

Prayers, Practices and Religious Literacy Objectives

For Students, Families and Catechists

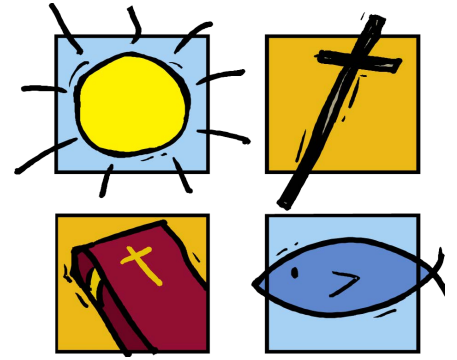


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Curriculum Outline for Each Grade:

The full religion curriculum is available, if you would like a copy. What follows is a summary of the goals for each level along with the material which will be included in the baseline testing.

First Year The theme: God created me and loves me.

The goals of the First Year curriculum are to introduce students to a structured study of their faith. The concentration is on 1) helping them to begin to understand their creation by a loving God; 2) helping them to learn the formal prayers of the church and to begin a life of prayer; 3) helping them to understand their membership in the church.

By the end of first year, students will be expected to know the [Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be](#). Be able to begin to engage in silent prayer by using the "[Five Finger Prayer](#)".

Second Grade The theme: Jesus came to save us and we experience that salvation in the sacraments.

The goals of the Second Grade curriculum focus on preparing the students for the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist. In the course of this preparation, they concentrate upon 1) the life and person of Jesus; 2) how the church celebrates the sacraments in its liturgy; 3) how they can draw closer to God in prayer and in the sacraments.

In addition to their text, first communion candidates use a supplementary text at home with their families.

By the end of second grade, students will be expected to know an [Act of Contrition](#), the basic responses for the mass, and [a prayer to say after receiving communion](#). Students will increase their ability to pray silently, using the "[Five Finger Prayer](#)".

Third Grade The theme: The story of Jesus and his Church.

The Third Grade curriculum concentrates on what it means to belong to the church. Themes taught in first and second grades are repeated in greater depth, as the students are growing in their understanding. They specifically explore 1) how the church functions; 2) what the church believes in the Creed; 3) how the church depends upon Scripture.

By the end of third grade, students will be expected to know the [Apostles' Creed](#) and be able to describe basic personnel (priest, bishop, etc.) and basic structures (parish, Vatican, etc.) in the church. They will also be able to pray the [Rosary](#).

Fourth Grade The theme: How do we get to heaven to be with the Lord?

The focus of the Fourth Grade curriculum is the foundation for morality in the Beatitudes and the Commandments. Students will 1) learn how our moral tradition is rooted in the Old and New Testaments; 2) what the church teaches about how we should live our lives; 3) explore ways that they can "do good and avoid evil" in their everyday lives.

By the end of fourth grade, students will be able to list the [Ten Commandments](#), the [Beatitudes](#), the [precepts of the church](#), the [corporal and spiritual works of mercy](#). They will also be able to pray the [Examen](#).

Fifth Grade

The theme: Jesus comes to meet us in the sacraments.

The Fifth Grade curriculum concentrates on the sacraments and the liturgy of the church. In addition, they will explore the Scriptures further. Students will 1) learn about each of the sacraments in more depth; 2) have a working familiarity with the liturgy and the liturgical year; 3) explore the life and message of St. Paul.

By the end of fifth grade, students will be able to [list, describe and define each sacrament](#), to list the [basic parts of the mass](#), to be able to describe the principal ministries in the liturgy, the [major seasons of the church year and the holy days of obligation](#). They will also be able to recite the [Nicene Creed](#).

Sixth Grade

The theme: God loves us and desires to save us.

The Sixth Grade curriculum focuses on the Old Testament. Students will 1) develop a working knowledge of the major themes of the Old Testament; 2) explore more about Judaism and the world of the Scriptures; 3) be able to describe the links between the Old Testament and the Christian tradition.

By the end of sixth grade, students will be able to identify and describe in chronological order the major events in the Old Testament and the major events in life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They will also be able to pray with the Psalms using [lectio divina](#).

Seventh Grade

The theme: Jesus died and rose to save us.

This year consists of two segments: Jesus in the Gospels and discipleship and Christian morality. The first segment will give a survey of the life of Jesus as it is told to us in the gospels, and also will pose the challenge of discipleship to the students. Is following Jesus, and letting that govern the choices in their lives, a decision that they are ready to make? The second segment will help lay the foundation for a discussion about living a moral life and give the students information about the Church's guidance in moral decision-making.

By the end of seventh grade, students will be familiar with the Gospels, especially the Gospel of Luke. They will be able to engage in a discussion of sin, grace, conscience and specific moral issues. They will also be able to pray with the Gospels using [Ignatian contemplation](#).

Eighth Grade

The theme: Jesus sends the Spirit to make us strong in our faith.

The Eighth grade curriculum consists of three segments: the Acts of the Apostles, the Creed and a review of Catholic teaching and immediate preparation for confirmation. The review of the Creed, what the church believes, provides a foundation to profess that belief in the sacrament of confirmation.

By the end of eighth grade, students will be familiar with how the Church, guided by the Spirit, took root in human history. They will be able to describe how the Spirit continues to guide the faith of the Church and they will be able to profess that faith at Confirmation. They will have a greater familiarity with and ability to use the forms of prayer introduced over the years.

Prayers to learn by heart:

These are presented here in English. However, as long as a child knows them in one language, they have met the benchmark in our program.

The Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us no into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Additional prayers for Second Grade and beyond.

Act of Contrition

My God,
I am sorry for my sins with my whole heart.
In choosing to do wrong
and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you
who I should love above all things.
I firmly intend with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for
us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

*The following are much loved prayers which are
appropriate to say after receiving communion.*

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will.
All I have and call my own.
Whatever I have or hold, you have given me.
I return it all to you
to be used according to your will.
Give me only your love and grace
and I am rich enough
and ask for nothing more.

St. Ignatius of Loyola

Soul of Christ, make me holy.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, let me drink your wine.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesus, hear me.
Within your wounds, hide me.
Do not let me be separated from you.
From every evil, defend me.

At the hour of my death, call me.
Ask me to come to you,
That I may praise you in the company
of your saints, for all eternity.

Traditional prayer, translated by John Henry Newman

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love,
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
In pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Traditionally attributed to St. Francis of Assisi

Additional prayers for Third Grade and beyond

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life,
our sweetness, and our hope. To you do we
cry poor banished children of Eve. To you do
we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping
in this valley of tears. Turn then, O most
gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward
us and after this our exile show unto us the
blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement!
O loving! O sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us, O
Holy Mother of God. That we may be made
worthy of the promises of Christ.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.

In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Daily Prayer

THE MORNING OFFERING

The following is a daily prayer, commending our lives to God, popularized by the Apostleship of Prayer.

You can find the monthly intentions which accompany this prayer at

www.apostleship-prayer.org

Loving Father,
I offer you everything I do this day -
my thoughts, works, joys and sufferings.
I desire to join my heart this day
to the heart of your Son,
who gave himself up totally to your service
and to the service of others.
Give me your Spirit
so that I can live like him.
joined to his offering in the Eucharist.
I pray with Mary and the whole Church
for the Pope's intentions this month.

THE DAILY PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

*There is a long tradition, founded in the spiritual life of the Jewish people, of Christian prayer throughout the day. **The Liturgy of the Hours** is the official 'daily prayer' of the church. You can find this cycle of prayer, with psalms, readings and canticles, online at **www.universalis.com***

There are three canticles from Luke's Gospel which are prayed as part of the Liturgy of the Hours. Even if you don't pray all of the Liturgy, it is good to pray these at morning, evening and before bed. These canticles are found in Luke 1 and 2. It is the custom to say the "Glory Be..." after each one of these prayers.

Benedictus

This was prayed by Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist and is prayed in the morning.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he has come to his people and set them free. He
has raised up for us a mighty savior, born of the
house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old

that he would save us from our enemies, from
the hands of all who hate us.
He promised to show mercy to our fathers and
to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father
Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our
enemies, free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of
our life.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of
the Most High; for you will go before the Lord
to prepare his way, to give his people
knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of
their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God the
dawn from on high shall break upon us, to
shine on those who dwell in darkness and the
shadow of death, and to guide our feet into
the way of peace.

Magnificat

This canticle was prayed by Mary when her cousin Elizabeth recognized that she was pregnant with the Messiah. It is prayed in the evening.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has
looked with favor on his lowly servant. From
this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me, and
holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him in every
generation. He has shown the strength of his
arm, he has scattered the proud in their
conceit. He has cast down the mighty from
their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He
has filled the hungry with good things, and the
rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers, to
Abraham and his children for ever.

Nunc Dimittis

This canticle was prayed by Simeon, an old man, when he saw the infant Christ after a long life of waiting. It is the original 'bedtime prayer' in the Christian tradition.

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people, Israel.

MORE PRAYERS FOR THE DAY

The Jesus Prayer

Praying throughout the day is part of the Christian call to holiness. One tradition, from Eastern Christianity is to pray quietly one line over and over until it becomes a refrain through one's life. This prayer is a favorite of many.

O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner!
or

Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us!

Blessings Before and After Meals

This is one blessing for before meals.

Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts, which we are about to receive from your bounty, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

This is the traditional blessing after a meal.

We give thanks for all your benefits, almighty God, who lives and reigns forever. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

The Angelus

The Angelus is traditionally prayed at dawn, noon and evening. (Or at 6:00 AM, 12:00 PM and 6:00 PM.) The three versicles and responses are taken from Luke 1 and John 1.

The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary....

Behold the handmaid of the Lord:
Be it done unto me according to your word.

Hail Mary....

And the Word was made Flesh:
And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary . . .

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,
that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer for those who have died

This prayer and response is the traditional prayer for God's mercy on those who have died.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.
And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Amen.

The Creeds

Why do we have two Creeds in the first place? *The Apostles' Creed was developed from the questions asked of those to be baptized in the church at Rome. We answer these same questions at our own baptism and renew them when celebrating the sacraments of initiation and during the Easter season.*

The answer to all these questions is "I do."

Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

Do you reject the glamor of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?

Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

Later in the church's life, by the fourth century, various controversies had arisen about the nature of who Jesus was. The Creed we recite on Sundays was first developed at the Council of Nicea in 325 and added to slightly at the Council of Constantinople in 381. It was based on the Apostles' Creed, with some additions to clarify that Jesus was truly God and truly human.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God

from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Five Finger Prayer

When Pope Francis first appeared on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica after his election in March, 2013, he asked everyone to pray over him and then with him. Before blessing the crowd, he invited them to pray the simple prayers that most of us learned first, when we were small children: the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be. No matter where you were in the world that day, no matter what language you spoke, you could pray along with him and the crowds gathered in the Square. When it really comes down to it, sometimes the simplest ways, which we have known 'by heart' for most of our lives, work the best in drawing us together.

Later that spring, the Pope suggested another way to pray that can be used not only by children but by anyone. He didn't invent it, but he made it popular. One uses one's fingers to quietly remember who to pray for:

1—The thumb is the closest to you. Pray for those who are closest in your life.

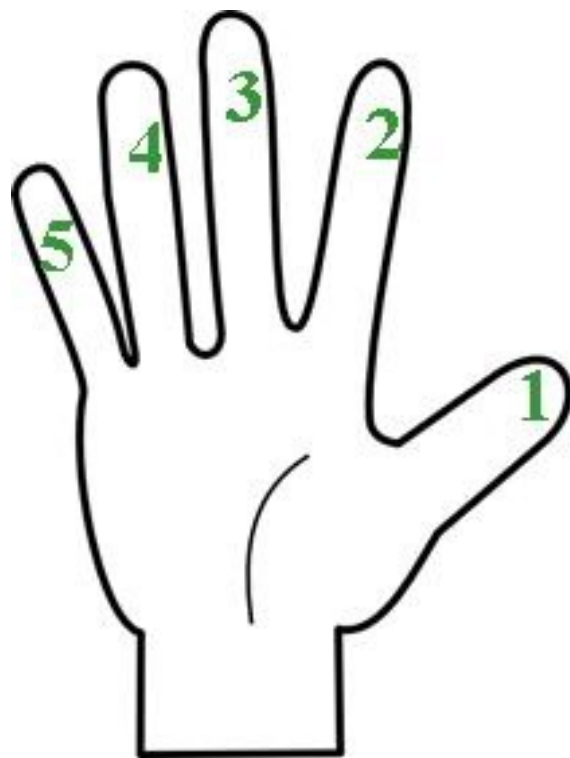
2—The index finger is used to point. Pray for those who point out the way and lead you in any capacity.

3—The middle finger is longest. It symbolizes those in authority in the church and in civil society.

4—The fourth finger is the weakest. It reminds us of those who are weak and in trouble, the ill and the poor.

5—The little finger reminds us of ourselves. We shouldn't fail to pray for ourselves, too!

Close with those three prayers we all know by heart—the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be.



The Examen

The **Examen** is a short prayer devised by St. Ignatius of Loyola in which you try to see how God was active during your day. Using this method of prayer can help you become conscious of how God is helping you to grow in holiness. It is a good way to remember that we depend upon God to become holy people. It can be prayed at midday or before going to bed.

The first point is to give thanks to God our Lord for the gifts received.

Ignatius once said that the most abominable sin he could imagine was the sin of ingratitude. He knew that an awareness of God's goodness and generosity is the foundation of our relationship with God. Once we recognize God's goodness, we spontaneously feel gratitude. In this first point, we express gratitude for the experiences and encounters during the day that have been good or pleasant or meaningful, whether they seem trivial or important. We also express gratitude for the larger gifts we have received: our faith and our salvation, our life, our talents and abilities, significant relationships, whatever comes to mind.

We might sometimes find ourselves in a mood of resentment or depression where a feeling of gratitude is hard to muster. At that time, it is all the more important for us to express thanks to God. Not to pretend to feelings we don't feel, but to acknowledge, at whatever level we can, the truth of God's goodness to us.

The second point is to ask for the grace to know my sins and to root them out.

Ignatius gives his second point a moralistic tone. The particular grace we are seeking here can be expressed more broadly as the light to see our life the way that God sees it, without the illusions and deceptions that we commonly live by.

If we are to ask for this grace wholeheartedly, it is important for us to know how desperately we are in need of it. Psychology has shown that many of our true feelings and motivations are genuinely hidden from us. The unconscious part of ourselves can have a powerful influence on what we feel and how we act.

Praying the Examen

Thanksgiving

Lord, I realize that all, even myself, is a gift from you.

Today, for what things am I most grateful?

Intention

Lord, open my eyes and ears to be more honest with myself.

Help me to look honestly at myself and what I need and desire.

Examination

Lord, show me what has been happening to me and in me this day.

Today, in what ways have I experienced your love?

Contrition

Lord, I am still learning to grow in your love.

Today, what choices have been inadequate responses to your love? What have I done wrong?

Hope and Help

Lord, let me look with longing toward the future.

Today and tomorrow, in what ways do I need your grace and your help?

Conclude with the Lord's Prayer

Even apart from this, there is a natural tendency to rationalize our actions and to believe the sort of front we put on for other people. Or we can deny or repress unpleasant or embarrassing things about ourselves. Or we can have attitudes of self-deprecation or contempt that distort our view of ourselves and others. The possibilities for self-deception are endless. To truly know ourselves is not something that we are able to do alone. We need to ask the Holy Spirit for the light that can reveal us to ourselves.

The third point is to demand an account of my soul from the moment of rising to that of the present examination, hour by hour or period by period. The thoughts should be examined first, then the words, and finally the actions.

The third point is the heart of the *Examen*. Our actions, words, thoughts, feelings can come from an internal source of freedom and openness to other people and God. Or they can come from what St. Paul calls the "flesh" or the "law of sin"; that is to say from the self-centredness that inhabits all of us. We examine the events of our day methodically in order to uncover the source and the direction of our life that day.

Ignatius suggests we move from thoughts to words to actions. However, it can be more fruitful to move the other way, to look at words and actions and then reflect on the real motivations, intentions and feelings that underlay them. Actions that are apparently good can be done for bad motives, such as a desire for praise. Such an action might be considered praiseworthy but really springs from self-centredness.

Some people are free from actions that are obviously sinful. But when we go to a deeper level of intention and feeling, we can discover that sin has a larger hold on our life than we suspect, that there are all sorts of subtle ways that we focus on self rather than moving outward, towards others and towards the Other.

The Christian life aims at a purity of intention, where all our actions spring from freedom and grace. At first we achieve this type of freedom only sporadically and often fall short. But we can grow towards it. The examination of our day is not simply earnest introspection, it is prayer. It is going through our day with God, attentive to the inner feelings and desires which is where we experience God's call in the midst of everyday activity.

The fourth point is to ask pardon of God our Lord for my faults.

Once we have reviewed our day, we may have come to a sense of the dynamic of sin and grace that has been operating in our life that day. The fourth point is our response to that awareness.

Insofar as we have discovered grace and freedom operative during the day, our response is gratitude and wonder for the work of God in our soul. Genuine freedom always comes as a surprise to us, because it involves a sort of self-transcendence that we know we don't have in ourselves. When we discover that in our day, we need to praise God for it.

Conversely, when we discover sinfulness and self-centredness, our response is remorse and contrition. Contrition does not mean dwelling in guilt and shame and beating ourselves for not being perfect. It means

recognizing our distance from God, our moving away from God, and asking for and receiving God's forgiveness. The difference between contrition and shame is that contrition is a feeling that moves us out of ourselves and towards God. Shame simply moves us deeper into ourselves.

Like gratitude in the first point, we may not be able to deeply feel the contrition that is the proper response to recognition of our self-centredness. But it is important then to express it, even if it doesn't seem very deep, by asking for pardon.

The fifth point is to resolve to amend with the help of God's grace. Close with the Lord's Prayer.

We end the *Examen* by looking towards tomorrow with the desire and resolve to effect changes in action or attitude that God has called us to today.

Alcoholics Anonymous has a slogan, "One Day at a Time" by which they mean that sobriety is not achieved by big and noble resolutions, but by trying to stay sober for one day. It can be useful to look at our spiritual life in that way. We deal with it one day at a time. In this fifth point we don't look at changing our whole lives, we simply look at what we want to change tomorrow, and ask God's help for it. Our lives are a drama of sin and grace. But this drama is being played out on the rather humble stage of our day to day life. Ignatius adds our need for God's grace, an important point. We are not resolving to perfect ourselves by force of our own will. We are resolving to open ourselves to grace through awareness of where we need it.

The Process of *Lectio Divina*

A VERY ANCIENT art, practiced at one time by all Christians, is the technique known as *lectio divina* - a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God. This ancient practice has been kept alive in the Christian monastic tradition, and is one of the precious treasures of Benedictine monastics and oblates. Together with the Liturgy and daily manual labor, time set aside in a special way for *lectio divina* enables us to discover in our daily life an underlying spiritual rhythm. Within this rhythm we discover an increasing ability to offer more of ourselves and our relationships to the Father, and to accept the embrace that God is continuously extending to us in the person of his Son Jesus Christ.

***Lectio* - reading/listening**

THE ART of *lectio divina* begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear "with the ear of our hearts" as St. Benedict encourages us in the Prologue to the Rule. When we read the Scriptures we should try to imitate the prophet Elijah. We should allow ourselves to become women and men who are able to listen for the still, small voice of God (*1 Kings 19:12*); the "faint murmuring sound" which is God's word for us, God's voice touching our hearts. This gentle listening is an "atunement" to the presence of God in that special part of God's creation which is the Scriptures.

THE CRY of the prophets to ancient Israel was the joy-filled command to "Listen!" "Sh'ma Israel: Hear, O Israel!" In *lectio divina* we, too, heed that command and turn to the Scriptures, knowing that we must "hear" - listen - to the voice of God, which often speaks very softly. In order to hear someone speaking softly we must learn to be silent. We must learn to love silence. If we are constantly speaking or if we are surrounded with noise, we cannot hear gentle sounds. The practice of *lectio divina*, therefore, requires that we first quiet down in order to hear God's word to us. This is the first step of *lectio divina*, appropriately called *lectio* - reading.

THE READING or listening which is the first step in *lectio divina* is very different from the speed reading which modern Christians apply to newspapers, books and even to the Bible. *Lectio* is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally - not loudly, but intimately. In *lectio* we read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God's word for us this day.

***Meditatio* - meditation**

ONCE WE have found a word or a passage in the Scriptures which speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and "ruminate" on it. The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the Word of God. Christians have always seen a scriptural invitation to *lectio divina* in the example of the Virgin Mary "pondering in her heart" what she saw and heard of Christ (Luke 2:19). For us today these images are a reminder that we must take in the word - that

is, memorize it - and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, our desires. This is the second step or stage in lectio divina - meditatio. Through *meditatio* we allow God's word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels.

***Oratio* - prayer**

THE THIRD step in lectio divina is oratio - prayer: prayer understood both as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into His embrace; and as consecration, prayer as the priestly offering to God of parts of ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration-prayer we allow the word that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves. Just as a priest consecrates the elements of bread and wine at the Eucharist, God invites us in lectio divina to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him, and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given us in our lectio and meditatio. In this oratio, this consecration-prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.

***Contemplatio* - contemplation**

FINALLY, WE simply rest in the presence of the One who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. No one who has ever been in love needs to be reminded that there are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. It is the same in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One Who loves us has a name in the Christian tradition - *contemplatio*, contemplation. Once again we practice silence, letting go of our own words; this time simply enjoying the experience of being in the presence of God.

* * * * *

IN CONTEMPLATION we cease from interior spiritual *doing* and learn simply to *be*, that is to rest in the presence of our loving Father. Just as we constantly move back and forth in our exterior lives between speaking and listening, between questioning and reflecting, so in our spiritual lives we must learn to enjoy the refreshment of simply *being* in God's presence, an experience that naturally alternates (if we let it!) with our spiritual *practice*.

The Practice of *Lectio Divina*

CHOOSE a text of the Scriptures that you wish to pray. Many Christians use in their daily *lectio divina* one of the readings from the Eucharistic liturgy for the day; others prefer to slowly work through a particular book of the Bible. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as one has no set goal of "covering" a certain amount of text: the amount of text "covered" is in God's hands, not yours.

PLACE YOURSELF in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Some Christians focus for a few moments on their breathing; other have a beloved "prayer word" or "prayer phrase" they gently recite in order to become interiorly silent. For some the practice known as "centering prayer" makes a good, brief

introduction to *lectio divina*. Use whatever method is best for you and allow yourself to enjoy silence for a few moments.

THEN TURN to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow says, "I am for you today." Do not expect lightening or ecstasies. In *lectio divina* God is teaching us to listen to Him, to seek Him in silence. He does not reach out and grab us; rather, He softly, gently invites us ever more deeply into His presence.

NEXT TAKE the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories and ideas. Do not be afraid of "distractions." Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself which, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

THEN, SPEAK to God. Whether you use words or ideas or images or all three is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. And give to Him what you have discovered in yourself during your experience of *meditatio*. Experience yourself as the priest that you are. Experience God using the word or phrase that He has given you as a means of blessing, of transforming the ideas and memories, which your pondering on His word has awakened. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

FINALLY, SIMPLY rest in God's embrace. And when He invites you to return to your pondering of His word or to your inner dialogue with Him, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

SOMETIMES IN *LECTIO DIVINA* one will return several times to the printed text, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given, or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for *lectio divina*. It is not necessary to anxiously assess the quality of one's *lectio divina* as if one were "performing" or seeking some goal: *lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

Lectio Divina

Read. Don't skim. Read slowly. Chew on the words. Read it over a few times. Let your mind and eyes 'sink' into the text.

Meditate. What caught your eye? What word or phrase really stood out for you? Let your mind wander with that word or phrase. Where does it lead you? What might God be wanting you to hear, or to do?

Pray. Let the next step happen. Just speak quietly to God in your heart.

Contemplate. This means just 'being with God.' You don't have to 'talk.' Let God be with you.

Ignatian meditation: Using your imagination and Scripture

Excerpted from J. Veltri, Orientations for Spiritual Growth

The point of departure in Gospel Contemplation is the imagination. With this method, one primarily uses the active imagination upon a particular event in Jesus' life. The gospel story is the guided imagery context for the imagination. Gospel Contemplation differs from our present-day, psychological, guided imagery techniques in that the person at prayer actively keeps oneself more or less within the gospel framework. In Gospel Contemplation, one does not let the imagination roam as freely as one might do with guided imagery techniques.

Secondly, Gospel Contemplation differs from Contemplative Prayer Forms precisely because it involves images, feelings, and thoughts. Therefore, a rule of thumb is this: To the extent that images, feelings, and thoughts are absent, the prayer more closely approximates the Contemplative Prayer Forms explained above than it does Gospel Contemplation. Certainly as one makes use of Gospel Contemplation, as with many other methods, one is frequently led into moments of prolonged imageless, wordless, faith-filled experiences of God.

Importance Of Imagination

Since the point of departure in Gospel Contemplation is the imagination, it is important to consider the difference between the words imaginary and imagination. When we use the word imaginary about anything, we generally mean that it is not real, not true, and that there is no objectivity in it. In our Western culture people tend to confuse these two words and so they consider the work and activity of imagination with suspicion. Nineteenth-century rationalism and our twentieth-century scientific method with its penchant for attempting to achieve objective knowledge contributed to a separation between the work of imagination and the work of reason. As a result, we often fail to appreciate that imagination is very "rational," though not necessarily analytical. Great inventions of human history and discoveries of science owe their initial inspiration to the work of imagination.

Without imagination, we would not be able to understand what another person is saying to us. For instance, if I asked you to list and describe for me the things that you did during the past two weeks and you began to tell me, the key way you would be able to access them from your memory bank would be through the function of your imagination. Furthermore, the only way I could truly appreciate and adequately take in your descriptions would be through the function of my imagination. Imagination, just as much as analytical thinking, is rational. Even though imagination primarily functions through narrative discourse with a logic different from analytical logic, it deals with the understanding and communication of meaning. Let me give this working description of the word imagination:

Imagination is that power within each of us which equips us *to make present what is not present*. Imagination is intimately connected with our senses which take in the data coming to us from our environment. Imagination is linked intimately also with our memory by helping the memory access data from within us. Enmeshed with our cognitive powers, imagination is essential to our grasp of meaning and to the communication of the same. With our power of memory, imagination can be a

gateway to the unconscious and to deep feelings. The imagination is key to our ability to use and to create symbols that are so important to us as rational beings.

How does this method proceed?

This is how you can enter into the life of Jesus through prayer:

1. Select a short concrete/action passage.

First, from one of the Gospels, select an action passage, preferably fast-moving and colourful in detail. When you first begin to use this method do not attempt to pray a parable or a sermon.

2. Relax and settle into God's presence.

Ask for a particular grace that you are seeking or the particular gift you need at this time - perhaps to know Jesus more intimately, or to become more compassionate, or to be healed in a particular area of your heart etc.

3. Read aloud the passage several times, pausing half a minute or so between each reading while the gospel episode takes hold of you.

Slowly read the passage once - aloud, if circumstances allow. Then for 30 seconds or so look up from the page and let the scene sink into your imagination. Do a second oral reading, noticing details which you missed in the first reading. Again look up from the page for 30 seconds or so, until these new details fit into the total scene in your imagination. In the third reading, you will see more details for the first time, also insights, questions and interpretations will begin to occur to you. Use a half-minute to let them settle into your memory. Then read a fourth or even a fifth time until almost all the distractions have disappeared, and the Gospel scene totally saturates your imagination.

4. Now place the bible aside and let the scene happen.

Do nothing to promote it except to stay alert to its developments. As you let yourself sink into the scene, you will tend to lose the sense of yourself and to identify with the situation. Suppose, for example, that you have read about Jesus quieting the storm on the lake. You may imagine the wind howling, the boat pitching, the apostles struggling at the oars. If this identification deepens, you will find yourself in the boat, e.g., at the oars, or you may find yourself to be in Peter or Philip. Sometimes you will discover yourself drifting in and out of the scene, in and out of various people of the scene.

5. Allow yourself to take part in the scene which is now present to you.



Be as passive as possible while being as alert as possible. In fact, let everyone else control the event: Jesus, Peter, Mary, Martha, John. You merely interact with the persons, listen and reply to their words, take part in their activity - conversing with them, accompanying them, helping them in their occupations, in whatever ways you find yourself as part of the event that is present to you.

6. Do not moralize or try to make applications.

Don't moralize (for example, "I should be more spontaneous like Peter when I am with my friends ...") or draw theological conclusions (for example, "Notice how the three temptations of Jesus parallel the temptations of the Israelites ...") or try to make clever applications ("It's amazing how the Pharisees are so much like the people I am working with ...") By losing yourself in the persons, words and activity of the gospel event your whole being is affected and influenced. You won't need applications because you will notice what happens to you either in the period of reflection after your prayer or, more subtly, in the effects in your life as almost by osmosis you begin to put on the mind and heart of Jesus's Spirit.

7. After your period of prayer comes to an end, make a review for a few minutes by reflecting upon what took place during the prayer.

What happened in you during this prayer exercise? What did you notice as standing out even slightly? Is there something you should return to in a later period of prayer? Give thanks to the Lord for being with you during this time.

The Mysteries of the Rosary

The Rosary began as a way to meditate on the first lines the 150 Psalms. Over time, this form of meditation began to center on the prayer, Hail Mary. Breaking up these 150 prayers were points of meditation on the life of Christ and the mystery of the redemption. Saying the Rosary always leads us back to these stories from Scripture and through them to the mystery of our salvation through Christ.

How to say the Rosary

We begin by making the sign of the Cross. Then we say the Apostles' Creed, an Our Father, three Hail Marys, and one Glory to the Father (Prayer of Praise) on the small chain.

Then recall the first mystery, say one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and one Glory to the Father. This completes one decade. All the other decades are said in the same manner with a different mystery meditated upon during each decade.

At the end of the rosary, the prayer Hail, Holy Queen may be recited.

The mysteries of the rosary are scenes from the life of Jesus and Mary. By meditating on these, we come to a better understanding of our faith: the Incarnation of the Lord, Christ's ministry and gifts to us, the Redemption, and the Christian life-present and future.

The Joyful Mysteries

The Annunciation: the Messenger of God announces to Mary that she is to be the Mother of God. *Luke 1:26-38*

The Visitation: Mary visits and helps her cousin Elizabeth. *Luke 1:39-56*

The Nativity: Mary gives birth to Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem. *Luke 2:1-20*

The Presentation: Jesus is presented in the Temple 40 days after his birth. *Luke 2:22-38*

The Finding in the Temple: Jesus is found in the Temple. *Luke 2:41-52*

The Mysteries of Light

The Mysteries of Light (or Luminous Mysteries) were added to the rosary by Pope John Paul II in 2002.

The Baptism in the Jordan. *Matthew 3:13-17*

Jesus' first miracle at the wedding of Cana. *John 2:1-11*

Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God, with his call to conversion. *Matthew, chapters 5,6,7*

The Transfiguration: Jesus' disciples see him transfigured into his risen glory before his death. *Luke 9:28-35*

The institution of the Eucharist. *Luke 22:14-20*

The Sorrowful Mysteries

The Agony in the Garden. *Luke 22:39-44*

The Scourging at the Pillar. *Matthew 27:17-26*

The Crowning with Thorns. *Matthew 27:27-30*

The Carrying of the Cross. *Matthew 27:31-32*

The Crucifixion. *Matthew 27:33-56; Mark 15:22-41; Luke 23:33-49; John 19:15-37*

The Glorious Mysteries

The Resurrection. *Luke 24:1-9*

The Ascension: Jesus ascends into heaven 40 days after the Resurrection. *Acts 1:9-11*

The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost. *Acts 2:1-4*

The Assumption. Mary is taken into heaven and reunited with the Lord, as we hope to be. *1 Corinthians 15*

The Coronation of Mary as queen of heaven and earth. *Revelation 19:5-8*

The Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross are a way to meditate on the Passion and death of Christ. They are a kind of 'virtual pilgrimage.' We may not be fortunate enough to walk the streets of Jerusalem, following the path that took Jesus to the Cross. But in our imagination and prayer, we can follow Christ's journey to Calvary and learn from this prayer more about the path of discipleship.

The First Station

Jesus is Condemned to Death

Mark 15:6-15

The Second Station

Jesus Bears His Cross

Matthew 27:31

The Third Station

Jesus Falls the First Time

Isaiah 50:6-7

The Fourth Station

Jesus Meets His Mother

Luke 2:33-35

The Fifth Station

Jesus is Helped by Simon of Cyrene

Matthew 27:32

The Sixth Station

Veronica Helps Jesus

Matthew 25:35-40

The Seventh Station

Jesus Falls the Second Time

Isaiah 53: 3-5

The Eighth Station

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Luke 23:27-28

The Ninth Station

Jesus Falls the Third Time

Isaiah 53:7-8

The Tenth Station

Jesus is Stripped of His Clothing

John 19:23-24

Eleventh Station

Jesus is Crucified

Luke 23: 32-34

Twelfth Station

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Luke 23:44-46

Thirteenth Station

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Matthew 27:58-59

Fourteenth Station

Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

John 19: 39-42

Outline of the Eucharistic Liturgy

Introductory Rites

- ▶ Procession
- ▶ Greeting
- ▶ Penitential Rite
- ▶ Gloria (omitted in Advent and Lent)
- ▶ Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

- ▶ First reading (On Sundays this is usually from the Hebrew Scriptures - Old Testament.)
- ▶ Response (Psalm)
- ▶ Second reading (This is usually from one of the New Testament letters.)
- ▶ Gospel Acclamation
- ▶ Gospel Proclamation
- ▶ Homily

- ▶ Profession of Faith (Creed or Baptismal promises)
- ▶ Prayer of the Faithful

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- ▶ Preparation of the Gifts

- ▶ Eucharistic Prayer
 - ▶ Preface
 - ▶ Holy
 - ▶ Canon
 - ▶ Amen

- ▶ Communion Rite
 - ▶ Lord's Prayer
 - ▶ Sign of Peace
 - ▶ Breaking of the Bread (Lamb of God)
 - ▶ Communion
 - ▶ Prayer after Communion

Concluding Rites

- ▶ Blessing
- ▶ Dismissal

The Liturgical Year

Seasons and Times

Advent The beginning of the year. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. The colors used are violet and rose (for the third Sunday). The mood is one of hope, joy and expectation.

Christmas The celebration of the Incarnation and birth of Jesus. Traditionally it lasts to the Baptism of the Lord (the third Sunday after Christmas). It includes the feast of the Holy Family (the Sunday between Christmas and the New Year), January 1, a feast of Mary and the Epiphany (the Sunday after January 1.) The colors used are white and gold.

Ordinary Time Begins after the feast of the Baptism of the Lord and continues until Ash Wednesday. The color used is green, originally chosen as a sign of hope.

Lent Begins with Ash Wednesday and continues for six weeks until Easter. In the early Church it was the time of final preparation for those who were about to be baptized. It has continued to be a time for all Christians to pay special attention to renewing their spiritual lives and to prepare for Easter.

There are a number of traditions connected with Lent, which help us to remember the purpose of the season. These include a greater attention to prayer, acts of penitence, such as fasting and abstinence, and works of charity.

The color of Lent is purple. It is not the violet of Advent, but a more reddish purple, reminiscent of the *vexilla regis* (banner or flag of the king.) The somber color reminds us that we follow this king to the Cross.

The last Sunday of Lent is Passion (Palm) Sunday, which begins the observance of Holy Week. Red, the color of the martyrs, is worn.

Triduum This word literally means "Three Days" and it is the central point of the Church year. The liturgy begins on Thursday and continues through the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

On **Holy Thursday**, the Eucharist is celebrated only once, in the evening. It is called the "Mass of the Lord's Supper" and includes the *Mandatum*. According to John's gospel, Jesus' command that we serve each other was symbolized by his washing of his disciples' feet. (*Mandatum* means "command"; this is why some Protestant traditions call this "Maundy Thursday".)

There is no final blessing or recessional on Holy Thursday. Instead, the Eucharist, which has been consecrated to be used on Good Friday is taken to a special chapel for veneration and prayer until midnight.

Good Friday is the one day of the year when the Eucharist is not celebrated. The church is stripped; there is nothing in the tabernacle. There is one liturgy in the evening, the Liturgy of Lord's Passion. At this liturgy the Passion from John's gospel is read, people are invited to venerate the Cross and communion is given.

The **Easter Vigil** is the holiest night of the Church year. It begins anytime after sundown on Saturday until dawn on Sunday morning. The liturgy begins with the lighting of the new fire and the Paschal candle. There is a long series of readings that recalls God's salvation throughout history, culminating in a rousing proclamation of the Easter gospel. Water is blessed and the new members of the church are called forward for baptism and confirmation. The whole community also renews their baptismal promises and joins together in celebrating the Eucharist.

Easter

The Great Vigil is echoed in the liturgies of the Easter season. The Paschal candle burns during the liturgies. The Alleluia is sung with special gusto, the congregation is often blessed with the water from the font. The Easter season is also a time for the community to continue to celebrate new life. Children are welcomed in the celebrations of first communion and confirmation.

It is important to remember that the fasting of Lent is forty days, but the feasting of Easter lasts for fifty. The colors worn are white and gold.

In many parts of the United States, as in other countries, the Ascension is celebrated on the seventh Sunday of Easter.

Pentecost

This feast concludes the Easter season and celebrates the giving of the Spirit to the apostles after Jesus' resurrection. It is the celebration of the beginning of the Church. Red vestments are worn to remind us of the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Ordinary Time

This resumes with the feasts of **Trinity Sunday** and **Corpus Christi** (the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.)

Through the summer and into the fall, the "ordinary part" of the year continues. Note that it gets its name *not* from the idea of being a "common", not-too-special time. "Ordinary Time" comes from the idea that all our time is marked and counted because it is important. (We count by using 'ordinal' numbers.)

Ordinary Time ends with the feast of **Christ the King** on the last Sunday before Advent begins.

Other Feasts

There are a number of special holy days and feasts celebrated throughout the year. Some are traditional "days of obligation" which vary from country to country. In the United States, besides Christmas and New Year's, they include:

- ▶ December 8, the feast of the ***Immaculate Conception***.
- ▶ August 15, the feast of the ***Assumption***.
- ▶ November 1, the feast of ***All Saints***.

There are a number of other special feast days which are not days of obligation but are important celebrations. Among them are:

- ▶ February 2, the feast of the ***Presentation of the Lord***.
- ▶ March 25, the feast of the ***Annunciation***.
- ▶ June 24, the feast of the ***Birth of John the Baptist***.
- ▶ June 29, the feast of ***Sts. Peter and Paul***.
- ▶ August 6, the feast of the ***Transfiguration***.
- ▶ September 14, the feast of the ***Triumph of the Cross***.
- ▶ November 2, the feast of ***All Souls***.
- ▶ November 9, the feast of the ***Dedication of St. John Lateran***. (This is the cathedral church in Rome, and so the anniversary of its dedication is celebrated throughout the church.)

There are, of course, many others, including other days that honor Mary, the apostles, other saints and other events in the life of Jesus and in the church.

The Sacraments

The sacraments are divided into three categories. **Sacraments of Initiation** - Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. These make us members of the Catholic church. **Sacraments of Healing** - Penance (Reconciliation) and Anointing of the Sick. These bring us Christ's grace and mercy when we are ill in soul and body. **Sacraments of Vocation** - Marriage and Holy Orders. These are signs of Christ's life in families and the larger community, lived out on a day to day basis.

Sacrament	Outward Sign	Inner Meaning
Baptism	Water is poured while baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit	1) Original Sin and all sins committed up to this point are forgiven; 2) beginning of a new life in Christ; 3) become a member of the church
Confirmation	The bishop lays hands on the candidate and calls down the Holy Spirit; anoints the candidate with chrism	Sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit
Eucharist	We receive the host and from the chalice under the appearances of bread and wine	The bread and wine have become really and truly the Body and Blood of Christ
Reconciliation or Penance	The priest prays the words of absolution	All sins are forgiven by Christ if one is truly sorry
Anointing of the Sick	One is anointed with the Oil of the Sick	1) Healing of one's spirit; 2) Healing of one's body if that is God's will; 3) forgiveness of sins
Marriage	A man and woman promise to love and be faithful to each other for their entire lives	In their love for each other, they grow closer to Christ
Holy Orders	A man becomes a deacon, a priest or a bishop	In a life of service to the church, a man grows closer to Christ

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are found in Exodus 20

- I I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange Gods before me.
- II Do not take the name of the Lord in vain.
- III Remember to keep holy the Sabbath.
- IV Honor your father and your mother.
- V Do not kill.
- VI Do not commit adultery.
- VII Do not steal.
- VIII Do not lie. (Do not bear false witness.)
- IX Do not covet your neighbor's wife or husband.
- X Do not covet your neighbor's goods.

The Precepts of the Church

The precepts of the Church are principles to be followed. They are a rule and guide to what it means to be a Catholic Christian. In a sense they are the bare minimum to be a 'practicing Catholic.' (For example, we are certainly encouraged to go to communion frequently, but the minimum is once a year.)

- ◆ You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. You should also rest from unnecessary ('servile') labor on Sunday.
- ◆ You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
- ◆ You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
- ◆ You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence prescribed by the Church. (The laws of fasting and abstinence are published by each diocese, usually at the beginning of Lent.)
- ◆ The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his or her abilities.

There are two other precepts commonly thought to be necessary as well:

- ◆ To obey the laws of the church regarding marriage.
- ◆ To participate in the Church's mission of spreading the Gospel.

The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are found in Matthew 5:3-12. The Beatitudes are the way of holiness that Jesus preached. (Beatus in Latin means 'blessed' or 'holy'.)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy have to do with taking care of peoples' bodies (corpus is 'body' in Latin.) The Spiritual Works of Mercy have to do with taking care of people's souls or spirits.

The Corporal Works of Mercy come from Matthew 25, where Jesus reminds us that "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me." When we take care of the poor, the homeless, the hungry, we are caring for the Body of Christ.

Corporal Works of Mercy

Feed the hungry
Give drink to the thirsty
Clothe the naked
Visit the imprisoned
Shelter the homeless
Visit the sick
Bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

Admonish the sinner
Instruct the ignorant
Counsel the doubtful
Comfort the sorrowful
Bear wrongs patiently.
Forgive all injuries
Pray for the living and the dead

Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is given to us in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. God created us to live in holiness and peace. The gifts of the Spirit, if we accept them and use them, lead us to holiness. The fruits of the Spirit are some evidence that we are living according to God's will for us. The list of these fruits is taken from Galatians 5:22-23.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Wisdom
Understanding
Counsel
Courage
Knowledge
Piety
Fear of the Lord

Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Charity
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Generosity
Gentleness
Faithfulness
Modesty
Self-control
Chastity

Using an Examination of Conscience

Many of us remember long lists, based on the Commandments, which we used to find out if we had sinned. Sin is not always a question of “breaking a rule,” but of our attitudes and patterns of behavior.

At the same time, reflecting on our actions in light of the Commandments and the teachings of the church can be helpful in calling us to change our lives and to live more fully as disciples of the Lord.

The following list can be used as a guide. Ideally, we should examine our conscience every day. As you begin to reflect on this list, say a short prayer to the Holy Spirit to help you to remember what you have done and to help you to see it clearly.

Childrens’ Version of the Examination of Conscience

1. Do I honor God above everything else?
Do I ask God's help in my decisions? Do I pray to God regularly?
2. Have I used the name of God or of Jesus in a disrespectful way?
3. Do I come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday?
4. Do I obey the adults who care for me?
5. Do I take care of my own body with good food, rest and exercise?
6. Have I physically hurt anyone, or have I hurt someone's feelings, or have I been so angry that I might have hurt someone?
7. Have I been loyal and faithful to my family and friends?
8. Have I taken what is not mine?
9. Have I told the truth?
10. Have I been jealous of other people or of other things?

11. Have I done what I can to help the poor?
12. Have I done what I can to make the earth a good place to live?
13. Have I done what I can to be part of my church and school communities?
14. Have I shared my possessions and my talents with others?

Adults’ Version of the Examination of Conscience

1. Have I honored God above everything else? Have I ignored God’s guidance in making my decisions? Have I neglected praying to God regularly?
2. Have I used the name of God or of Jesus in a disrespectful way?
3. Have I come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sundays?
4. Have I cared for my parents and other adults in my family? Have I cared for my children and grandchildren in a responsible way? Have I failed to look at someone lovingly, or have I seen them as a burden or a bother?
5. Have I failed to take good care of my own

- body with good food, rest and exercise?
Have I abused drugs or alcohol?
6. Have I physically hurt anyone, or have I hurt someone's feelings, or have I been so angry that I might have hurt someone?
 7. Have I been faithful in my marriage? Have I been loyal and faithful to my family and friends?
 8. Have I been responsible in the exercise of my sexuality? Have I respected others in my relationships?
 9. Have I taken what is not mine?
 10. Have I told the truth?
 11. Have I been jealous of other people or of other things?

12. Have I done what I can to help the poor?
13. Have I done what I can to make the earth a good place to live?
14. Have I done what I can to be part of my church and community?
15. Have I shared my possessions and my talents with others?

This list covers most of the major areas of our lives. However, it is not exhaustive. As was stated above, it is important to look for patterns and habits of acting, as well as to look for specific offenses.