

*Virtues  
in Practice*



*Faith ♦ Hope ♦ Charity*

PARENT GUIDE

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Cover image: Photograph of Blessed Louis and Zélie Martin, parents of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. Louis and Zélie are the second married couple to be beatified as a couple. Image courtesy of Carmel of Mary and Joseph, Varroville, Australia. Used with permission.

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PARENT GUIDE

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF ST. CECILIA CONGREGATION  
Nashville, Tennessee

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

## VIRTUES IN PRACTICE—GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Age-Appropriate Definitions: What is Virtue?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Age-Appropriate Definitions: Who are Saints?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



of people devoted to the cause.

Steps of Canonization\*:

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

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