out the title at the top of the page, and read it to the children. Explain that the first few pages of the Bible tell a story about God creating the world. Tell the children that you will just read part of this story for now.
- Read the Scripture passage to the children. Then ask the children several questions to check for comprehension, such as the following:
  - What did God create on this first day? (light)
  - What did God call the light? (day)
  - What did God call the darkness? (night)
- Summarize the other days of Creation briefly for the children by mentioning what was created (Genesis 1:6–2:4): day 2—sky and water, day 3—land and plants, day 4—sun and moon, day 5—birds and sea creatures, day 6—people and animals, day 7—God rested. Remind the children that after God created these things, he looked at them and was pleased with what he saw.

The **Get Ready!** part of the lesson begins with an opening prayer and an activity that will spark interest and create excitement in the children.

The **Dive In!** part of the lesson invites the children to interact directly with *The Catholic Children's Bible* and learn important concepts through key Bible stories.

the artwork on page 22 of *The Catholic Children's Bible* (page 21). Point out the title at the top of the page, and read it to the children. Explain that the first few pages of the Bible tell a story about God creating the world. Tell the children that you will just read part of this story for now.

page 2 of the activity booklet and complete the

on page 1 of the activity booklet, or have a

summarize what they just heard, asking them key questions to check for comprehension.

points with them:

anything, there was only God.

from nothing. God's power alone made things

ation is a story of how God shares his love with us, and respect all of God's creation.

1 of the activity booklet, or have a volunteer

read it.

- Provide the children with paper, and invite them to draw a picture of something God has made. If they don't finish their drawing in the allotted time, encourage them to finish it at home.

#### Tell It!

- Ask the children to share what they recall about the story of Creation.
- Invite them to use the activity on page 2 of the activity booklet to help them remember some basic points.



### Discover! (25 minutes)

#### Core Learning Activity

##### Imagine If . . .

- Create a space where the children can sit together on the floor for this activity.
- Invite the children to close their eyes. Ask them to imagine if God had not created light. Explain that there would be no sun to see during the day and no moon to see at night, and everything would be dark. Tell them to open their eyes now.
- Have the children cup their hands around their eyes to create pretend binoculars to look through. Ask them to imagine what it might be like if God had not created the water for us to drink or bathe or play in. Ask them to imagine what it might be like if God had not created the sky to see clouds, stars, and the sun. Invite them to share how that might look.

The **Discover!** part of the lesson presents key content through an engaging learning activity and a core teaching section.

The **Core Teaching** part of the lesson relays key information that supports the lesson goals.

### Core Teaching

- Explain how God created everything out of love, using the following as suggested points:
  - Love is about providing for and caring for another person. We know that God's creation gives us many wonderful things, and we know that this is one way God shows his love and care for us.
  - When we create something, like a drawing or a card, we create out of love. We want to share something special from us with another person. Creation is God's gift of love to us.
  - The more we can see all that God has created around us as gifts, the more we can grow in our ability to know God's love.
- Tell the children that when we love all that God has created, we are showing our love to God since he created it all.
- Explain to the children that because every part of God's creation shows us God's love, we must **respect** all of creation. Tell them that *respect* means "caring for," so we must care for animals, plants, and one another.
- Tell the children that it is important that we care for and don't hurt or damage what God has made. Remind them that we wouldn't like it if someone damaged the art or gift we made, so we want to show how important God's creation is to us by using great care with all that he created.
- Ask the children some questions to check for comprehension, such as the following:
  - Who created the water, land, animals, and people? (God)
  - When we care for God's creation, we are showing our love and respect for whom? (God)
- Invite the children to turn to the activity on page 3 of their activity booklet and complete it. When they have finished, tell them that *all* of the pictures show ways we can care for God's creation.
- Have the children turn to page 4 of the activity booklet. Read the "People of Faith" section to the group, and add any other information you know about Blessed Julian of Norwich. Encourage the children to say, "Blessed Julian, pray for us," during the next week.

The **We Know and Live Our Faith** resource provides additional content that can be used to support the lesson.



### We Know and Live Our Faith

The following article and activity in the *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource correspond to concepts introduced in this lesson:

- "God Made You and Loves You" + activity, pages 6–7

Read the selections aloud, or invite a volunteer to read, as time allows. Check for understanding by asking several questions. Then invite the children to begin the activity, or have them complete it with their families at home.

**Additional Activity Options** is a reminder that each lesson offers three alternative possibilities for the core learning activity.

- Invite the children to repeat the following statements after you, to show thankfulness for creation:
  - Thank you, God, for creating light.
  - Thank you, God, for sky and the sea.
  - Thank you, God, for land.
  - Thank you, God, for all the plants.
  - Thank you, God, for creating birds, fish, and all the animals.
  - Thank you, God, for creating people, especially me.
  - Thank you, God, for reminding us to rest.

### Additional Activity Options

If the core activity would not work for your group for any reason, you may choose to use any of the additional activities on page 49 in its place.

The **Go!** part of the lesson invites the children to recall everything they have learned and ends with a closing prayer.



### Go! (10 minutes)

#### Lesson Wrap-Up

- Invite the children to think back over all the different things they did in this lesson, and invite volunteers to share some of the key things they learned.
- Ensure that the following points are made:
  - God created all things.
  - God created everything out of love.
  - It is important that we respect all of God's creation.
- Ask the children to place the chapter 1 sticker in the correct location on their Bible covers.

#### Closing Prayer

- Begin prayer by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross and saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God," followed by a few seconds of silence.
- Invite each child to name one thing she or he is thankful for.
- Play one of the suggested songs, if you have time, to further support the lesson.
- Read aloud the prayer on page 1 of the activity booklet, pausing at various points so the children can repeat after you. Close with the Sign of the Cross.

The **Additional Activities** are alternative options for the core learning activity. They may also be used to extend or supplement the lesson as needed.

## Additional Activities

#### Materials Needed

- pipe cleaners, three or four for each child

#### What Can We Make? (15 minutes)

- Give each child three or four pipe cleaners, and tell them they have 3 minutes to create something.
- Allow a few minutes so that volunteers can share some of the things they created. Then collect the children's creations, and tell them you will give them back at the end of the class. Clear the space of all extra pipe cleaners.
- Tell the children that they are now going to make something else, but give them no supplies. Wait for a few minutes to see their reactions.
- Remind them that God made things from nothing, but that is because he is God. Explain to them that people cannot make art, cook, or build anything with nothing. Only God can create the world from nothing.
- Explain that we should be thankful that God loves us so much that he created us and the whole world around us.

#### Materials Needed

- multiple pieces of paper, each with a simple picture of an item from nature

#### Creation Charades (15 minutes)

- Prepare ahead of time multiple pieces of paper with simple pictures of items from nature, such as a dog, a bird, a tree, a plant, water, the sun.
- Explain to the children how to play the game of charades. Tell them that they have to act out something without using words, only using their bodies. Give the children an example by acting out one of the pictures and inviting them to guess what you are acting out.
- Invite volunteers to come up to the front of the room, and give them a piece of paper with a picture on it. Have the rest of the class try to guess what the volunteer is acting out.
- Play several times, and remind the children that all these things were created by God. Explain that we can thank God for all of the wonderful things he created, including ourselves.

#### Materials Needed

- a computer with internet access
- a computer projector
- paper and crayons or markers

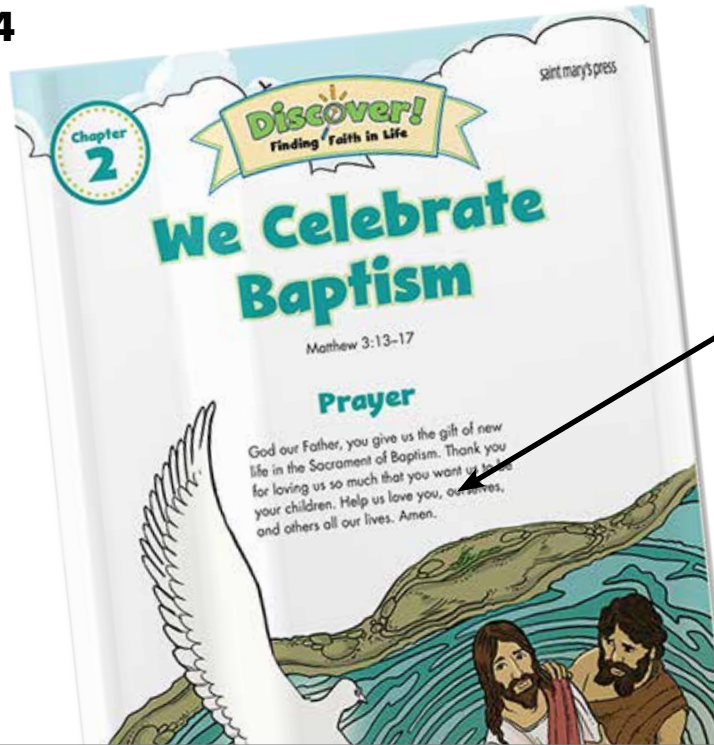
#### Creation! (15 minutes)

- Show the video "Creation (Genesis 1-2)" (YouTube, 3:49). Tell the children that this cartoon retells the story of Creation that is in the Bible.
- Invite the children to share their reaction to the video and their favorite part.
- Have the children choose one of the days of Creation (they can look at page 2 of the activity booklet to see what was created on what day) and draw a picture of God creating the things that were created on that day.
- Invite volunteers to share and explain their drawings with the large group.
- Say a quick prayer of thanksgiving to God for all of creation.



# Activity Booklets

## Grades 1–4



Each activity booklet begins with a **Prayer** that is used as the opening prayer for the lesson.



Page 2 (on left) features an activity that relates to content introduced in the Bible.

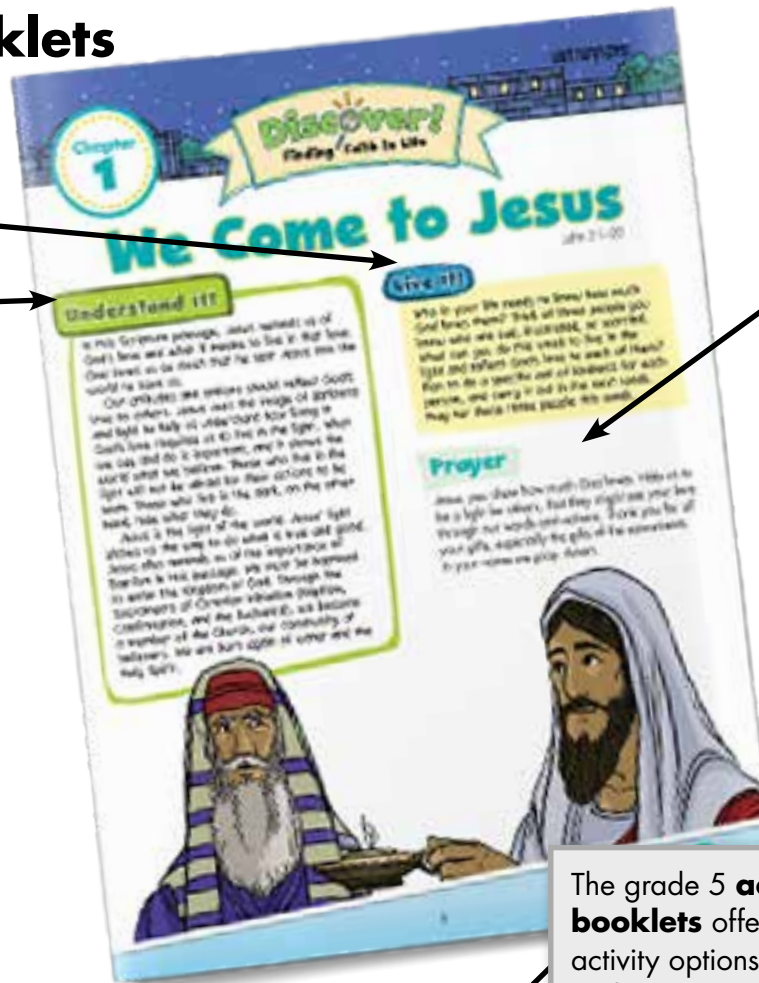
Page 3 (on right) features an activity that relates to the core teaching content for the chapter.

# Activity Booklets

## Grade 5

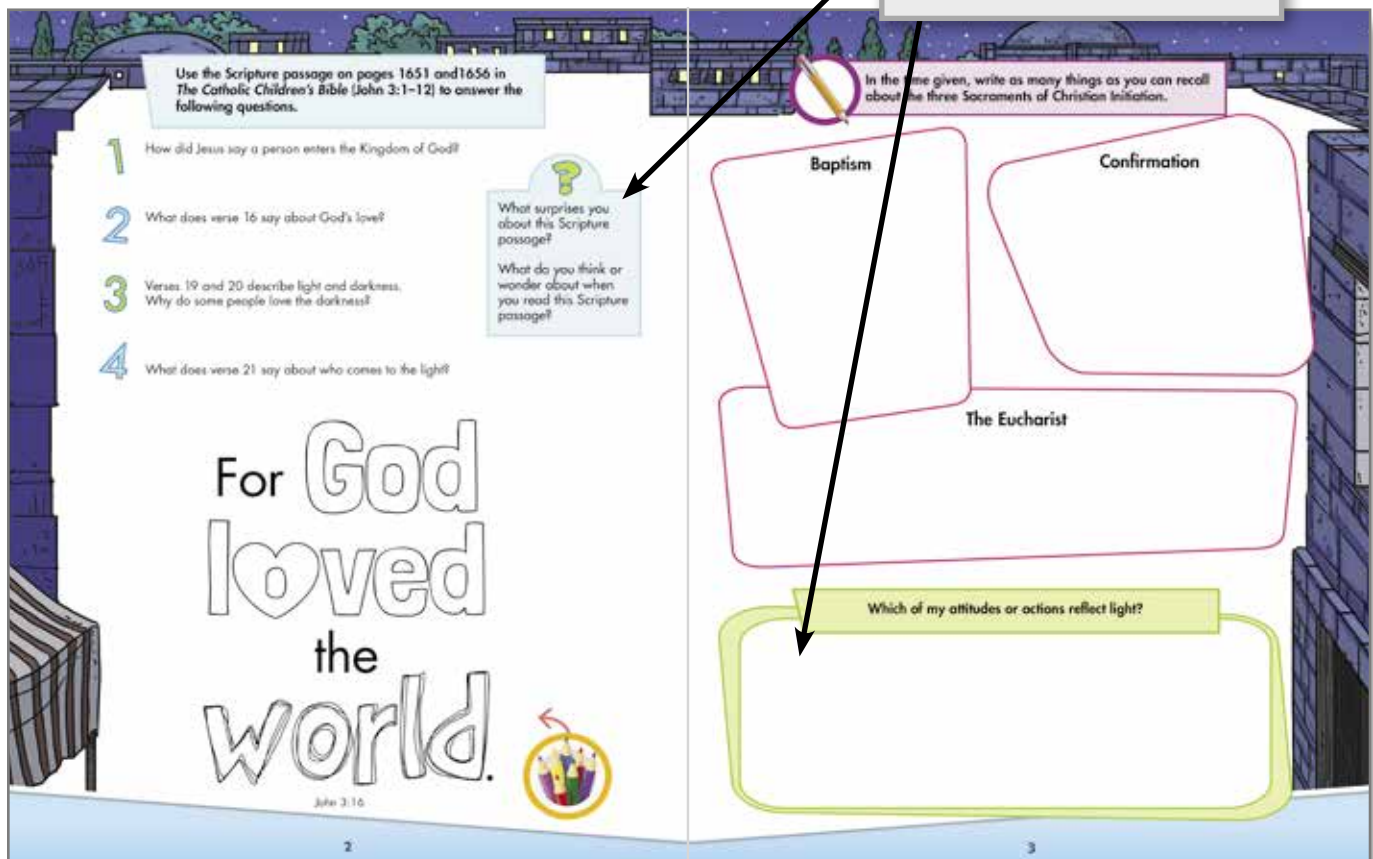
### Understand It! and Live It!

content appears on the opening page to deepen the understanding of the Scripture passage.



Each activity booklet begins with a **Prayer** that is used as the opening prayer for the lesson.

The grade 5 **activity booklets** offer additional activity options on pages 2 and 3.





# Activity Booklets

## Family Pages

### Grades 1 – 5

The **Family Page** provides families with helpful information about the chapter and ideas to bring the lesson to life at home.

## Family Page

### Background Reflection

God's love is perfect, never changing or swayed by anything we do. God created us from his love and desires us to remain in his love for all time. In the New Testament, we learn that God loved us so much that he sent his only Son to be with us and to teach us how to live. We celebrate God's love as the Church, a gathered community of faith.

This chapter offers a deeper understanding of what love is through seeing the everlasting love of our God. The true, eternal love of God is not something we can earn but is a gift freely given.

Take some time to reflect on how you celebrate God's love through the way you worship, pray, and serve. Share your own experience of the depth of God's love as you help your child understand God's love for him or her as God's beloved child.

### Family Activities

- Discuss some of your favorite family religious celebrations. This discussion might include the reception of sacraments by family members, the parish community's liturgical seasons, or preparing for Sunday Mass. Share what makes these celebrations special to your family and explain that by taking the time to celebrate we grow in our love for God.
- Watch the video "VeggieTales — My Day" (YouTube, 2:42) together. Invite your child to share some things that he or she is thankful for that happened throughout the day. Discuss how God's love might be visible in some of these things.
- Read together the Featured Story on page 1780 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (Romans 8:35, 37–39). Invite your child to tell you what he or she remembers about the meaning of this Scripture passage.

**People of Faith** introduces the children to saints and other holy people who are models of faith.

### People of Faith

#### Saint Paul the Apostle (first century)

Paul was changed after meeting the Risen Jesus on a journey. He went from being against Christians to getting baptized and teaching and writing letters about Jesus to others. The feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul is January 25.

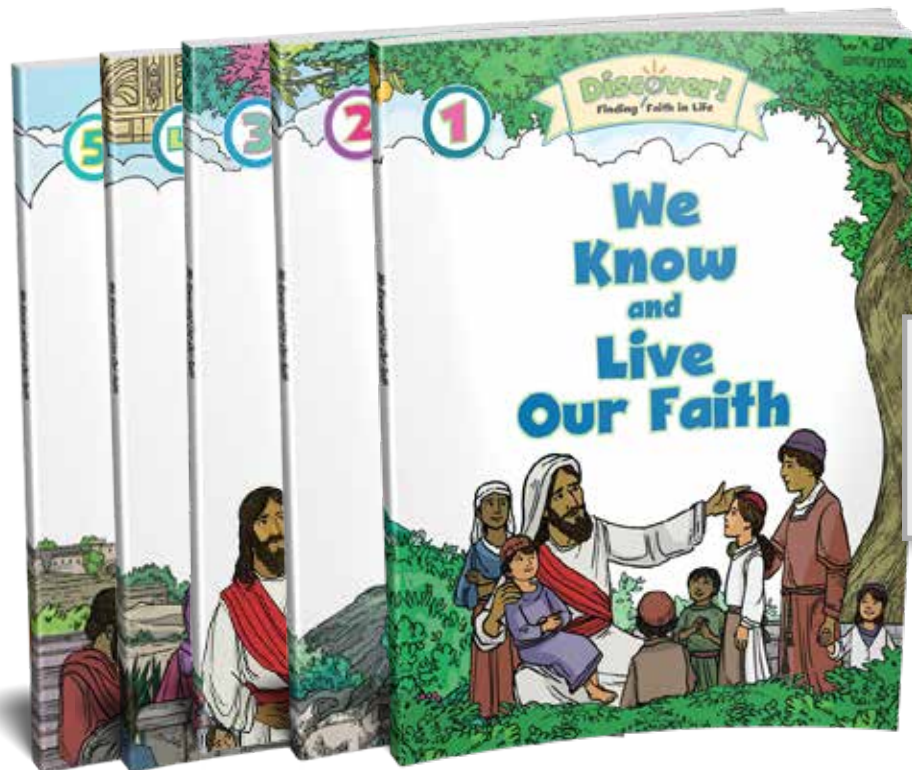
### Prayer

*Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.*

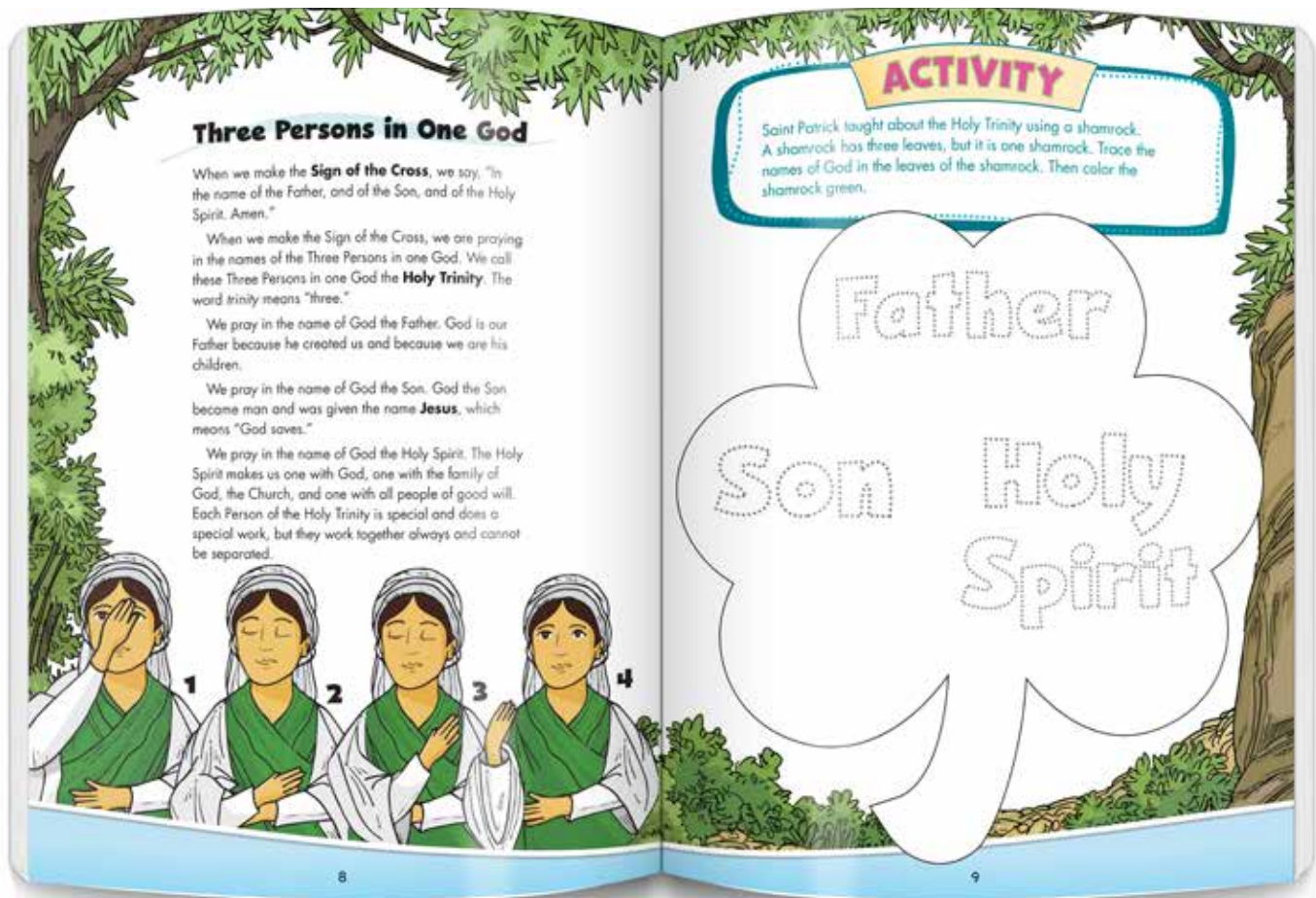
God, you love us so much that you want to share all of creation with us. Thank you for making the world and everything we see! Amen.



## We Know and Live Our Faith



This resource provides an additional opportunity for the children to learn about their faith. It can be used as part of the session or at home with the family.





# Special Features



Seek and Find Stickers

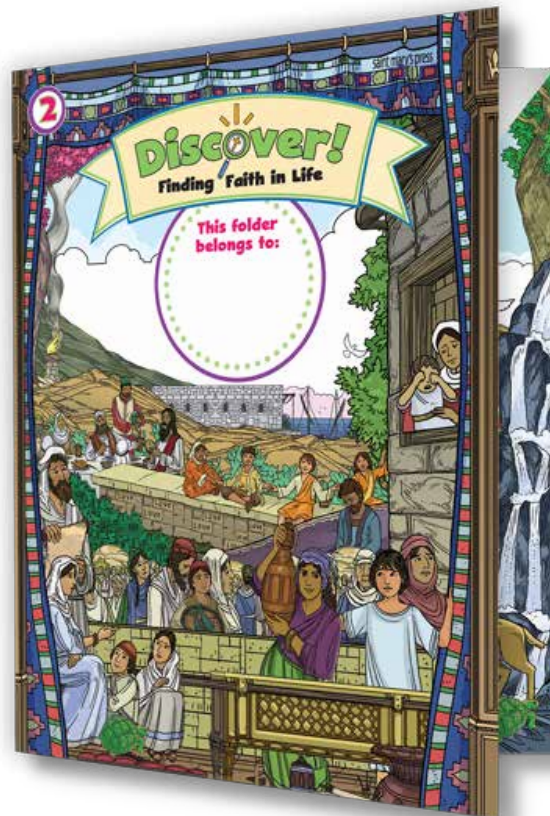
Seek and Find Sheet

## Grade 1

At the end of each of the twenty core lessons, the children will be encouraged to take a sticker and find where it belongs on the Seek and Find sheet in their folders. Each week they will complete a different scene from Scripture.

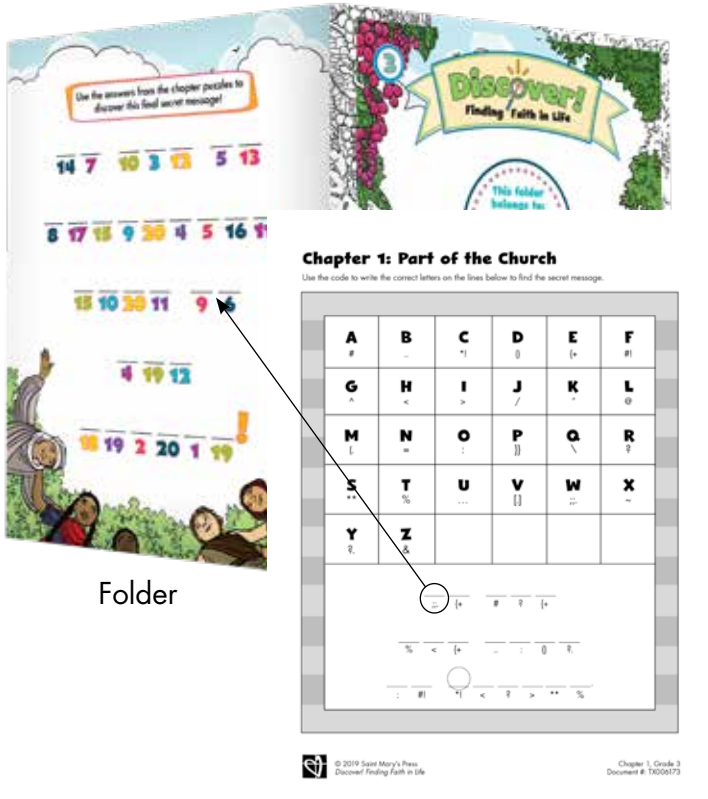
## Grade 2

At the end of each of the twenty core chapters, the children will be given a specific image to look for on their folders. It will be hidden among many other images, so they will have to look carefully!



Folder





Folder

### Grade 3

Each of twenty core lessons ends with a **puzzle handout** for the children to complete. They will use a part of their answers on these handouts to reveal the master puzzle on the back of their folders.



Folder

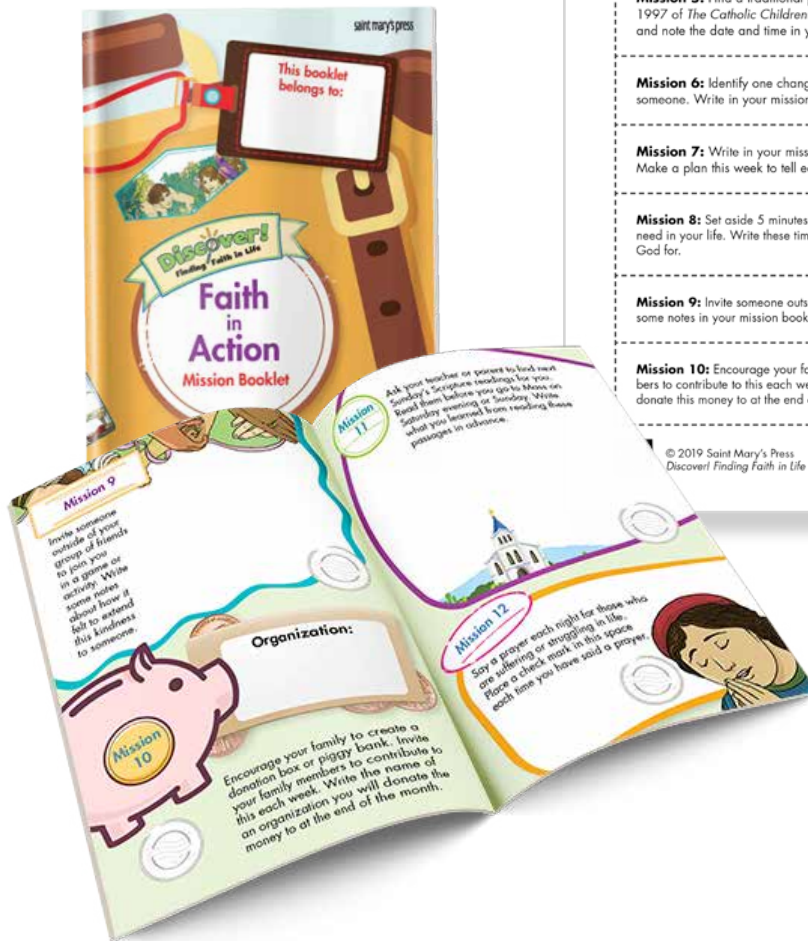
### Grade 4

At the end of each of the twenty core lessons, the children will be encouraged to take a **sticker** and find where it belongs on the back of their folders. At the end of the twenty core lessons, their grid of stickers will complete one main image.

Sticker Sheet

## Grade 5

Each of the twenty core chapters will end with a randomly-selected mission that will challenge the young people to actively live out their faith during the week. Then the young people will be encouraged to write a reflection in their mission booklets about the mission they were challenged to live.



Mission Booklet

297

### Living the Mission: Faith in Action

**Mission 1:** Each day this week, write in your mission booklet one thing you are grateful for. Say a silent prayer to God in thanksgiving.

**Mission 2:** Reflect on someone you might need to say you're sorry to. Write that person's name in your mission booklet, and make a plan to express your sorrow to this person in some way.

**Mission 3:** Think of one thing you can do to care for creation in a new way this week. Take that action and write a few notes in your mission booklet about what it was like.

**Mission 4:** Share some of your thoughts and feelings about what it means to you to be a follower of Jesus with one person this week. Write in your mission booklet how that conversation went.

**Mission 5:** Find a traditional prayer that you like [you can find some of these on pages 1990–1997 of *The Catholic Children's Bible*]. Make a point to say this prayer each morning this week and note the date and time in your mission booklet.

**Mission 6:** Identify one change you can make in your behavior to minimize or end a conflict with someone. Write in your mission booklet about that change, and take that action.

**Mission 7:** Write in your mission booklet the names of five people who are important to you. Make a plan this week to tell each of these people how important they are to.

**Mission 8:** Set aside 5 minutes for silent prayer time each day this week. Ask God for those things you need in your life. Write these times in your mission booklet, and make some notes about what you asked God for.

**Mission 9:** Invite someone outside of your group of friends to join you in a game or activity. Write some notes in your mission booklet about how it felt to extend this kindness to someone.

**Mission 10:** Encourage your family to create a donation box or piggy bank. Invite your family members to contribute to this each week. Write in your mission booklet the name of an organization you will donate this money to at the end of the month.

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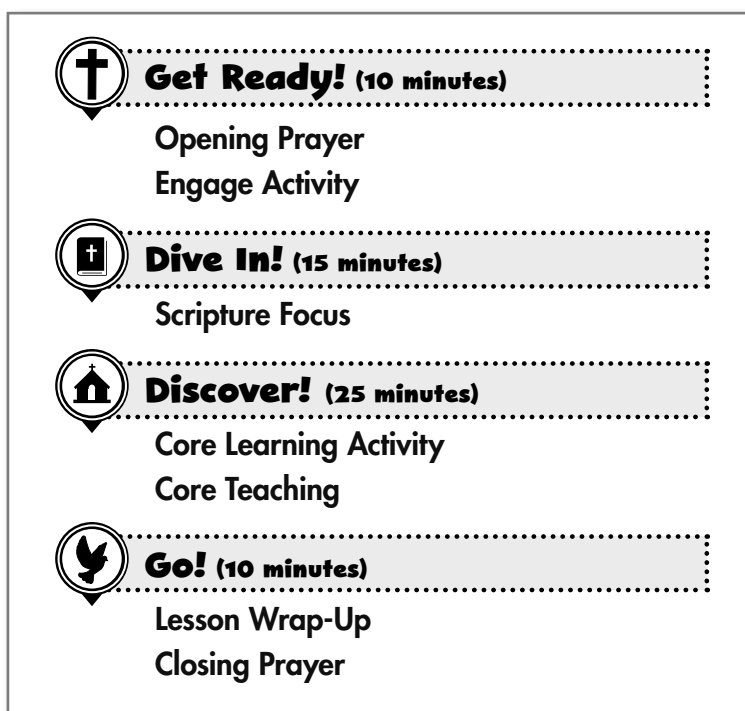
Chapter 1, Grade 5  
Document #: TX006200

# Key Elements of the Program

## Teaching Guide

The Lesson at a Glance feature offers the teacher an overview of the lesson goals and the core information needed to plan a lesson. It identifies materials that will be needed for the lesson as well as key vocabulary introduced and music suggestions that correspond to the lessons. A background reflection for teachers is offered, as well as *Catechism* references that are related to the concepts covered in the lesson. These references can be used by the teacher for deeper research and understanding.

Each lesson follows the same overall structure and timing. It will be important for the teacher to assess the time frames according to his or her unique group make-up and time parameters. Some activities may take longer for some groups than others. Reading through each lesson prior to the session will guide the teacher in making necessary adjustments to ensure success in his or her particular setting. The 60-minute timing structure is presented as follows:



## Get Ready!

This first part of the lesson starts with an opening prayer and an engage activity that lays the foundation for the lesson by accessing the children's prior knowledge and experience. This engages the children by providing them with an early opportunity for success by prompting discussion and activity around concepts they are familiar with and then connecting those concepts with content they will be learning in the lesson.

## **Dive In!**

This part of the lesson immerses the children in the Bible through a key Scripture passage. It always focuses on helping the children to understand the Scripture story and involves processing the content presented in the Understand It!, Live It!, and Tell It! features of *The Catholic Children's Bible*.

## **Discover!**

This part of the lesson involves a core learning activity (a craft in the liturgical season lessons) that brings to life one of the themes of the lesson in an interactive way. Frequently, this involves an out-of-the-seat activity that creates energy and excitement while helping the children further explore a concept related to the lesson. The core teaching part of the lesson is presented after this learning activity, giving the teacher essential catechetical information to share and questions to ask to assess comprehension.

## **Go!**

This part of the lesson wraps up the session with a final check and recall of the core lesson goals. The children close with one additional fun activity (in the twenty core lessons) that rewards them for completing the lesson and builds excitement for the lessons to come. The session then ends with a closing prayer.

## **Activity Booklets**

A fun and colorful activity booklet accompanies each chapter. The activities provided in these booklets may be used in the group lesson or may be completed at home with the family, depending on time parameters. Each booklet includes the opening prayer used for each lesson, two activity pages that support the learning of the chapter, and a family page that offers families background information on the chapter topic, suggested activities, and a family prayer. *Note:* In the liturgical season lessons, the activity on page 3 is replaced with a prayer service that can be used at the end of the lesson.

## ***We Know and Live Our Faith***

This resource, a supplemental piece that follows the pillars of the *Catechism*, is filled with articles that present additional doctrinal content to expand the core concepts covered in the program. Directions in the teaching guide pinpoint which articles relate to which chapters in the program. Some articles may be referred to multiple times, as they may relate to several chapters. Other content in this resource may not be referred to directly in lessons, as it may introduce concepts that are not focused on in the core program. The *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource can be used either directly in class as time allows or as a family-centered piece that deepens family understanding through reading and discussing faith content together.

## Special Features

Each grade ends the lesson with an engaging activity to reinforce the chapter focus, to celebrate the completion of another chapter, and to track the progress the group has made through the year. From stickers to decoding puzzles, each age-specific special feature will create excitement at the end of the lesson, and the children and young people will look forward to discovering something new each week.

## Music Suggestions

Music can add another wonderful dimension to this program. Each chapter includes two song suggestions that correspond to the chapter theme. These songs can be purchased and downloaded individually online. For a complete list of all the songs for the program, please see the *Discover! Finding Faith in Life* online resources for each teaching guide. Of course, the teacher may also wish to add her or his own favorite hymns or songs, such as those popular in your parish community.

## Videos

Options for activities that incorporate fun and engaging videos are provided throughout the program. Settings that have access to the necessary technology can utilize this additional media to further enliven learning. The video suggestions are also included on the family page in the children's activity booklets, so even if they are not used within the formal learning environment, they can be enjoyed at home with the family. Links to the video resources that are referenced throughout this program are available as part of the online resources for each teaching guide.



# Catechist Orientation Session

## Overview

This 105-minute session is for catechists who will use the *Discover! Finding Faith in Life* program in a parish setting.

## Session at a Glance



### **Get Ready!**

- A. Welcome and Gathering Prayer (5 minutes)
- B. Reflecting on Goals (15 minutes)



### **Dive In!**

- C. Bible Story (20 minutes)
- D. Balloon Activity (20 minutes)
- E. Break (10 minutes)



### **Discover!**

- F. Program Overview (30 minutes)



### **Go!**

- G. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

## Materials and Preparation

### Materials Needed

*The Catholic Children's Bible*, a candle and matches or a battery-powered candle, and other items to create a prayer space

name tags, one for each catechist

markers for filling out name tags

*Discover!* kits and Teaching Guides, one for each catechist, appropriate to their grade level

index cards for reflection on goals, one for each catechist

pens for group use

manila envelopes for handouts

copies of handouts for each catechist: "Characteristics of Elementary Children" (TX006297), "Overview of Catholic Social Teaching" (TX006298), "Faith and Fun in the Family" (TX006299)

12-inch balloons, one for each catechist

rulers, one for each catechist

refreshments for break time

### Preparation Tasks

Print each handout on different colored paper for easy identification during the session. *Note:* The handouts can be found at the end of the Parent Orientation Session in this manual or accessed online at [www.smp.org/discover\\_online](http://www.smp.org/discover_online).

Place a copy of the handouts in a manila envelope for each catechist, and write each catechist's name on an individual envelope. Arrange the envelopes on a table near the entrance, in alphabetical order, for the catechists to pick up as they enter.

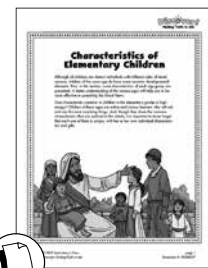
Set up a table with the *Discover!* kits and Teaching Guides, one of each for each catechist, appropriate to his or her grade level.

Have blank name tags and markers available for catechists as they arrive.

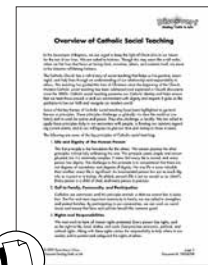
Bookmark 2 Corinthians 4: 5–12 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Prior to the session, ask a catechist volunteer to prepare to read this passage at the closing prayer. On an index card or slip of paper, write, "A reading from Saint Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians" and "The Word of the Lord," and place it in the Bible. Suggest that the reader begin the passage with the first phrase and end with the latter one.

Provide a light snack and beverages for the participants.

### Handouts



TX006297



TX006298



TX006299

# Session Steps



## Get Ready!

### A. Welcome and Gathering Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the catechists and thank them for coming. Introduce yourself and your pastor, if present. Ask the catechists to take a minute to introduce themselves to their colleagues at their table or sitting nearby.
2. **Invite** the group to recall that they are in the holy presence of God, and allow for a few moments of silence.
3. **Lead** or choose another appropriate person to lead the following prayer:
  - Lord Jesus Christ, you have said, "Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). As we begin another year of religious education together, help us to lead our children to you. Always aware of our own weakness as earthenware vessels, help us always to come to you for strength and guidance. Help us to discover your love, and a glimpse of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the ministry we undertake. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. (All say "Amen.")
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

### B. Reflecting on Goals (15 minutes)

1. **Ask** the catechists to form grade-level groups, even if only two or three catechists per group, including aides if you have invited them to this orientation. If your program has only one catechist per grade, then keep the catechists together in one group.
2. **Distribute** an index card and a pen to each catechist.
3. **Ask** the catechists to take a moment to consider the coming year. Invite them to consider what three goals they would most like to have accomplished with the children or young people in their group by the end of the year. Explain that these might be educational or spiritual goals.
4. **Direct** the catechists to write down their goals, and then to share their goals with other members of their small group. Choose volunteers from each small group to share their goals with the larger group.
5. **Remind** the larger group that if these goals are to be met, the catechists must address them each week in some way. Ask the catechists to turn their cards to the other side and make a statement indicating how they will work toward these goals in small steps each week. For example: "I will pray a Hail Mary each week with the children so that they will know this prayer by heart by the end of the year." Or, "I will remind the children, at some point in the lesson, that Jesus wants us to love one another." Give the catechists a few moments to write down their plans to meet their goals.

6. **Encourage** the catechists to use one another as resources in meeting these goals, and, during the year, as resources and sources of help and encouragement. Remind them that they are here for the children, but they are also here for one another as a community of catechists. Remind the catechists that you, as the director, are here for them. Encourage them to approach you with any challenges or concerns.



## Dive In!

### C. Bible Story (20 minutes)

1. **Distribute** a *Discover!* kit (*The Catholic Children's Bible*, activity booklets and the *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource) as well as the Teaching Guide, to each catechist, according to grade level.
2. **Direct** the catechists to turn to the Featured Story "Solomon Asks God for Wisdom," on page 458 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Tell them that the text between the leaves on page 458 is a shortened version of the Scripture verses on pages 457 and 460. Alert them to the citations under the picture on page 458. Explain that the first citation notes the abbreviated story on page 458, and that the "full story" citation notes the Scripture verses on pages 457 and 460. Point out that the full story is also marked on these pages with a green leaf at the beginning and at the end.
3. **Explain** that you will go through the story with them, modeling how they might use it in the catechetical setting.
4. **Encourage** the catechists to take a moment to look at the artwork on the pages. Remind them that the art often helps convey the meaning of the story. Invite a volunteer to read aloud the Featured Story "Solomon Asks God for Wisdom" on page 458.
5. **Ask** the catechists several questions to illustrate the kind of questions that might be asked of the children in the lesson:
  - What was the man in the story doing? (*praying to God*)
  - What is the name of the man who is praying to God in the story? (*Solomon*)
  - Solomon was a king. What was King Solomon asking God for? (*wisdom*)
  - Why did Solomon need wisdom? (*He needed to know the difference between right and wrong so that he could rule with justice.*)
  - Let's look at the words at the bottom of the page. What is wisdom? (*seeing things as God sees them, knowing how to act*) What is justice? (*fairness, right treatment of people*)

6. **Summarize** the meaning of the story for the group. Explain that catechists too need wisdom from God, sometimes in very subtle ways, to reach each child in the group. Remind the catechists that they need wisdom to see each child as God sees that child, and to know how to act accordingly. Remind them also that they need to show fairness, and to explain to children that fairness does not mean treating everyone the same—fairness means giving each person what they need to grow.

### **Understand It!**

**Summarize** the first paragraph of the Understand It! Note these points:

- Solomon asked for wisdom so that he could be a good leader.
- Wisdom would help him to know the right thing to do.
- This prayer showed that he already had some wisdom, as this was a very wise prayer.
- As catechetical leaders, we too need to ask for wisdom and help from God, and sometimes from the program director.

### **Live It!**

Invite the catechists to read the Live It! on page 459, and have them discuss the situations briefly in small groups. Then call everyone back to the larger group and summarize by explaining that although the answers may seem obvious to us, they may not be obvious to children. Remind the catechists that giving the children an opportunity to think through imaginary situations stretches their minds and hearts and prepares them for new situations that may arise in their own lives.

### **Tell It!**

Point out the images in the Tell It! on page 459, and explain that these images recall the Featured Story and will help the children remember the story.



## **D. Balloon Activity (20 minutes)**

1. **Distribute** a balloon and a ruler to each catechist, and invite the catechists to blow up their balloons and tie them. Some catechists may need assistance. Then divide the group in half, and select one group to be the wisdom team and one group to be the justice team.
2. **Invite** the wisdom team to take their balloons and rulers and stand by the wall on one side of the room. Invite the justice team to take their balloons and rulers and stand by the wall on the opposite side of the room
3. **Explain** that when you say, "Go!" each team will use their rulers to gently move their balloons until they touch the wall on the opposite side of the room. Encourage the catechists to take great care of their balloons, as the two teams will be crossing each other to get to their goal walls. Tell them that when each person's balloon touches the opposite wall, that person should grab it and hug it, signaling that he or she has finished. The first team to collectively get their balloons to touch the opposite wall is the winner.
4. **Process** the activity by congratulating the winners, and by explaining that as long as we care about wisdom and justice, and as long as we ask God for these important strengths in our lives and in our teaching, we are all winners!
5. **Explain** to the catechists that they have just been led through the first part of a typical lesson in the *Discover!* program, with the focus on a Bible story and a core learning activity. Add that after learning about a Bible story related to the topic of a particular lesson, the children will learn more about that topic in greater detail.

## **E. Break (10 minutes)**



## Discover!

### F. Program Overview (30 minutes)

1. **Explain** that you will now take a few minutes to help the catechists understand the *Discover!* program.
2. **Direct** the catechists to open their Teaching Guides and to find the Scope and Sequence for their grade. Explain that they might like to look over this information in detail as they begin to plan each lesson. Tell them that this is a roadmap of the goals, concepts, Scripture stories, key words, and other items that will be covered in the program.
3. **Ask** them to next turn to the Table of Contents. Explain that the program's core chapters are presented in four units of five chapters each. Note that each chapter follows a pillar of the *Catechism* in that unit: The first chapter is Believe (doctrine), the second is Celebrate (liturgy and sacraments), the third is Live (morality), the fourth is Live: Catholic Social Teaching (social teaching principles), and the fifth is Pray (prayer).
4. **Note** that an additional eight liturgical season lessons are offered following the core chapters. Explain that these are listed in order of presentation for the year and can be used as time or your particular program allows. Ask the catechists to note the lesson on Mary for their own grade. Explain that in grades 1 and 2, the Mary lesson can be used for any feast of Our Lady or during the month of May. Note that in grades 3, 4, and 5, the Mary lesson is focused on a specific feast.
5. **Ask** the catechists to turn to chapter 3 in their Teaching Guides, no matter what grade. Encourage the catechists to page through the chapter for a few moments to get familiar with the presentation and the layout of the pages.
6. **Direct** them to find the first page of the chapter, the Lesson at a Glance page. Point out the Scripture Focus connected to this lesson in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Ask the catechists to open their Bibles to this Scripture passage and its Featured Story. Explain that even though they may be looking at different lessons, you will be walking through the lesson's main features together.
7. **Note** that grade 5 is special because it uses no Featured Stories. Explain the following:
  - In grade 5, all of the Bible stories are given from the two-column Bible text, and are not condensed into a Featured Story. In fifth grade, the young people are asked to use their biblical literacy skills to find the Scripture passages in the two-column section of *The Catholic Children's Bible*.
  - The features that would ordinarily be given in the Bible that support the Scripture story (Understand It! and Live It!) are given on the first page of the grade 5 activity booklets. The Tell It! directions are given in the Teaching Guide.

- Occasionally, this is also the case for some of the lessons in grades 1 through 4. If there is no Featured Story, the first page of the activity booklet presents the Understand It! and Live It! paragraphs.
8. **Continue** explaining the Lesson at a Glance page. Comment on the following:
- The Lesson Goals are given in three clear statements, and are repeated at the end of the lesson as a summary for the children.
  - The *Catechism* Pillar reminds you which pillar the chapter is focused on.
  - The *Catechism* References are paragraph numbers in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that go deeper into some of the concepts introduced to the children. These references are for your background and aren't meant to be used directly with the children.
  - The Key Words are printed in two kinds of type. The words in italic are words that are introduced in the Featured Story in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. The words in regular type are words introduced in the Teaching Guide lesson.
  - The Music Suggestions are songs that can be incorporated into the lesson and relate to the concepts being presented.
  - The Materials Needed list identifies the needed materials for the chapter lesson, activities, and crafts. Please look at the lists for upcoming lessons well ahead of time.
  - The Background Reflection is offered as a personal reflection to help you make connections with the chapter content and your own faith. It also provides some additional background for you as you prepare to teach each lesson.
9. **Ask** the catechists to turn to the second page of the lesson, Get Ready! Explain that this is the first of the four movements of the chapter. Note that the other three are: Dive In!, Discover!, and Go! Explain that these four movements prepare for the lesson, dive into the lesson through Scripture, discover more ideas and concepts through the Core Learning Activity and Core Teaching, and then encourage an active response in real life in the last movement, Go!
10. **Explain** that you will go through each movement in turn. Make the following brief comments:
- The Get Ready! includes the Opening Prayer, which is found on the first page of the activity booklet. (We will look at the activity booklet separately a little later.)
  - The Get Ready! also includes the Engage Activity, which helps to excite interest in the topic of the lesson through an active-learning example or situation involving the group. This activity prepares for and transitions into the "Dive In!" movement.
  - We have already experienced the Dive In! through our Scripture reading of the Featured Story on Solomon's prayer for wisdom and through our review of the Understand It!, Live It!, and Tell It! features in *The Catholic Children's Bible*.

- The next movement, Discover!, begins with the Core Learning Activity, which we also experienced earlier. This activity is central to the lesson, as the children are encouraged to use their bodies and minds to grasp meaning that both springs from and leads to a central concept discovered in this lesson. The Discover! section also introduces the Core Teaching, which introduces additional catechetical content to the children.
  - Note the Additional Activity Options box. If necessary, one of these activities can be substituted for the Core Learning Activity. Please look over all the activities to find the best one for your group.
  - The *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource, highlighted in the box, references a resource that is part of the kit and can be incorporated into the Discover! movement, either with the group, if time permits, or at home with the children's families.
  - The lesson finishes with the fourth movement, Go!, which includes the Lesson Wrap-Up and the Closing Prayer. The Lesson Wrap-Up engages the children in articulating what they have learned, and it summarizes the lesson by presenting the three goals, in an abbreviated form, that shaped the lesson from the beginning. To mark their completion of the lesson, a fun activity is provided.
  - The Closing Prayer directs the children's hearts and minds to God in a simple but meaningful way.
11. **Ask** the catechists to look through their folders to find the activity booklet for chapter 3. Comment on the activity booklet contents as follows:
- The Opening Prayer is always found on the first page of the activity booklet. For chapters that use Scripture apart from a Featured Story, the Understand It! and Live It! can also be found here.
  - The second page relates to the Scripture used in the lesson. It is often planned as an open-Bible activity in which the children can further familiarize themselves with the Bible story and feel a sense of competence and accomplishment through the activity.
  - The third page is a review of some of the concepts presented in the Core Teaching. This page helps the children to recall and reinforce the main concepts of the teaching.
  - The last page of the activity booklet is called the Family Page. It includes the Background Reflection for the parents, Family Activities that can be done at home, the People of Faith paragraph, and a Prayer for the family.
  - The People of Faith paragraph is also presented in the lesson for the children, and you are encouraged to read this with the children and to invite them to ask a chapter's particular saint or person of faith to pray for them in the coming week.
  - It is important that these Family Pages go home with the children, as this is the main communication of the lesson content to families.

12. **Summarize** your remarks by asking the catechists to find the article “Understanding the Components” at the front of the Teaching Guide. Explain that these pages provide brief explanations of all the different parts of the Teaching Guide, the activity booklets, and the *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource.
13. **Refer** briefly to the manila envelopes the catechists picked up as they came in. Explain that these envelopes contain the informative handouts the parents will receive at their orientation as well as an article on Catholic social teaching, which is an important part of this program. Remind the teachers that there are other important and helpful articles in the front of each Teaching Guide. Explain that these articles will not be discussed today, but ask that the catechists read them for their own information.
14. **Point** out the article on the characteristics of children, and ask that the catechists read this article carefully. Note that the characteristics of the children at their own grade level are given in the front of their Teaching Guides. Remind the catechists that growth is on a spectrum, and for that reason it is helpful to know what can be expected at ages both younger and older than the grade they are teaching at the moment.
15. **Invite** the catechists to take some time to look over their Teaching Guide and to surface any questions they might have.

*(After a few minutes, ask the group if anyone has any questions. If someone has a question requiring a lengthy response, give a short response and then ask that catechist to see you after the session for a more detailed explanation.)*



**Go!**

## G. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Ask** the catechists to take a few moments to quiet themselves and to recall that they are in the holy presence of God.
2. **Begin** by asking the designated reader to read the prepared passage from Saint Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 4:5–12).
3. **Continue** by offering the following prayer:
  - Thank you, Lord Jesus, for making us the earthenware vessels, or common clay pots, that hold the power of your life within us. Help us share your love, wisdom, and justice with the children we will meet this year. Help us to pour out that love, wisdom, and justice through our planning, our activities, our teaching, and our joyful participation in the faith life of the children you call to yourself. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.
  - Let us now pray together in the words that Jesus taught us: Our Father . . .
  - Let us go in peace to share the Good News with the children, our parish, and our world. (Encourage the catechists to respond, “Amen!”)







# Parent Orientation Session

## Overview

This 90–120-minute session is for parents whose children will be using the *Discover! Finding Faith in Life* program in a parish setting.

## Session at a Glance

	<b>Get Ready!</b>
	A. Welcome and Gathering Prayer (5 minutes) B. Reflecting on Goals (15 minutes)
	<b>Dive In!</b>
	C. Bible Story (20 minutes) D. Balloon Activity (20 minutes) E. Break (10 minutes)
	<b>Discover!</b>
	F. Program Overview (30 minutes) G. Optional Activity (30 additional minutes)
	<b>Go!</b>
	H. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

## Materials and Preparation

### Materials Needed

*The Catholic Children's Bible*, a candle, and other items to create a prayer space

name tags for all parents

markers for filling out name tags

manila tags with string, for identifying children's kits by name

*Discover!* kit (a sample or demonstration copy, or one or more for each family, based on children registered)

index cards for reflection on goals, one for each family

pens for group use

copies of the handouts "Characteristics of Elementary Children" (TX006297), "Overview of Catholic Social Teaching" (TX006298), and "Faith and Fun in the Family" (TX006299), one set for each family

12-inch balloons, one for each parent

rulers, one for each parent

sticky notes, one for each family

stationery, envelopes, and pens (Optional Activity)

refreshments for break time

### Preparation Tasks

Print each handout on different colored paper for easy identification during the session. *Note:* The handouts can be found at the end of the Parent Orientation Session in this manual or accessed online at [www.smp.org/discover\\_online](http://www.smp.org/discover_online).

Set up tables with the *Discover!* kits on them, arranged by grade level, one for each child registered (if you wish parents to open, peruse, and identify their own children's kits during the session).

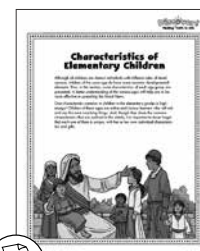
Have blank name tags and markers available for parents as they arrive.

Bookmark Matthew 19:13–15 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*.

Prior to the session, ask a volunteer to prepare to read this passage at the closing prayer. On an index card or slip of paper, write, "A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew" and "The Gospel of the Lord," and place it in the Bible. Suggest that the reader begin the passage with the first phrase and end with the latter one.

Provide a light snack and beverages for the participants.

### Handouts



TX006297



TX006298



TX006299

# Session Steps



## Get Ready!

### A. Welcome and Gathering Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Welcome** the parents and thank them for coming. Introduce yourself and your pastor, if present. Ask the parents to take a minute to introduce themselves to those at their tables or sitting nearby.
2. **Invite** the group to recall that they are in the holy presence of God, and allow for a few moments of silence.
3. **Lead** or choose another appropriate person to lead the following prayer:
  - Lord Jesus Christ, you have said, "Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). As we begin another year of religious education together, help us to lead our children to you. Help us always to come to you for strength and guidance. Help us to discover your love, and a glimpse of the kingdom of Heaven, in the midst of our own families. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. (All say "Amen.")
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

### B. Reflecting on Goals (15 minutes)

1. **Distribute** an index card and a pen to each parent.
2. **Ask** the parents to take a moment to consider the coming year. Invite them to consider what three hopes they have for their children or young people for this year of religious education. Explain that these might be educational or spiritual hopes.
3. **Direct** the parents to write down their hopes on their index card. Invite them to share their hopes with the other parents at their table. Choose volunteers to share their hopes with the larger group.
4. **Remind** the group that these hopes can be supported and nurtured at home. Ask the parents to turn their index cards to the other side and to write a statement indicating how they can approach these hopes at home in small steps each week. For example: "I will pray a decade of the Rosary in the car each week with our family so that my children will know this prayer by heart by the end of the year." Or, "I will remind my children often that Jesus wants us to love one another." Give the parents a few moments to write down their plans to meet their goals.
5. **Remind** the parents that you, as the director, are here for them. Encourage them to approach you with any challenges or concerns. Assure them that you and the catechists are here to help.



## Dive In!

### C. Bible Story (20 minutes)

1. **Draw** attention to a sample *Discover!* kit you have on display, or distribute one *Discover!* kit (a backpack with *The Catholic Children's Bible* if applicable, activity booklets and the *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource) to each family for each child registered, according to grade level.
2. **Explain** that not every child will have a Bible in the kit, because some children may already have one. Have extra Bibles on hand for parents to share.
3. **Direct** the parents to the Featured Story "Solomon Asks God for Wisdom," on page 458 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Tell them that the text between the leaves on page 458 is a shortened version of the Scripture verses on pages 457 and 460. Alert them to the citations under the picture on page 458. Tell them that the first citation notes the abbreviated story on page 458, and that the "full story" citation notes the Scripture verses on pages 457 and 460. Point out that the full story is also marked on these pages with a green leaf at the beginning and at the end.
4. **Explain** that you will go through the story with the parents, modeling how catechists might use it in the catechetical setting with the children.
5. **Encourage** the parents to take a moment to look at the artwork on the pages. Remind them that the art often helps convey the meaning of the story. Invite a volunteer to read the Featured Story "Solomon Asks God for Wisdom" on page 458.
6. **Ask** the parents several questions to illustrate the kind of questions asked of the children in the lesson:
  - What is the man in the story doing? (*praying to God*)
  - What is the name of the man who is praying to God in the story? (*Solomon*)
  - Solomon is a king. What is King Solomon asking God for? (*wisdom*)
  - Why does Solomon need wisdom? (*He needs to know the difference between right and wrong so that he can rule with justice.*)
  - Let's look at the words at the bottom of the page. What is wisdom? (*seeing things as God sees them, knowing how to act*) What is justice? (*fairness, right treatment of people*)
7. **Summarize** the meaning of the story for the group. Explain that parents too need wisdom from God, sometimes in very subtle ways, to parent their children effectively. Remind the parents that they need wisdom to see each child as God sees that child, and to know how to act accordingly. Remind them also that they need to show fairness, and to explain to children that fairness does not mean treating everyone in the family the same—fairness means giving each person in the family what they need to grow.



## **Understand It!**

**Summarize** the first paragraph of the Understand It! Note these points:

- Solomon asks for wisdom so that he can be a good leader.
- Wisdom would help him to know the right thing to do.
- This prayer shows that he already has some wisdom, as this is a very wise prayer.
- Parents also need to ask for wisdom and help, from God and sometimes from our parish program direction and catechists.

## **Live It!**

**Invite** the parents to read the Live It! on page 459, and have them discuss the situations briefly in small groups. Call them together and summarize by explaining that although the answers may seem obvious to us, they may not be obvious to children. Remind the parents that giving an opportunity for children to think through imaginary situations stretches their minds and hearts and prepares them for new situations that they may meet in their own lives.

## **Tell It!**

**Point out** the images in Tell It! on page 459, and explain that these images recall the Featured Story and will help the children remember the story.

## D. Balloon Activity (20 minutes)

1. **Distribute** a balloon and a ruler to each parent, and invite the parents to blow up their balloons and tie them. Some parents may need some assistance. (*Note: If you have a large group of parents, you may want to reduce the number of participants in this activity by choosing volunteers instead.*) Then divide the group in half and select one group to be the wisdom team and one group to be the justice team.
2. **Invite** the wisdom team to take their balloons and rulers and stand by the wall on one side of the room. Invite the justice team to take their balloons and rulers and stand by the wall on the opposite side of the room.
3. **Explain** that when you say “Go!” each team will use their rulers to gently move their balloons until they touch the wall on the opposite side of the room. Encourage the parents to take great care of their balloons, as the two teams will be crossing each other to get to their goal walls. Tell them that when each person’s balloon touches the opposite wall, that person should grab it and hug it, signaling that he or she has finished. The first team to collectively get its balloons to touch the opposite wall is the winner.
4. **Process** the activity by congratulating the winners, and by explaining that as long as we care about wisdom and justice, and as long as we ask God for these important strengths in our lives and in our teaching, we are all winners!
5. **Explain** to the parents that they have just been led through the first part of a typical lesson in the *Discover!* program, with the focus on a Bible story and core learning activity. Add that after learning about a Bible story related to the topic of a particular lesson, the children will learn more about that topic in greater detail.

## E. Break (10 minutes)



**Discover!**

## F. Program Overview (15 minutes)

1. **Explain** that you will now take a few minutes to go over the program as a whole. Tell the group that the entire structure of the *Discover!* program is based on active learning, and that each lesson consists of four movements: Get Ready! Dive In! Discover! and Go!.
2. **Tell** the parents that the Get Ready! section consists of an opening prayer and a short engaging activity to create interest in the lesson; the Dive In! section consists of the Scripture story and the Understand It!, Live It!, and Tell It! features in *The Catholic Children’s Bible*; the Discover! section consists of a core learning activity that gets the children out of their seats and engaged in the topic with both mind and body, as well as the core teaching section that explains the topic in fuller detail; and the Go! section, which ends the session with a review, a short summing up activity, and a closing prayer.

3. **Explain** that the learning activities and teaching in the session are supported by the activities presented in the activity booklets.
4. **Invite** the parents to open the folder inside the backpack (or, one of the backpacks) they have been given. Alternatively, use your demonstration copy to show the contents of the folders. Explain that the folder has within it the activity booklets for each of the twenty chapters taught throughout the year, as well as eight liturgical season activity booklets.
5. **Ask** the parents to open their chapter 3 activity booklets (or show this chapter from your demonstration copy), no matter what grade. Point out the opening prayer, the Bible story activity on page 2, the core learning activity on page 3, and the Family Page. Explain that the Family Page directly links the theme of the lesson to activities the family can do at home.
6. **Explain** that the activity on page 2 helps the children to review the basic story that they have just heard and discussed from *The Catholic Children's Bible* and is meant to solidify the basic facts of the story. Explain that the activity on page 3 helps the children to review the core teaching of the lesson. This page helps children recall and reinforce the main concepts of the teaching.
7. **Note** some important features of the Family Page: the background, which is written especially for the parents, as an aid to their understanding of the topic of the lesson; the People of Faith paragraph, which offers a short biographical sketch of a saint related to the lesson in some way; the Family Activities, which can be done at home; and a Family Prayer. Ask the parents to look out for this Family Page when their child brings the backpack home and to use it as they plan family activities for the week.
8. **Tell** the parents that the activities in these booklets are meant to support the learning that is taking place in the session. Explain that sometimes the activities will be completed in the session, and sometimes they might be left to complete at home. Note that the activities are not meant to test knowledge but to reinforce the topic being discussed in the session.
9. **Note** that grade 5 is special, because it uses no Featured Stories. Explain the following:
  - In grade 5, all of the Bible stories are given from the two-column Bible text and are not condensed into a Featured Story. In fifth grade, the young people are asked to use their biblical literacy skills and to find the Scripture passages in the two-column section of *The Catholic Children's Bible*.
  - The features that are ordinarily given in the Bible to support the Scripture story (Understand It! and Live It!) are instead given on the first page of the grade 5 activity booklets. The Tell It! directions are given in the Teaching Guide.
  - Occasionally, this is also the case for some of the lessons in grades 1 through 4. If there is no Featured Story, the first page of the activity booklet presents the Understand It! and Live It! paragraphs.

10. **Ask** the parents to open the *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource, or show them your demonstration copy. Explain that this resource can be used in every lesson, either in the session or at home. Remind the parents that if this resource is sent home, it should be returned in the backpack so the catechist can use it in the next session.
11. **Ask** the parents, if they have been given their children's kits, to reassemble the kits. Distribute a manila tag for use with each kit. Ask each family to write their child's name on a tag and tie it to their child's kit.
12. **Distribute** sticky notes and pens. Encourage the parents to write a note to their child or children, sticking it to the folder in the kit, thus providing a surprise from home at the child's opening session. (If you wish, you may omit this sticky note activity and use the Optional Activity described in the next section.) Invite the parents to return the kit to the tables designated by grade level so that the kits can be distributed to the children at the first session.
13. **Encourage** the parents to keep the contents of the kits a surprise so that their child will experience the joy of discovery when the kits are distributed.
14. **Distribute** one or both handouts to the parents. Explain that these articles will not be discussed today, but ask that the parents read them for their own information and for possible discussion with catechists as needs arise.
15. **Point** out the article on the characteristics of children, and ask that the parents read this article carefully. Remind the parents that growth is on a spectrum, and for that reason it is helpful to know what can be expected at ages both younger and older than the grade their own child is in this year.
16. **Explain** that the article on faith and family life is meant to be a reminder of all the ways we can live from the strong roots of our faith, no matter what else may be going on in our families.
17. **Invite** the parents to look through the handout(s) or any of the components of the *Discover!* program available to them for a few minutes.

*(After a few minutes, ask the group if anyone has any questions. If someone has a question requiring a lengthy response, give a short response and then ask that parent to see you after the session for a more detailed explanation.)*

## G. Optional Activity (an additional 30 minutes)

1. **Distribute** sheets of stationery, envelopes, and pens.
2. **Ask** the parents to write a letter that will be given to their child on the first day of the session. After composing the letter, the parents will put their child's full name on it, seal it, and place it in their child's backpack.
3. **Offer** the following suggestions to get the parents started:
  - how I feel about your new year of learning about God and our faith
  - how this year will help you grow closer to Jesus, Mary, and the saints
  - how this year will help you understand why we are Catholic
  - how our family will support you and help you learn and live our faith this year
  - prayers, affirmations of support, and love
4. **Remind** the parents that first graders will need only a few lines that can be read to them at home, and fifth graders can read something with significant content and meaning. Urge them to adjust for their own child as needed.



**Go!**

## H. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Ask** the parents to take a few moments to quiet themselves and to recall that they are in the holy presence of God.
2. **Begin** by asking the designated reader to read the prepared passage from the Gospel of Saint Matthew (Matthew 19:13–15).
3. **Continue** by offering the following prayer:
  - Thank you, Lord Jesus, for sharing your life and your love with our children. Help us to share your love, wisdom, and justice with our children as they learn more about you and about our faith this year. Help us to discover glimpses of the Kingdom of Heaven in our own children and in our own families. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.
  - Let us now pray together in the words that Jesus taught us: Our Father . . .
  - Let us go in peace to share the Good News with our children, our families, our parish, and our world. (Encourage the parents to respond, "Amen!")



# Characteristics of Elementary Children

Although all children are distinct individuals with different rates of development, children of the same age do have some common developmental elements. Thus, in this section, some characteristics of each age-group are presented. A better understanding of the various ages will help you to be more effective in spreading the Good News.

One characteristic common to children in the elementary grades is high energy! Children of these ages are active and curious learners who will ask and say the most surprising things. And, though they share the common characteristics that are outlined in this article, it is important to never forget that each one of them is unique, with her or his own individual characteristics and gifts.



## First Graders

First graders are enthusiastic, social, and eager to learn. Nowadays, many first graders are already reading and writing at a basic level, having developed these skills in kindergarten. Yet, six-year-olds and seven-year-olds still need a lot of movement and activity. Though they are quite inquisitive, their attention spans are rather short. Making sessions varied and dynamic will insure that your first graders are engaged and content.

### Physical Characteristics

Much is happening in first grade in terms of physical characteristics. Many children are losing teeth and growing new ones. Their fine motor skills are fairly well developed, which means that they can use scissors as well as draw and write. However, cutting around curves and writing with precision can still take quite a bit of effort. And, for some children, these are still challenging tasks. First graders' desire to move and play points to the importance of varying learning activities for this age-group. To address this, it is best to keep them moving, by doing such things as starting the class in a prayer circle in one corner of the room, singing a song with several simple motions, moving to a table activity, sitting on the floor to listen to a dramatic Bible story, playing a game in the middle of the room, or better yet, going outside or to the gym to play. This variety will satisfy their need to move while keeping them engaged and focused.

### Intellectual Characteristics

Thinking and learning are literal and concrete at this age. First graders will most likely think of God as a human person with human characteristics rather than use abstract or symbolic images. Nonetheless, first graders are thinkers. They ask a lot of questions, and they have creative imaginations. They will think about questions you ask, as long as the questions are not too complicated. Their attention spans are long enough that they like to listen to a good Bible story.

### Social-Emotional Characteristics

Most first graders like playing with others, but they often prefer small groups. They are willing to cooperate, but they often want to "win" or have things go their way. Young children need continual affirmation, thriving on praise. Many first graders want to be the center of attention, so they like telling stories about themselves.



## Second Graders

Second graders are lively, yet more grown-up and serious compared to the less confident first graders they were just a year ago. Now that second graders have a few years of elementary school experience, they are more settled and comfortable in their learning environment. The seven- to eight-year-old typically appreciates the order and structure of a classroom or catechetical setting. Thus, being organized and well-prepared will help second graders to feel relaxed, content, and ready to learn.

### Physical Characteristics

Most second graders have good hand-eye coordination and therefore are fairly adept at writing, painting, drawing, cutting, and pasting. Because they are still growing rapidly, they may be somewhat awkward at some of these tasks. However, in general they have good large- and small-muscle motor skills.

### Intellectual Characteristics

Second graders are concrete thinkers, but they do have some analytical skills and can organize their thoughts. For example, they can make comparisons and think reflectively. Yet, most of their thinking is concrete and focuses on the physical things that they can see or imagine. They might have trouble imagining something with which they are unfamiliar (see *Grade-by-Grade Learning*, at pbs.org). For example, they may have trouble imagining a desert if they have never seen one. So, if knowing what a desert is like is an important part of a lesson, they may need to see a picture or a video clip of a desert.

Furthermore, second graders do have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, although they will not always understand the consequences of their actions. They do, however, like to please adults.

### Social-Emotional Characteristics

The second-grade child is developing a sense of self. Interaction with classmates helps the child, but there are times when a second grader may want to be alone. And friendships can change quickly in second grade. At the same time, the seven- to eight-year-old child likes to play and work with friends. For this reason, second graders do best working with a partner or in a small group. Also, this is the period when the division of sexes begins, meaning that children prefer to play or work others of the same sex. Given that there is a heightened interest in friendships at this age, it is a good time to talk about Jesus as friend.



## Third Graders

Third graders are spirited, lively, and eager to take on more challenging, complicated tasks. However, they do not necessarily have all the follow-through skills needed to complete their tasks. Although they will take some initiative and work enthusiastically, you will have to help them stay organized.

### Physical Characteristics

Coordination and balance are much improved for third-grade children. Their muscle groups and their fine motor skills have developed to the point that they can do more intricate tasks beyond writing and drawing. They have the ability to use small instruments and thus can do things like simple sewing or threading small beads onto a string.

### Intellectual Characteristics

Verbal skills are in high gear by third grade. Most third graders have mastered a grade-level ability for reading, writing, and listening. They also like to talk and discuss their ideas. They are inquisitive, and now they want to know not just the facts but also the reasons behind the facts. For example, third graders may want to know why Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, or why he asked James and John to leave their father to be his disciples. And, they are ready and willing to discuss the importance of these facts.

This deeper level of thinking helps them to evaluate and make judgments. They are beginning to see the connections between concepts and to think abstractly. They not only know the difference between right and wrong but can also usually understand the consequences of choices they make.

### Social-Emotional Characteristics

In third grade, the peer group is very important, and peer pressure can become an issue. Also, it is fairly common for third graders to have a “best friend,” though sometimes to the exclusion of other children. You can build on the notion of Jesus as friend and use examples of Jesus and how he treated his friends. Point out that Jesus welcomed many friends, like Peter and the Apostles, Martha, Mary, Zacchaeus, and others.

Playing in same-sex groups is also still the norm. Most third graders enjoy the social dimension of working in groups and having group discussions. They can also work effectively in small groups to complete a simple task.



## Fourth Graders

Fourth graders are now some of the older children in their elementary school. Thus, they often feel pretty mature, important, and more autonomous. They are willing to work independently and have less need for adult direction. They are ready to take on more responsibility and make decisions. Indeed, this is a good age to discuss the responsibilities of discipleship. Fourth graders may also develop particular interests in a hobby, sport, or activity, and they may take it very seriously.

### Physical Characteristics

Girls are more physically mature than boys at this point. Some girls have begun pre-puberty and even puberty. Girls and boys alike may be more temperamental and brooding. But, at the same time, they are still high energy and still like to play outside and with friends. They may also enjoy team sports.

### Intellectual Characteristics

Fourth graders are able to do some abstract thinking and reasoning, but they still do best with concrete, hands-on learning. They like using books and references, and they have an interest in facts and figures. They also have a developing conscience and definitely have a sense of what is fair, right, and just. These interests make it a good time to have them delve more deeply into the Scripture stories that have moral lessons, as most of them do. For instance, a fourth grader will be intrigued by the fact that Jesus tells Peter he should forgive not seven times but seventy times seven times. Why would Jesus ask us to keep forgiving someone who keeps sinning?

Also, nine- to ten-year-olds have the capacity to complete a more complicated and prolonged project. So, for example, with guidance from you, a small group can take a Scripture story and act it out as a skit.

### Social-Emotional Characteristics

This is an age for high emotions and dramatic intensity, especially among girls. Fourth graders are often critical of themselves and others, sometimes expressing this inappropriately by talking about friends and classmates. Many fourth graders are interested in the opposite sex. Even when this is the case, however, most still want to stay within their same-sex groups for socializing. In addition, they like working in small groups and can even come to a group decision. Again, emphasizing that Jesus wants us not only to welcome one another as friends but also to love and help one another can lead fourth graders to develop empathy and respect for those they may not naturally like.





## Fifth Graders

Fifth graders may be considered “tweens,” because they are between early childhood and adolescence. Many of them, girls especially, will begin puberty, which often starts between the ages of ten and twelve for girls and a bit later for boys. These biological changes are often accompanied by changes in emotions and intellect as young people in these middle school years become more socially, intellectually, and physically mature. At the same time, they are still children who like to be silly and have fun.

### Physical Characteristics

Many fifth-grade girls will show the physical signs of puberty as they begin to enter the developmental stage known as adolescence. Breast development and menstruation often occur for girls. Many boys, however, do not begin puberty until the ages of twelve to fourteen.. Both boys and girls are often growing taller, feeling more stress, and sometimes experiencing changes in their sleep habits. Don’t be surprised if they arrive late or sleepy if you have a Sunday morning session.

### Intellectual Characteristics

Children in fifth grade are capable of critical thinking and problem solving. They are able to think somewhat abstractly. For example, ritual symbols are meaningful. They can understand that the cleansing effects of baptismal waters mean more than physical cleaning.

### Social-Emotional Characteristics

Most middle-school-age children enjoy group work. They are mature enough to compromise, cooperate, and collaborate when it comes to completing an assignment or solving a problem. Some fifth graders will have feelings for someone special and flirt with, text, or message those they are interested in. Social media can be a major source of influence and social anxiety at this age. Cell phones and mobile devices may become an issue in the classroom but can also be used as teaching tools.



# Overview of Catholic Social Teaching

In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are urged to keep the light of Christ alive in our hearts for the rest of our lives. We are called to holiness. Though this may seem like a tall order, when we live lives that focus on loving God, ourselves, others, and creation itself, we move in the direction of lifelong holiness.

The Catholic Church has a rich history of social teaching that helps us live positive, meaningful, and holy lives through an understanding of our relationship and responsibility to others. This teaching has guided the lives of Christians since the beginning of the Church. Modern Catholic social teaching has been addressed and explained in Church documents since the 1800s. Catholic social teaching promotes our Catholic identity and helps ensure that we treat those around us and our environment with dignity and respect. It gives us the guidance to live our faith and navigate our modern world.

Some of the key themes of Catholic social teaching have been highlighted as general themes or principles. These principles challenge us globally—to view the world as one family and to work for justice and peace. They also challenge us locally. We are called to apply these principles daily in our encounters with people, in forming our opinions regarding current events, and in our willingness to give our time and money to those in need.

The following are seven of the key principles of Catholic social teaching:

## 1. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

This first principle is the foundation for the others. We cannot practice the other principles without fully embracing this one. This principle seems simple and uncomplicated, but it is extremely complex. It states that every life is sacred, and every person has dignity. The challenge to this principle is to comprehend that there are not degrees of sacredness and degrees of dignity. No one life is more valuable than another; every life is significant. An incarcerated person has just as much dignity as a priest or a bishop. An elderly person's life is just as sacred as an infant's. Every person is a child of God, and every person is precious.

## 2. **Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

Catholics are communal, and this principle reminds us that we cannot live in isolation. The first and most important community is family; we are called to strengthen and protect families. By participating in our communities, we can work on social issues and ensure that laws and policies benefit the common good.



### **3. Rights and Responsibilities**

We must work to have all human rights protected. Every person has rights, such as the right to life, food, shelter, and work. Everyone has economic, political, and cultural rights. Along with these rights comes the responsibility to help others in our society and to protect and safeguard the rights of others.

### **4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

Jesus focused on those in most need—the disabled, the diseased, and the outcast. His concern for their welfare was a sign of the coming of the Kingdom of God among us. This principle encourages us to look for those who might need our help. The Catholic Church teaches that by celebrating the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity, we commit ourselves to concern for those who are poor and in need.

### **5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

All occupations are valuable and should be respected. Workers have a right to fair wages and to safe working conditions. Workers have a right to join unions. This principle especially speaks to our responsibility as consumers. Who makes the products we purchase? Where are they produced? What are the working conditions of those who produce them? Expanding our knowledge as responsible consumers means that we can use our consumer power to better the lives of workers around the globe.

### **6. Solidarity**

As one family, we have a commitment to one another. Regardless of culture, race, or social status, we are called to be nonjudgmental in our support for one another. This principle reminds us that we are not to participate in groups that set one side against another. We should work to eliminate the “we-they” mentality in our speech and other social communication. Under this principle, we commit ourselves to seek common solutions to common problems in an atmosphere of respectful dialogue. Working for peace in a world that is often filled with violence and conflict is at the core of this principle.

### **7. Care of God’s Creation**

The Catholic Church calls care for the Earth and all of God’s creation essential to our faith. The responsibility of taking care of the Earth’s resources must be taken seriously and thoughtfully. Each day we are faced with choices, large and small, that help sustain our environment or contribute to the abuse of the tremendous gift of God’s creation.



One person can dramatically affect the lives of others. Catholic social teaching reminds us that we are called to embrace everyone: the poor, the immigrant, the incarcerated, the unborn, the nosy neighbor, the coworker that irritates us, and those whose opinions differ from our own. We are called to treat everyone lovingly, as God loves us. We are also called to use the resources in our environment with careful consideration.

The goal of Catholic social teaching has been articulated in the Church since the beginning: “Love one another” (John 15:17). The principles of Catholic social teaching articulate this love in a precise and measurable way. Together they serve as an “examination of conscience” for the Church today, and they can serve as a beacon of hope for all of human society. In our world today, the principles of Catholic social teaching outline our path toward building a just society and a life of holiness.

*Discover! Finding Faith in Life* brings the core concepts of Catholic social teaching to life for children. One chapter in every unit of the program focuses on a Catholic social teaching principle and the basic concepts around this principle. This introduces children to a crucial component of Catholic teaching and can enrich their faith and understanding of their role in working for a better world.



# Faith and Fun in the Family

1. **Stick to the basics.** Never underestimate the power of repetition in forming faith. Pray the Prayer before Meals ("Bless us, O Lord . . .") before every meal, wherever you are (even in the car). And pray the Our Father and the Hail Mary as part of night prayers.
2. **Honor meals as family time.** Talk about things important to each family member. Share stories, memories, values, and upcoming plans or events. Make sure there are no electronics around that could cause distractions.
3. **Talk about Jesus.** Children should hear about Jesus at home as well as in church or during religious education sessions. Include conversations about what Jesus would do in different circumstances, ask Jesus to be with various people you encounter together, and remind one another how Jesus might feel when you do something good for others.
4. **Pray aloud.** Children should hear their parents praying. Share happenings of everyday life by requesting prayers from one another. For example, "Mom has a big presentation at work today. Let's pray now that the Holy Spirit will be with her." Or "Josh's spelling test is today. He really studied hard, so let's pray that he will remember what he knows." Also remember family members and others who are ill or in special need of prayer.
5. **Pray for safety and fair play in sports.** Emphasize that we pray for safety and fair play in our games, and that God does not favor one team over another. He loves the members of every team equally.
6. **Create a prayer space in your home.** A prayer space might be a small table placed in a corner of a room. Include a Bible, a candle (real or electric), a rosary, some favorite holy cards, and some Catholic children's books. Gather here at various times for family or individual prayer.
7. **Keep a rosary in the car.** Keep a rosary in the car, and pray it on short and long trips. Brush up on the list of the mysteries or keep a guide with you in the car, and announce one for each decade. When your child is ready, invite him or her to lead.





8. **Plan vacations with Mass in mind.** Each parish in the world is unique. Research nearby parish churches and plan to participate in the Eucharist on the Sundays you are vacationing. After Mass, introduce yourselves to the celebrating priest. Ask him for tips on local restaurants or other places to see in the area.
9. **Get out in the real world.** Enjoy God's gift of creation with your family. Visit a local park or nature preserve, and wonder aloud at the beauty of God's handiwork. At every site, pray a litany: "Thank you, God, for . . ." with each family member naming one thing she or he sees in nature. Go around as many times as you like!
10. **Bless your child.** A parent's blessing is a powerful sign of God's love. With your hand on your child's head, make the sign of the cross with your thumb on your child's forehead, while saying, "God bless you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Any other appropriate words can be added. Blessings can be done before any occasion, special or routine, such as leaving for school, preparing for a test or sports competition, or going to bed.
11. **Talk about your values.** Use TV, social media, video games, or other influences as "teachable moments" to express your Christian values. Be sure to accentuate the positive if you see it illustrated in a particular character or situation.
12. **Prepare for Mass together.** Mass should be anticipated with preparation. Saturday night might be a good time to read the Sunday Gospel at the evening meal. Discuss as a family what Jesus might be telling or showing your family in the Gospel. After Mass, incorporate the homily into your conversation on the way home.
13. **Celebrate feast days.** Keep track of annual feasts by using your parish calendar and bulletin reminders. Though the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter are key, various feasts during the year merit attention and offer an opportunity to celebrate faith and make the day special. You may want to add family name days to your feast-day calendar, as well as baptismal anniversaries. There are many sources, in books and online, for celebrating feast days on the Catholic calendar. Feast days give us a respite from everyday routine and root us more firmly in the life of Christ as mirrored in each individual feast or saint.



# Characteristics of Elementary Children

Although all children are distinct individuals with different rates of development, children of the same age do have some common developmental elements. Thus, in this section, some characteristics of each age-group are presented. A better understanding of the various ages will help you to be more effective in spreading the Good News.

One characteristic common to children in the elementary grades is high energy! Children of these ages are active and curious learners who will ask and say the most surprising things. And, though they share the common characteristics that are outlined in this article, it is important to never forget that each one of them is unique, with her or his own individual characteristics and gifts.

## First Graders

First graders are enthusiastic, social, and eager to learn. Nowadays, many first graders are already reading and writing at a basic level, having developed these skills in kindergarten. Yet, six-year-olds and seven-year-olds still need a lot of movement and activity. Though they are quite inquisitive, their attention spans are rather short. Making sessions varied and dynamic will insure that your first graders are engaged and content.

## Physical Characteristics

Much is happening in first grade in terms of physical characteristics. Many children are losing teeth and growing new ones. Their fine motor skills are fairly well developed, which means that they can use scissors as well as draw and write. However, cutting around curves and writing with precision can still take quite a bit of effort. And, for some children, these are still challenging tasks. First graders' desire to move and play points to the importance of varying learning activities for this age-group. To address this, it is best to keep them moving, by doing such things as starting the class in a prayer circle in one corner of the room, singing a song with several simple motions, moving to a table activity, sitting on the floor to listen to a dramatic Bible story, playing a game in the middle of the room, or better yet, going outside or to the gym to play. This variety will satisfy their need to move while keeping them engaged and focused.

## Intellectual Characteristics

Thinking and learning are literal and concrete at this age. First graders will most likely think of God as a human person with human characteristics rather than use abstract or symbolic images. Nonetheless, first graders are thinkers. They ask a lot of questions, and they have creative imaginations. They will think about questions you ask, as long as the questions are not too complicated. Their attention spans are long enough that they like to listen to a good Bible story.

## **Social-Emotional Characteristics**

Most first graders like playing with others, but they often prefer small groups. They are willing to cooperate, but they often want to “win” or have things go their way. Young children need continual affirmation, thriving on praise. Many first graders want to be the center of attention, so they like telling stories about themselves.

## **Second Graders**

Second graders are lively, yet more grown-up and serious compared to the less confident first graders they were just a year ago. Now that second graders have a few years of elementary school experience, they are more settled and comfortable in their learning environment. The seven- to eight-year-old typically appreciates the order and structure of a classroom or catechetical setting. Thus, being organized and well-prepared will help second graders to feel relaxed, content, and ready to learn.

## **Physical Characteristics**

Most second graders have good hand-eye coordination and therefore are fairly adept at writing, painting, drawing, cutting, and pasting. Because they are still growing rapidly, they may be somewhat awkward at some of these tasks. However, in general they have good large- and small-muscle motor skills.

## **Intellectual Characteristics**

Second graders are concrete thinkers, but they do have some analytical skills and can organize their thoughts. For example, they can make comparisons and think reflectively. Yet, most of their thinking is concrete and focuses on the physical things that they can see or imagine. They might have trouble imagining something with which they are unfamiliar (see *Grade-by-Grade Learning*, at pbs.org). For example, they may have trouble imagining a desert if they have never seen one. So, if knowing what a desert is like is an important part of a lesson, they may need to see a picture or a video clip of a desert.

Furthermore, second graders do have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, although they will not always understand the consequences of their actions. They do, however, like to please adults.

## **Social-Emotional Characteristics**

The second-grade child is developing a sense of self. Interaction with classmates helps the child, but there are times when a second grader may want to be alone. And friendships can change quickly in second grade. At the same time, the seven- to eight-year-old child likes to play and work with friends. For this reason, second graders do best working with a partner or in a small group. Also, this is the period when the division of sexes begins, meaning that children prefer to play or work others of the same sex. Given that there is a heightened interest in friendships at this age, it is a good time to talk about Jesus as friend.

## **Third Graders**

Third graders are spirited, lively, and eager to take on more challenging, complicated tasks. However, they do not necessarily have all the follow-through skills needed to complete their tasks. Although they will take some initiative and work enthusiastically, you will have to help them stay organized.

### **Physical Characteristics**

Coordination and balance are much improved for third-grade children. Their muscle groups and their fine motor skills have developed to the point that they can do more intricate tasks beyond writing and drawing. They have the ability to use small instruments and thus can do things like simple sewing or threading small beads onto a string.

### **Intellectual Characteristics**

Verbal skills are in high gear by third grade. Most third graders have mastered a grade-level ability for reading, writing, and listening. They also like to talk and discuss their ideas. They are inquisitive, and now they want to know not just the facts but also the reasons behind the facts. For example, third graders may want to know why Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, or why he asked James and John to leave their father to be his disciples. And, they are ready and willing to discuss the importance of these facts.

This deeper level of thinking helps them to evaluate and make judgments. They are beginning to see the connections between concepts and to think abstractly. They not only know the difference between right and wrong but can also usually understand the consequences of choices they make.

### **Social-Emotional Characteristics**

In third grade, the peer group is very important, and peer pressure can become an issue. Also, it is fairly common for third graders to have a “best friend,” though sometimes to the exclusion of other children. You can build on the notion of Jesus as friend and use examples of Jesus and how he treated his friends. Point out that Jesus welcomed many friends, like Peter and the Apostles, Martha, Mary, Zacchaeus, and others.

Playing in same-sex groups is also still the norm. Most third graders enjoy the social dimension of working in groups and having group discussions. They can also work effectively in small groups to complete a simple task.

## **Fourth Graders**

Fourth graders are now some of the older children in their elementary school. Thus, they often feel pretty mature, important, and more autonomous. They are willing to work independently and have less need for adult direction. They are ready to take on more responsibility and make decisions. Indeed, this is a good age to discuss the responsibilities of discipleship. Fourth graders may also develop particular interests in a hobby, sport, or activity, and they may take it very seriously.

### **Physical Characteristics**

Girls are more physically mature than boys at this point. Some girls have begun pre-puberty and even puberty. Girls and boys alike may be more temperamental and brooding. But, at the same time, they are still high energy and still like to play outside and with friends. They may also enjoy team sports.

### **Intellectual Characteristics**

Fourth graders are able to do some abstract thinking and reasoning, but they still do best with concrete, hands-on learning. They like using books and references, and they have an interest in facts and figures. They also have a developing conscience and definitely have a sense of what is fair, right, and just. These interests make it a good time to have them delve more deeply into the Scripture stories that have moral lessons, as most of them do. For instance, a fourth grader will be intrigued by the fact that Jesus tells Peter he should forgive not seven times but seventy times seven times. Why would Jesus ask us to keep forgiving someone who keeps sinning?

Also, nine- to ten-year-olds have the capacity to complete a more complicated and prolonged project. So, for example, with guidance from you, a small group can take a Scripture story and act it out as a skit.

### **Social-Emotional Characteristics**

This is an age for high emotions and dramatic intensity, especially among girls. Fourth graders are often critical of themselves and others sometimes expressing this inappropriately by talking about friends and classmates. Many fourth graders are interested in the opposite sex. Even when this is the case, however, most still want to stay within their same-sex groups for socializing. In addition, they like working in small groups and can even come to a group decision. Again, emphasizing that Jesus wants us not only to welcome one another as friends but also to love and help one another can lead fourth graders to develop empathy and respect for those they may not naturally like.



## **Fifth Graders**

Fifth graders may be considered “tweens,” because they are between early childhood and adolescence. Many of them, girls especially, will begin puberty, which often starts between the ages of ten and twelve for girls and a bit later for boys. These biological changes are often accompanied by changes in emotions and intellect as young people in these middle school years become more socially, intellectually, and physically mature. At the same time, they are still children who like to be silly and have fun.

### **Physical Characteristics**

Many fifth-grade girls will show the physical signs of puberty as they begin to enter the developmental stage known as adolescence. Breast development and menstruation often occur for girls. Many boys, however, do not begin puberty until the ages of twelve to fourteen. Both boys and girls are often growing taller, feeling more stress, and sometimes experiencing changes in their sleep habits. Don’t be surprised if they arrive late or sleepy if you have a Sunday morning session.

### **Intellectual Characteristics**

Children in fifth grade are capable of critical thinking and problem solving. They are able to think somewhat abstractly. For example, ritual symbols are meaningful. They can understand that the cleansing effects of baptismal waters mean more than physical cleaning.

### **Social-Emotional Characteristics**

Most middle-school-age children enjoy group work. They are mature enough to compromise, cooperate, and collaborate when it comes to completing an assignment or solving a problem. Some fifth graders will have feelings for someone special and flirt with, text, or message those they are interested in. Social media can be a major source of influence and social anxiety at this age. Cell phones and mobile devices may become an issue in the classroom but can also be used as teaching tools.

## **Summary**

The characteristics of each age-group presented here are very general. Although these characteristics might not describe every child, an awareness of these qualities will help you plan developmentally appropriate learning activities for your group. The more you learn about the spectrum of child development, the more you will understand where the children you teach have “come from” and where they are headed in their next phase of development. Each child develops at his or her own pace, and it is likely an uneven pace at that! One child may be far ahead intellectually but a little behind socially.

Another child's social development may be right on target, but he or she may face challenges in thinking skills. The activities in the *Discover!* program are varied so that you are sure to find some to meet almost every child's need to grow intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

One way to give every child a chance to grow and develop in your classroom, even if a group meets only once a week, is to give each child a job. Line leader, paper passer, prayer leader, movement leader, Bible carrier—whatever small job is available should be assigned for one session (or one week), and then reassigned for the next one. Keep a running list of assignments so that each child gets a turn at doing each job. Write the assignments for each session on the board. All elementary-age children love to help and enjoy feeling appreciated, and you will be rewarded with a smooth-running group of proud and happy children.

# Biblical Literacy and the Teaching of Scripture

As a religious educator, you know the power that Scripture has to touch children's hearts and inspire their moral and spiritual lives. To remind us to draw on this power in catechesis, the Church's teaching documents always call us to make the Bible an integral part of our ministry:

Catechesis should take Sacred Scripture as its inspiration, its fundamental curriculum, and its end because it strengthens faith, nourishes the soul, and nurtures the spiritual life. (*National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 70)

Likewise, the holy synod forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful, especially those who live the religious life, to learn "the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine scriptures. (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation [Dei Verbum]*, 1965, 25)

Through catechetical ministry, teachers equip children with the essential knowledge and skills required for their lifelong journey of faith. When it comes to the Bible, those in ministry want to begin teaching the knowledge and skills that will help children to ultimately become biblically literate adults. So let's start by describing biblically literate adults.

Biblically literate adults are comfortable reading and using the Bible. They know how the books of the Bible are arranged and how to quickly and easily locate a specific book or passage. They have a solid understanding of the biblical story of salvation history, and they are familiar with key people and events and can tell how God's saving power worked through those people and events. Biblically literate adults understand that any book or passage from Scripture must be understood in its proper context. When reading the Bible, they consider things like the literary genre, the culture of the time, the original author's intended message, how the message fits into the bigger picture of salvation history, and how the passage is understood in the Church's Tradition.

We can help children to become biblically literate adults by working on three specific goals:

- A. Help them to become knowledgeable and comfortable using the Bible.
- B. Help them to know and understand the biblical story of salvation history.
- C. Help them to understand how to interpret Bible books and passages in their proper contexts.

Goal A is the **Access** goal. Goal B is the **Big-Picture** goal. Goal C is the **Context** goal. Taken together, these can be called the ABCs of biblical literacy.

The three goals of biblical literacy follow a certain progression. The **Access** goal is the most basic goal; its competencies create a foundation for working on the **Big-Picture** and **Context** goals. The Big-Picture competencies build on the Access competencies and creates greater knowledge that the Context competencies can then build on. All three goals are closely related; working on any one goal usually reinforces the others.

As a general guideline, with elementary-age children, the primary focus should be developing the **Access** competencies and introducing some **Big-Picture** knowledge. The **Context** competencies will probably not be focused on, because they require more abstract reasoning than most young children are capable of. However, specific Context skills and knowledge competencies will be used as children learn about the meaning of specific Bible stories.

Let's take a closer look at these three goals and how teachers can help children to develop the competencies needed to become proficient in them. (For a more detailed look at these three goals, read *Biblical Literacy Made Easy: A Practical Guide for Catechists, Teachers, and Youth Ministers*, Saint Mary's Press, 2008.)

## **Access Goal: Helping Children Become Knowledgeable and Comfortable Using the Bible**

Many children do not know how to use the Bible. They may have heard Bible stories, and maybe they were even given a Bible for their First Communion. But they do not know how the Bible is structured or how to find specific passages or stories within it. By focusing on the competencies of the **Access** goal, we can help the children we teach to become more familiar and comfortable with the Bible.

The most critical practice for achieving the **Access** goal—a practice so basic that many people overlook it—is simply having the children *use* the Bible. Too often children read Scripture passages as quotations in textbooks. There may be only one Bible in the classroom, so the teacher looks up the passage and then hands the opened Bible to a young person to read. These practices do not encourage children to learn basic biblical literacy skills. If young Catholics are to become comfortable in accessing the Bible, they must use it regularly. Every classroom or meeting space must have enough Bibles for each student to use. What we model as important has a much greater impact than what we say is important!

To help children become comfortable in using the Bible, we can teach them two important competencies: (1) knowing the Bible's structure and (2) locating a passage in the Bible.

## Knowing the Bible's Structure

The Bible is not one book; rather, it is a collection, or even a small library, of books and letters. These books are organized in a specific and intentional structure, sort of like books might be grouped in sections on a bookshelf. At the beginning of *The Catholic Children's Bible*, these sections are briefly explained and visually presented in the section called "The Bible Is Like a Bookshelf." Here is a slightly more detailed explanation of those sections:

- **The Old Testament** is the first major section of the Bible. Its books are primarily about God's relationship with his Chosen People, the Israelites (or the Jews).
  - The first part of the Old Testament is called the **Pentateuch**. The stories in these books are the heart of the Old Testament.
  - The second part of the Old Testament is called the **Historical Books**. These books recount how the Chosen People settled in the Promised Land and how they eventually became a kingdom ruled by great and not-so-great kings.
  - The third part of the Old Testament is called the **Wisdom Books**. These books teach some of the collected wisdom of the Israelites.
  - The fourth part of the Old Testament is called the **Books of the Prophets**. These contain the warnings and consolations of some of Israel's prophets.
- **The New Testament** is the second major section of the Bible. Its books tell how God fulfilled the Old Testament promises by sending us the Savior, Jesus Christ.
  - The first part of the New Testament is the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospels have the stories about Christ's life and teaching, and the Book of Acts tells us about how the Church spread after Christ's Ascension.
  - The second part of the New Testament is the Letters. Early Church leaders sent these letters, some to specific individuals and others to specific Christian communities.
  - The last book of the New Testament is the Book of Revelation. It is a unique collection of prophecies and symbolic visions.

These sections can be referred to when the children look up passages in the Bible with comment, such as, "This Bible story is from the Book of Exodus, which is in the Old Testament of the Bible," or "This Bible story is from the Gospel of Mark. The Gospels have stories about the life of Jesus and the things he taught."

## Locating a Passage in the Bible

The system for finding a particular passage in the Bible is simple and explained in the beginning of *The Catholic Children's Bible* in the section called "How to Find a Bible Passage." After explaining this system to the children, teachers can assist them in developing the skill of locating Bible passages through practice, practice, practice! This skill will take time for children to master, but it is a crucial skill for lifelong Bible reading. Help in teaching navigation skills to children can be found in the article in each teaching guide—and this Online Director's Manual—titled "Helping Children Navigate *The Catholic Children's Bible*."

## **Big-Picture Goal: Helping Children Know and Understand the Biblical Story of Salvation History**

Because of our Lectionary-based liturgies, Catholics are often familiar with most of the important people and stories of history. But if liturgies are a person's only contact with Scripture, she or he may not see how those individual stories fit into the overarching biblical story of God's covenant relationship with the human race, which we also call salvation history. Much of Catholic theology is based on the presumption that we know and understand the overarching story of salvation history.

Salvation history is often organized into different periods to help us understand God's saving work. In all relevant Saint Mary's Press® resources, eight historical periods are named to describe the arc of salvation history:

1. Primeval History (the figurative stories in the Book of Genesis)
2. The Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)
3. Egypt and the Exodus (Moses and desert experience of Israel)
4. Settling the Promised Land (Joshua and the Twelve Tribes of Israel)
5. The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel (the time of the Prophets)
6. The Exile and Return (the Babylonian Captivity and restoration of the Temple)
7. The Life of Jesus Christ
8. The Early Christian Church

Understanding how each biblical book's story fits into this bigger history is the mark of a truly biblically literate person. This kind of knowledge grows with repetition and review. Teachers can best help children develop this knowledge by exposing them to key people and events in Scripture. *The Catholic Children's Bible* helps to do this by focusing on 125 key people and events in the Featured Stories on two-page spreads. Using these Featured Stories consistently with children will provide them an excellent foundation for knowing and understanding salvation history.

## **Context Goal: Helping Children Understand How to Interpret Bible Books and Passages in Their Proper Contexts**

The **Context** goal is more subtle and complex than the **Access** and **Big-Picture** goals. Teachers typically do not work on the skills required to master this goal with young children. It requires a level of abstract thinking that this age-group is not yet capable of. However, teachers need to understand this goal in order to teach children the correct interpretation of the biblical stories they read.

This excerpt from the Second Vatican Council document *Divine Revelation* describes how to correctly interpret the Bible:

Seeing that, in sacred scripture, God speaks through human beings in human fashion, it follows that the interpreters of sacred scripture, if they are to ascertain what God has wished to communicate to us, should carefully search out the meaning which the sacred writers really had in mind, the meaning which God had thought well to manifest through the medium of their words. (12)

This excerpt states that we must do two things when interpreting a Bible story or teaching. First, we must seek to understand what the original human author intended to communicate. The Church Fathers called this the “literal sense” of Scripture. Second, we must seek to understand what God is revealing through the story or passage. The Church Fathers called this the fuller sense or the “spiritual sense” of Scripture. Often the literal sense and the spiritual sense of a passage are closely related. But in some Scripture passages, God reveals, through the spiritual sense, a deeper and more universal truth than the human author originally understood or intended.

Paragraphs 109–119 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* further explain how to apply these principles. These paragraphs describe the contexts we must consider when interpreting any particular passage of the Bible, which is why we describe this as the Context goal.

- **Historical context** To understand the full importance or meaning of a certain event, we need to know the larger historical situation the event occurred within.
- **Cultural context** Sometimes the true meaning of certain actions or words makes sense only when we understand the cultural practices or beliefs of the time.
- **Literary genre** The Bible is composed of many different types of literature. We must know which type we are reading and realize that each genre has its own rules for interpretation.
- **Unity of the whole Bible** When taken as a whole, God’s revealed truth is presented in the Bible without error. This is the case in many Old Testament passages, whose Christian meaning can be completely and accurately understood only in light of the New Testament revelation.
- **Living Tradition of the Church** To fully understand some Bible passages, we must take into account how the Magisterium—the official teaching authority of the Church—has interpreted the meaning of those passages.
- **Coherence of the truths of faith** When it comes to religious or moral truth, the Bible cannot contradict itself or any other revealed truth of our Tradition.

If we do not interpret the Bible using these contexts, we could easily misinterpret God’s Revelation. This is the danger of biblical fundamentalism, an approach to biblical interpretation that Catholics are cautioned to avoid. In its extreme forms, biblical fundamentalism leads people to false beliefs, such as the belief that God created the universe in six twenty-four-hour days.



Even though teachers will not necessarily mention these different contexts when working with young children, the Featured Stories in *The Catholic Children's Bible* provide trustworthy tools to help children correctly understand the contexts of 125 Bible stories. The engaging art in *The Catholic Children's Bible* provides strong visual cues about the human author's intention. The Tell It! panels provide children the opportunity to retell the story using the visual prompts so that they begin to process its meaning. And the short Understand It! panels explain what God is revealing through the story, drawing upon the contexts of the unity of the Bible, Tradition, and the coherence of the truths of faith.

# Helping Children Navigate *The Catholic Children's Bible*

Helping children become familiar with the structure of the Bible so that they can easily locate specific books and passages is a foundational part of building biblical literacy. *The Catholic Children's Bible* offers multiple tools to help children more readily navigate their way around the Bible.

## Color Coding

When you look at the bottom of *The Catholic Children's Bible* or open it to any page, you will notice bands of color along the bottoms of the pages. These colors delineate the major divisions of the Bible.

Section of the Bible	Books of the Bible	Band Color
The Pentateuch (or Torah)	Genesis through Deuteronomy	aqua
The Historical Books	Joshua through Second Maccabees	brown
The Wisdom Books	Job through Sirach	purple
The Books of the Prophets	Isaiah through Malachi	orange
The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles	Matthew through John and the Acts of the Apostles	blue
The Letters and Revelation	Romans through Revelation	green
Prayer and Bible Helps	back of the book	yellow

The same colors are shown in the table of contents (pages 3–6) as bands of color behind the name of each section of the Bible. They are also repeated in “The Bible Is Like a Bookshelf” image on page 15 of *The Catholic Children's Bible*. This image can be helpful in introducing children to the structure of the Bible and can be another resource to help them identify where a particular book of the Bible is located.

## Page Tabs

You will also notice that the table of contents (pages 3–6) indicates a specific color for each individual book of the Bible. These colors are matched with tabs that are provided along the sides of each page within the Bible. A chapter number is also included in the tab to indicate the core chapter that is featured on each page.

## Finding Specific Passages in the Bible

The article “How to Find a Bible Passage” on page 13 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* presents the traditional method of finding specific Bible passages by the name of the book, the chapter, and the verse. This is basic information for anyone who wishes to understand Scripture citations and use them to locate a particular Bible passage.

## Navigating the Featured Stories

One of the most attractive elements of *The Catholic Children's Bible* is its Featured Stories. These stories encapsulate a Scripture story or passage, illustrate it, and surround it with the helpful Understand It!, Live It!, and Tell It! teaching aids. In addition, new or unfamiliar words are printed in bold type and presented, with definitions, along with the Featured Story. A full list of the 125 Featured Stories that are offered within the Bible is presented on pages 7–11 of *The Catholic Children's Bible*.

When the children encounter a Featured Story, such as the one presented on page 122, for example, they will see a green leaf at the beginning and end of the Scripture text. This indicates that this is a portion of text repeated from the main body of the Bible. To identify where this text comes from, the children can simply look at the Scripture citation or citations above the Scripture text. In many cases, this text shown for the Featured Story is a shortened version of a longer Scripture citation. The children can find the “full story” citation in their Bibles and will see two green leaves that indicate where the full story starts and stops (see pages 120–121).

# The Dark Passages of Scripture

In helping children read and understand the Bible, teachers must be aware that some Bible stories are not child-friendly. The accounts of incest, rape, genocide, and holy war in the sacred pages of Scripture can come as a surprise for many beginning Bible readers. In his apostolic exhortation "The Word of the Lord" (*Verbum Domini*, November 2010), Pope Benedict XVI called these stories the "dark" passages of the Bible. Here is what the Holy Father said regarding these passages:

In discussing the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments, the Synod also considered those passages in the Bible which, due to the violence and immorality they occasionally contain, prove obscure and difficult. Here it must be remembered first and foremost that *biblical revelation is deeply rooted in history*. God's plan is manifested progressively and it is accomplished slowly, in *successive stages* and despite human resistance. God chose a people and patiently worked to guide and educate them. Revelation is suited to the cultural and moral level of distant times and thus describes facts and customs, such as cheating and trickery, and acts of violence and massacre, without explicitly denouncing the immorality of such things. This can be explained by the historical context, yet it can cause the modern reader to be taken aback, especially if he or she fails to take account of the many "dark" deeds carried out down the centuries, and also in our own day. In the Old Testament, the preaching of the prophets vigorously challenged every kind of injustice and violence, whether collective or individual, and thus became God's way of training his people in preparation for the Gospel. So it would be a mistake to neglect those passages of Scripture that strike us as problematic. Rather, we should be aware that the correct interpretation of these passages requires a degree of expertise, acquired through a training that interprets the texts in their historical-literary context and within the Christian perspective which has as its ultimate hermeneutical key "the Gospel and the new commandment of Jesus Christ brought about in the paschal mystery."<sup>1</sup> I encourage scholars and pastors to help all the faithful to approach these passages through an interpretation which enables their meaning to emerge in the light of the mystery of Christ. (42)

In this teaching, Pope Benedict emphasized the following points:

- The Bible does not shy away from telling about the worst things that humans do to one another—these are the very things that Jesus Christ came to save us from. Unfortunately, these evil acts continue even into our time.
- The biblical author does not always explicitly say that a particular action is immoral; at the time he was writing, these actions might not have yet been seen as immoral (such as the killing of whole groups of people) or the biblical author may have presumed the reader knew that these were immoral actions (such as Lot's daughters having sexual relations with their drunken father). Because God's Revelation is "manifested progressively" and "is accomplished slowly, in successive stages," the preaching of the prophets and, ultimately, the teaching of Jesus Christ help us see the true moral meaning of these actions.
- Properly understanding these passages requires the help of people trained in biblical interpretation, such as pastors and biblical scholars.

So what does this mean for teachers of children when it comes to these dark passages of Scripture? The best advice is to avoid these passages completely, because these stories can be too disturbing and confusing for young and innocent minds. *The Catholic Children's Bible* does not use any of these stories as Featured Stories, so there is no need to worry about coming across any dark stories when the special two-page spreads are used.

# Overview of Catholic Social Teaching

In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are urged to keep the light of Christ alive in our hearts for the rest of our lives. We are called to holiness. Though this may seem like a tall order, when we live lives that focus on loving God, ourselves, others, and creation itself, we move in the direction of lifelong holiness.

The Catholic Church has a rich history of social teaching that helps us live positive, meaningful, and holy lives through an understanding of our relationship and responsibility to others. This teaching has guided the lives of Christians since the beginning of the Church. Modern Catholic social teaching has been addressed and explained in Church documents since the 1800s. Catholic social teaching promotes our Catholic identity and helps ensure that we treat those around us and our environment with dignity and respect. It gives us the guidance to live our faith and navigate our modern world.

Some of the key themes of Catholic social teaching have been highlighted as general themes or principles. These principles challenge us globally—to view the world as one family and to work for justice and peace. They also challenge us locally. We are called to apply these principles daily in our encounters with people, in forming our opinions regarding current events, and in our willingness to give our time and money to those in need.

The following are seven of the key principles of Catholic social teaching:

## 1. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

This first principle is the foundation for the others. We cannot practice the other principles without fully embracing this one. This principle seems simple and uncomplicated, but it is extremely complex. It states that every life is sacred, and every person has dignity. The challenge to this principle is to comprehend that there are not degrees of sacredness and degrees of dignity. No one life is more valuable than another; every life is significant. An incarcerated person has just as much dignity as a priest or a bishop. An elderly person's life is just as sacred as an infant's. Every person is a child of God, and every person is precious.

## 2. **Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

Catholics are communal, and this principle reminds us that we cannot live in isolation. The first and most important community is family; we are called to strengthen and protect families. By participating in our communities, we can work on social issues and ensure that laws and policies benefit the common good.

### **3. Rights and Responsibilities**

We must work to have all human rights protected. Every person has rights, such as the right to life, food, shelter, and work. Everyone has economic, political, and cultural rights. Along with these rights comes the responsibility to help others in our society and to protect and safeguard the rights of others.

### **4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

Jesus focused on those in most need—the disabled, the diseased, and the outcast. His concern for their welfare was a sign of the coming of the Kingdom of God among us. This principle encourages us to look for those who might need our help. The Catholic Church teaches that by celebrating the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity, we commit ourselves to concern for those who are poor and in need.

### **5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

All occupations are valuable and should be respected. Workers have a right to fair wages and to safe working conditions. Workers have a right to join unions. This principle especially speaks to our responsibility as consumers. Who makes the products we purchase? Where are they produced? What are the working conditions of those who produce them? Expanding our knowledge as responsible consumers means that we can use our consumer power to better the lives of workers around the globe.

### **6. Solidarity**

As one family, we have a commitment to one another. Regardless of culture, race, or social status, we are called to be nonjudgmental in our support for one another. This principle reminds us that we are not to participate in groups that set one side against another. We should work to eliminate the “we-they” mentality in our speech and other social communication. Under this principle, we commit ourselves to seek common solutions to common problems in an atmosphere of respectful dialogue. Working for peace in a world that is often filled with violence and conflict is at the core of this principle.

### **7. Care of God’s Creation**

The Catholic Church calls care for the Earth and all of God’s creation essential to our faith. The responsibility of taking care of the Earth’s resources must be taken seriously and thoughtfully. Each day we are faced with choices, large and small, that help sustain our environment or contribute to the abuse of the tremendous gift of God’s creation.



One person can dramatically affect the lives of others. Catholic social teaching reminds us that we are called to embrace everyone: the poor, the immigrant, the incarcerated, the unborn, our nosy neighbor, the coworker that irritates us, and those whose opinions differ from our own. We are called to treat everyone lovingly, as God loves us. We are also called to use the resources in our environment with careful consideration.

The goal of Catholic social teaching has been articulated in the Church since the beginning: “Love one another” (John 15:17). The principles of Catholic social teaching articulate this love in a precise and measurable way. Together they serve as an “examination of conscience” for the Church today, and they can serve as a beacon of hope for all of human society. In our world today, the principles of Catholic social teaching outline our path toward building a just society and a life of holiness.

*Discover! Finding Faith in Life* brings the core concepts of Catholic social teaching to life for children. One chapter in every unit of the program focuses on a Catholic social teaching principle and the basic concepts around this principle. This introduces children to a crucial component of Catholic teaching and can enrich their faith and understanding of their role in working for a better world.

## **Helpful Web Links**

[USCCB Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching](#)

[YouTube Videos on Catholic Social Teaching 101](#)

[USCCB Additional Resources on Catholic Social Teaching](#)

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