

Communion with the Saints,
A Family Preparation Program
for First Communion and Beyond
in the Spirit of St. Therese

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A RACE for Heaven Product

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Communion with the Saints, A Family Preparation Program for First Communion and Beyond in the Spirit of St. Therese

General Instructions

Introduction

St. Therese of the Child Jesus began her specific preparation for Holy Communion on Saturday, March 1, 1884, and received this sacrament on Thursday, May 8, 1884—a period that covers sixty-nine days or almost ten weeks. [Note that the original date set for Therese’s First Holy Communion, May 29, was later changed to May 8.] This program is designed to begin on a Monday, sixty-nine days before the Sunday on which the reception of First Holy Communion would occur. (However, each day is numbered for the convenience of those who receive the sacrament on a day other than a Sunday.)

During her sixty-nine day preparation period, St. Therese was carefully instructed by her sister Pauline, a Carmelite nun known as Sr. Agnes of Jesus, who prepared a “copy-book” with prayers, pious thoughts, and the practice of virtue through the image of the cultivation of various flowers. The following letter from Sr. Agnes of Jesus to Therese was written in February 1884:

This morning, I promised Marie I’d give you the little copybook for the beginning of March. I’m working on it all the time. I hope my Benjamin will work very hard, too, in order to cultivate her little garden. To plant flowers in this garden which are just as beautiful as those in the little copybook, she must not allow one single weed in it.

Oh! when I think that in three months’ time Jesus will come to rest in this little child’s heart, in my Thérésita’s heart!

You must, darling, spare yourself nothing to make your soul a little heaven where the Child Jesus will want to dwell forever!

Ah! may this gentle Child already be the King, the love of your heart. What is there on earth more delightful than Jesus? Jesus in His cradle, Jesus in Thérésita’s heart on May 29 . . . sleeping among flowers! (John Clarke, translator, *General Correspondence Volume 1*, page 185)

Therese’s sister Marie also instructed Therese in the doctrines of the faith and especially in the sanctity of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. This program too relies upon the instruction and interaction of various family members.

Program Outline

Communion with the Saints, A Family Preparation Program for First Communion and Beyond in the Spirit of St. Therese is a program of preparation for and appreciation of the Sacrament

of Holy Communion. It can be used to aid in preparing a family member to receive the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist for the first time, or it can serve as a second beginning for those who may have lost fervor for this sacrament. If this program is used with a first communicant, be sure to include the weekend reading, journal entries, and readings. When the program is used only with those who are already receiving this sacrament, the weekend readings and projects may be eliminated if desired. All of the readings from the main texts of this program are read and reviewed during the weekdays.

The program has several components: a study guide for the four main texts with corresponding answer keys, additional daily readings for older siblings, weekend family projects, journal entries, and optional catechism lessons. These components—as well as the books necessary for each component—are described and outlined below.

The following books are required to complete the *Communion with the Saints* program:

- 📖 Three Mary Fabyan Windeatt books: *The Little Flower*, *The Story of St. Therese of the Child Jesus*; *The Children of Fatima and Our Lady’s Message to the World* and *The Patron Saint of First Communicants*, *The Story of Blessed Imelda Lambertini*
- 📖 Mother Mary Loyola’s *King of the Golden City, An Allegory for Children* (any edition of the book or one of the many audio editions available)
- 📖 *The Story of a Soul, The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux* (for students grade 7 and beyond—see page v below for more information)
- 📖 Catholic Bible for the study of Scripture

Optional materials include the following:

- ✝ *My First Communion Journal in Imitation of St. Therese, The Little Flower* OR *My First Communion Journal in Imitation of St. Paul: Putting on the Armor of God*
- ✝ For first communicants, either the Faith and Life second grade religion book, *Jesus Our Life*, or *The New Saint Joseph First Communion Catechism*
- ✝ For siblings grades 3-5, *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism, Book No. 1*; and for siblings grades 6-8, *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism, Book No. 2*
- ✝ Either the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, or *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* for students beyond eighth grade (See “Optional Catechism Lessons” below for more specific instructions.)
- ✝ *Eucharist Miracles* by Joan Carroll Cruz or *This Is My Body, This Is My Blood: Miracles of the Eucharist* by Bob and Penny Lord (Either of these books may be used as a religion text for older siblings who already have a solid grasp of the catechism.)
- ✝ *The Story of a Family, The Home of the Little Flower (St. Thérèse of Lisieux)* by Father Stéphane-Joseph Piat (for parents—see page v below for more information)

Study Guide

The *Communion with the Saints* study guide contains a chapter-by-chapter review of four books in the following order:

1. *The Little Flower, The Story of St. Therese of the Child Jesus* by Mary Fabyan Windeatt—to reveal the foundation of God’s love for us and to encourage a desire for holiness
2. *The Children of Fatima and Our Lady’s Message to the World* by Mary Fabyan Windeatt—to show the sinfulness of our world and the need to avoid sin
3. *The Patron Saint of First Communicants, The Story of Blessed Imelda Lambertini* by Mary Fabyan Windeatt—to inspire devotion to the Holy Eucharist
4. Mother Mary Loyola’s *The King of the Golden City Study Edition* by Janet McKenzie—to illustrate Jesus’ Presence as the source of grace necessary to live a holy life

In each of these books, one or more chapters are to be read aloud each day as outlined in the study guide. After the oral reading, complete the additional exercises together as a family. As the format for the Windeatt biographies and *The King of the Golden City* are somewhat different, they will be reviewed separately.

Format for the Windeatt Biographies

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

Several questions are provided for each chapter; answers are provided in the answer key. These questions can be used in a variety of ways:

- If read aloud before the reading of the chapter, they can serve as a cue to the important content of each chapter.
- After reading the chapter, they can serve as a test of the listeners’ comprehension.
- Use them as prompts when the listeners narrate the chapter after its oral reading.

Discussion Topics

These topics may be discussed together orally to provide an expansion of the material contained in each chapter, and to inspire spiritual family conversation.

Growing in Holiness

Each day a practical application of at least one religious lesson is provided. The importance of this part of the program cannot be overemphasized. Remember that it is not enough to know of God—as through the catechism and the Bible. We must actually know and experience God Himself. Through prayer, sacrifice, and a conversion of our minds and hearts, we may come to know and imitate Him more each day.

Optional Catechism Lessons

These lessons may be utilized for those who wish to incorporate the study of the doctrines of the Church into their preparation program. For a child who is preparing to receive his/her First Holy Communion, choose either the Faith and Life second grade religion book, *Jesus Our Life*, or *The New Saint Joseph First Communion Catechism* as the religious text. By following the plan outlined for each chapter, either of these catechisms will be completed by the end of the program.

Children in grades 3 through 8 should follow the outline for *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism, Book No. 1* or *Book No. 2*, depending on the ages of the student. Both of these texts will be covered in their entirety by the end of the sixty-nine days.

High-school students should use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or the *Compendium* as their religious text. The references for the more concise *Compendium* appear in parentheses after the CCC citations. Older siblings can read aloud—and then discuss—the stated text paragraphs with an adult.

Older siblings who already know their doctrine well may prefer to use one of the following books as a religious text: *Eucharist Miracles* by Joan Carroll Cruz, or *This Is My Body, This Is My Blood: Miracles of the Eucharist* by Bob and Penny Lord.

Format for The King of the Golden City

The format for this section is the same for both the “Discussion Topics” and the “Growing in Holiness” sections. Other exercises are outlined below. (Although these activities are included in *The King of the Golden City Study Edition*, they are also included here for those who own a different edition of the book or for those who wish to use the audio version of this book.)

Narration

Instead of answering comprehension questions, students are asked to narrate each day’s oral reading. Siblings—beginning with the youngest—should be asked to narrate or tell back the story after the oral reading. Older family members should then add further details to the first narration. Especially at first, it may be easier to pause between chapters to narrate rather than wait until both chapters of the daily lesson have been read.

Parallel Figures Chart

After the day’s reading and narration are complete, characters, objects, and events should be entered onto a large chart. This chart, constructed of either notebook paper or a large sheet of poster board, will list—from the beginning of the book until the end—important characters, objects, and events in one column and what each of these symbolizes, or parallels, in the next column. Be open to characters or objects symbolizing more than one thing. Perhaps it may seem to parallel one thing but as more information is gathered, it more likely parallels something different. This project should be completed as a family project. Characters, objects, and events to be deciphered are listed for each chapter, although an attentive listener will find more. Some possible parallels for each character, object and event are included in the answer key.

Searching Scripture

Passages from Holy Scripture are selected for each chapter of *The King of the Golden City*. Encourage older siblings to make a connection between the biblical citations and the text within each chapter. Help them relate God’s Word to life’s events and decisions.

Carmelite Connections

For those interested in deepening their prayer life, this section provides quotations from several Carmelite saints including St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and St. Therese

of the Child Jesus. These quotations provide helpful comments on the transformation of the little maid as she deepens her friendship with the King and progresses in heroic virtue and spiritual perfection. Older siblings and adults can profit from the teachings of the Carmelite saints regarding our relationship with God as well as the stages and methods of deep Carmelite prayer. Allow these saints to assist you in understanding God's love and desire for us, the obstacles to an intimate relationship with Him, and how to make true progress toward perfect union with our Lord and King.

Optional Catechism Lessons

For first communicants, the review of the catechism continues in the same format as done in prior weeks. However, with the completion of the three biographies, older siblings using either *Book No. 1* or *Book No. 2* of *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism* will have completed their catechism review. Now comes the time to apply their catechetical knowledge. Several articles of doctrine or vocabulary words from the catechism are listed for each chapter. Siblings should define these words or phrases using, if necessary, the "Dictionary and Index" section found at the back of the catechism. Additionally, the index lists the question number where the word/phrase can be located; the questions of the catechism should be reviewed and studied as necessary. All words and phrases can be located in both *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism, Book No. 1* and *Book No. 2* unless otherwise noted.

Encourage the students to think through the reason why each word/phrase is included for each chapter. Have them attempt to find a passage in *The King of the Golden City* that corresponds to the specific word or phrase cited. This allows them to see how the Faith as presented in the catechism is enacted in daily life.

Additional Daily 7

Parents are encouraged to read *The Story of a Family, The Home of The Little Flower (St. Thérèse of Lisieux)* by Fr. Stéphane-Joseph Piat in conjunction with this program. This book provides much inspiration regarding the home life and spiritual habits of the Martin family. As this book is rather lengthy (over 400 pages), a reading schedule of ten or so pages per day has been included with each day's lessons. Weekends are used to catch up on any reading not completed during the week.

Older students are asked to read *The Story of a Soul, The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux* in conjunction with the Windeatt biography of St. Therese. This schedule is included in the study guide. Thereafter, the short meditational readings for this age group are contained in the "Reading Schedule for High School and Middle School Students" beginning on page 77 below. Be sure to read the two abridged papal encyclicals presented on pages 93-101.

If desired, the readings outlined in the "Reading Schedule" may be replaced with readings from either *Eucharist Miracles* by Joan Carroll Cruz or *This Is My Body, This Is My Blood: Miracles of the Eucharist* by Bob and Penny Lord. Parents too will benefit from these books.

Weekend Projects

The study guide provides readings and exercises—both oral and written—for all the weekdays of the sixty-nine days of the *Communion with the Saints* program. Some short meditational readings for older siblings are also provided for the weekend. The “Weekend Projects” section of this program provides a variety of activities ranging from field trips, craft projects, family discussions, parish involvement, family apostolates, and the establishment of family traditions. Far more activities are suggested than a family will be able to complete within the time frame of this program. Prayerfully choose those activities that best match your family’s needs and interests. (Perhaps call a family meeting.)

Review the suggested projects well in advance in order to lay out a possible project schedule for the first nine weekends of the program. To aid in scheduling, a summary list of all projects is included on page 112. Use this list to record completed projects and review upcoming projects. Try to complete at least one activity each weekend. Some projects are ongoing in nature, and some will be difficult to complete within one weekend. Plan accordingly.

Journal

The following letter was written by Sr. Agnes of Jesus, St. Therese’s sister Pauline, from the Carmelite convent to Therese on February 28, 1884:

I don’t know if it’s you who will come tomorrow morning to get this short note. In any case, I’m informing you about the famous copybook for this evening. When I think that my Thérésita will begin her great preparation on Saturday morning! Only two months and a half and little Jesus will come down for the first time into her heart! Oh! how necessary it is to use these two months and a half well! How much work to do and how many flowers to sow in so little time! But, my dear, look at nature. It is beginning to repair its dress almost on the same day as yourself. We already see buds on the trees in gardens, and very soon the flowers will appear. Certainly during the month of May everything will charm the eyes. Well, what nature is doing just to give joy to our eyes, will you not do also, Thérésita of the Child Jesus, to receive and give joy to the beloved little Child at His first awakening in your heart?

However, I hear your answer, and I feel it’s almost useless to encourage you when one possesses a good little heart like yours, my darling!

I feel that from a distance Jesus Himself is inviting and encouraging His little sister to work for Him, and so what are your poor Agnes’ incentives compared to little Jesus’ gentle words?

Adieu, Thérésita. If your little garden is in bloom, if all is ready when the great day arrives, believe that Jesus will not come with empty hands! Ah! If you only knew the delightful treasures hidden in this little Host of a well-prepared First Communion! Your Agnes (Clarke, *General Correspondence Vol. 1*, pages 187-88)

The “famous copybook” to which Sr. Agnes refers is described in the footnote for the preceding letter as follows: “. . . one page for each day. Each page was decorated with a border, rays in each of the corners, the date in Gothic illumination, the name of a flower and a short invocation which the scent of the flower symbolized; it was all done in black and red ink. The flyleaf was particularly well done. Prayers to the Child Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the guardian angel preface each of the . . . months. Preparation was to begin on March 1.” (As Therese received her first Holy Communion on Thursday, May 8, 1884, her preparation period was sixty-nine days.)

In another letter to Therese (February 29, 1884), Sr. Agnes again refers to the copybook with its cover of blue velvet, embroidered with the initials “T M” in white. (John Clarke, translator, *General Correspondence Volume I*, pages 189-90)

Celine too had a copybook similar to the one Sr. Agnes prepared for Therese: “. . . Pauline prepared Celine for her First Communion. She put together for her, as she later did for Therese, a little book where, under the symbols of flowers, the little girl could record her sacrifices and her pious thoughts.” (Fr. Stéphane-Joseph Piat, *The Story of a Family, The Home of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, page 19)

Format for My First Communion Journal

Two Separate Themes

Two separate themes are presented in the journals: *My First Communion Journal in Imitation of St. Therese, the Little Flower* presents a floral theme (in imitation of St. Therese’s copybook) and *My First Communion Journal in Imitation of St. Paul: Putting on the Armor of God* presents a battle theme, for those less inclined toward the study of flowers.

The floral theme is appropriate for a number of reasons. First, as noted above, St. Therese herself was given instruction for her First Holy Communion with this theme. Secondly, St. Therese is known as “The Little Flower.” In her autobiography *The Story of a Soul*, St. Therese sets the title of the manuscript as the “Springtime Story of a Little White Flower.” She uses the title of “Little Flower” when referring to herself twenty-four times within this manuscript. This title derives from several sources: When Therese approached her father with her desire to enter Carmel, he responded by plucking a small white flower (lily of the valley) from the garden, explaining to her that care with which God had preserved and cared for that flower. She compares His care for the little flower with the care He has bestowed upon His little Therese. (Therese kept this flower in her copy of *The Imitation of Christ*.) Upon receiving permission from her uncle to enter Carmel, he too used this metaphor, telling her that she was a little white flower God wanted to gather. The Vietnamese martyr St. Theophane Venard, who was a great hero to Therese, was also fond of the image of a spring flower. This image of a small white flower suited the spirituality of Therese and her “Little Way.” Within the first pages of the story of her life, Therese uses the image of the rose versus that of the wildflower to illustrate her “Little Way,” for if all creation esteemed to be great as roses, much would be lost. Therese of Lisieux teaches us that the simplicity and littleness of a soul in union with the will of God enriches and beautifies the Kingdom of God.

In addition to *My First Communion Journal in Imitation of St. Therese, The Little Flower* imitating the study of virtues as associated with flowers, it also imitates the preparation of St. Therese for First Holy Communion by encouraging sacrifice, a focus on things above, and a growth in humility. St. Therese's "copybook" contained several short prayers (or aspirations) to be prayed many times daily and space to note the small sacrifices made each day to please Jesus. She kept track of how many times she raised her heart to Jesus and how many sacrifices she made daily by counting them on her "sacrifice beads" (a small chaplet of moveable beads) and noting them daily in her book. This journal includes these prayers and has space for recording the number of times the prayers are recited as well as space to note the number of sacrifices (or mortifications) made each day.

The alternative battle theme, as presented in *My First Communion Journal in Imitation of St. Paul: Putting on the Armor of God*, centers on our earthly life as a battle. This journal also contains the simple prayers used by St. Therese (along with several additional ones) as well as space for noting the number of times recited each day and the number of sacrifices made. However, rather than imitating the virtues the flowers present to us, we are encouraged to cultivate virtuous habits by putting on God's armor (Ephesians 6:10-17) as we battle through our earthly life in our fight for eternal glory.

Holy Scripture

St. Therese's knowledge and love of Holy Scripture is evident in her writings. Quotations from both the Old and New Testament permeate her writings; her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, contains over 150 scriptural references. To encourage this knowledge and love of Scripture, each journal contains numerous biblical passages suitable for memorization.

Study of the Mass

The matching activity found on pages 75-76 helps to familiarize the students with the scriptural basis for the words used in the Mass. Answers for this exercise are provided in the answer key. As this is not a comprehensive list, challenge them to find others.

However, other than this one matching worksheet and the overviews provided in the catechisms, the *Communion with the Saints* program does not contain much study of the Mass. Many resources are available from various Catholic vendors that include a more in-depth study. For your convenience, several of these are listed below.

Miniature Mass Kit for Children contains a chalice, paten, censer, bell, snuffer, crucifix, candles, cruets, finger bowl, sanctuary light, incense/charcoal, and directions for making altar cloths such as the finger towel, purificator, pall, and corporal. The lesson booklet has directions for constructing a wooden altar and tray. (See Our Father's House at OurFathersHouse.biz.)

This Is My Body by Mark P. Shea is a study on the True Presence, which relies on Scripture and Tradition. Julia Fogassy of Our Father's House also provides a five-week study guide for this book for middle school ages and above.

The Mass Explained to Children by Maria Montessori was originally published in 1932. This delightful book explains many aspects of the Mass: its meaning, what is necessary for the Mass, an introduction to the Mass, the Mass of the Catechumens, and the Mass of the Faithful. It also contains an easy-to-read commentary on the Latin Mass with most parts applicable to the Novus Ordo Mass as well. It has been recently republished by Roman Catholic Books.

The Essence of the Mass published by Catholic Heritage Curricula contains explanations of the Mass for children as well as more in-depth meditations and commentaries for older children and adults.

Discovering the Treasures of the Mass: 28 Puzzles that Teach Its Rites and Rituals by Lynne Sterritt and published by Twenty-Third Publications for high school and middle school students is full of information about the action and prayers of the Mass in a fun format.

A Biblical Walk through the Mass: Understanding What We Say and do in the Liturgy is written by Edward Sri and published by Ascension Press. Based on the 2011 revised translation of the Mass, this book explores the biblical roots of the actions and words we use in the Mass and relates the long-standing tradition of the Mass.

Living Books on the Mass:

The Weight of a Mass, A Tale of Faith by Josephine Nobisso—a picture book based upon a true story which enhances the appreciation of the Mass for all ages. This beautifully written and illustrated book emphasizes the depth and richness of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in a simple tale that will be enjoyed by all ages.

Outlaws of Ravenhurst Study Edition by Sister M. Imelda Wallace and Janet P. McKenzie—a novel originally written in 1950 and republished by Neumann Press that tells the story of the Catholic persecutions of seventeenth-century Scotland where participating in Mass meant death. This excellent family read-aloud choice is an exciting tale that will not soon be forgotten.

Conclusion

Many suggestions for the use of this program are included above. It is important to remember that they are only suggestions. It is very easy to get absorbed into a program as established by someone else and forget the importance of tailoring the program to fit your family's—and each specific child's—current needs. It is a poor program that will not lend itself to adaptation. Feel free—in fact please do—adjust this program to fit your particular needs. Do only those activities that you deem necessary and fruitful; add or substitute other materials if you feel they are more useful than the material suggested.

Only one rule applies to the use of this program: Every day each family member must do some spiritual reading—either orally or silently—and must spend some time in silent meditation in front of a crucifix or before the tabernacle. This rule applies to weekends

as well as weekdays. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith.” (Hebrews 12:1-2a)

Communion with the Saints, A Family Preparation Program for First Communion and Beyond in the Spirit of St. Therese

Study Guide

Monday, Week 1 (Day 1)

Parents: Read pages vii-xiv today in *The Story of a Family, The Home of St. Thérèse of Lisieux* by Fr. Stéphane-Joseph Piat, O.F.M.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the Introduction (Foreword) and Prologue in *The Story of a Soul, The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*.

First Communicants: Begin your First Communion journal by completing “Day 1” in your journal today.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter I of *The Little Flower, The Story of St. Therese of the Child Jesus* by Mary Fabyan Windeatt.

Chapter I—In Which Therese Is Born and Thrives

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. Why did some people think that the marriage of Therese’s parents was a mistake?
2. Why did Therese’s parents name all of their children—even the boys—“Marie”? Why was it important for them to have a boy?
3. What day was Therese born? What was her full name?
4. Why was Therese sent to live in the country with a nurse?

Discussion Topics

After the death of his two sons, Therese’s father stated, “The boys will pray for us. Just think! They went to God without one sin on their souls!” (page 3) Discuss the Church’s teaching of the communion of saints as it applies to this quotation. Include the three groups of saints included in this doctrine as well as how each group helps each other.

Growing in Holiness

“Everyone marveled at the wonderful way in which Papa and Mama accepted these fresh trials. Death had called four times in twelve years, yet the Martin house was still a cheerful place.” (page 4) Is your house a cheerful place? What immediate steps can you take to help it be a more cheerful place? Consider at least two positive actions that you can take toward this goal as well as at least two things that you can stop doing in order to help your house be full of Christian joy.

Optional Catechism Lessons

- I. First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - a. In *The New Saint Joseph First Communion Catechism*, read Lesson 1 **or**
 - b. In *Jesus Our Life* from the Faith and Life series, read Lesson 1; review questions 1-4; review the “Words to Know” using the definitions that start on page 141.

- Older siblings should review Lesson 24 in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism* on baptism. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, this would be text paragraphs 1213-1274 (252-264) or the summary at paragraphs 1275-1284. Be sure to review the role of godparents as outlined in text paragraph 1255 (259).

Tuesday, Week 1 (Day 2)

Parents: Read pages 3-10 in *The Story of a Family*.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the first chapter in *Story of a Soul*.

First Communicants: Complete “Day 2” in your First Communion journal.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter 2 of *The Little Flower*.

Chapter 2—In Which Therese Begins To Love Jesus

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

- By what pet name did Therese’s father call her?
- What did Mr. and Mrs. Martin do for a living?
- At what age did Therese decide to become a nun?

Discussion Topics

- What are some of Therese’s faults? Give examples of each from the story.
- What plan does three-year-old Therese enact to become a saint?
- Explain the meaning of this statement: “I will make you happy not in this world but in the next.” (page 20)

Growing in Holiness

If you have a set of St. Therese sacrifice beads, use them to keep track of the sacrifices you make and the good deeds you do each day. See how many times each day you can please the Little Jesus by saying humbling yourself and saying “Yes” to God. In the space provided in the journal (lower right-hand side of each day’s entry), enter the number of sacrifices you make each day.

Optional Catechism Lessons

- First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - Answer questions at the end of Lesson 1 in *The New Saint Joseph First Communion Catechism*; begin memorization of catechism questions 1-4 **or**
 - Read Lesson 2 in *Jesus Our Life* from the Faith and Life series. Review questions 5-7 and the “Words to Know.”
- By this statement, “. . . but I want you (her mother and father) to go to Heaven” (page 12), Therese shows that even at the age of three, she had a good understanding of the purpose of man’s existence. Older siblings should review Lesson 1 in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism* as well as text paragraphs 27-28, 293-294, 355-58, 1718, 185-87, 198, 239, 268, 279, 314, 325-27, 358, 422-24, 430, 484-88, 596, 619-623, 629-30, 636-37, 656-58, 665-67, and 680-82 (36, 51, 53, 59, 66, 79, and 135) in the CCC.

Wednesday, Week 1 (Day 3)

Parents: Read pages 11-21 in *The Story of a Family*.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the second chapter in *Story of a Soul*.

First Communicants: Complete “Day 3” in your First Communion journal.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter 3 of *The Little Flower*.

Chapter 3—In Which Therese Loses Her Mother and Continues to Grow in the Good God’s Grace

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. After the death of her mother, Therese and her family move to Lisieux. State the name of their new home there as well as the meaning of this name.
2. Why were Carmelites “hidden from the world”? (page 25)
3. What effect did the priest’s blessing have on Therese’s rosary beads?

Discussion Topics

1. Describe the activities in the Martin house on Sunday, Therese’s favorite day of the week. Compare and contrast these activities with the activities in your house on this day.
2. What do the terms “merit of sacrifice” and “merit of obedience” as used by Pauline on page 31 mean?

Growing in Holiness

Therese and her father made a habit of visiting Jesus in the tabernacle of the churches they would pass on their daily walks. Choose a time of day or a day of the week to visit Jesus as they did. Memorize the prayer Therese recited after her first confession (page 28) and recite it before the tabernacle—or in times of temptation: “My God, I give You my heart. May it please You to accept it, so that no creature can take possession of it but You alone, my good Jesus!” Note in your journal each day in the space provided on the lower left-hand page the number of prayers recited each day.

Optional Catechism Lessons

1. First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - a. Write catechism questions 1-4 from *The New Saint Joseph First Communion Catechism* on index cards and review **or**
 - b. Read Lesson 3 in *Jesus Our Life* from the Faith and Life series; review questions 1-9 and all the “Words to Know” studied to date.
2. Therese received the Sacrament of Penance when she was six years old; she states, “I had been well instructed as to the meaning of Confession.” (page 27) Older siblings can review Lesson 29 in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism* to reinforce their understanding of this sacrament. Corresponding text paragraphs in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* include 1440-1470 (296-312).

Thursday, Week 1 (Day 4)

Parents: Read pages 22-32 in *The Story of a Family*.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the third chapter in *Story of a Soul*.

First Communicants: Complete “Day 4” in your First Communion journal.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter 4 of *The Little Flower*.

Chapter 4—In Which Therese Attends School and Becomes Very Ill

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. How old was Therese when she began to attend school? Where did she attend?
2. What was the name Pauline received upon her admission to Carmel? What was the name Therese was to receive should she later be admitted?
3. Describe the spiritual battle that took place immediately before Therese’s cure from her mysterious illness.

Discussion Topics

1. Discuss several possible meanings of the “vision” Therese had of her father.
2. Father Domin, the chaplain at the Benedictine convent, called Therese his “Little Doctor.” (page 34) Why was this a prophetic statement?

Growing in Holiness

“Priests would be her (Pauline’s) particular care. She would offer her life that God might bless the world with many good and holy priests.” (page 36) As there are now fewer cloistered nuns to pray for priests, be sure to pray daily for “good and holy priests.” After each decade of the rosary, add the following prayer: “God our Father, please send us holy priests.”

Optional Catechism Lessons

1. First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - a. Ask someone to read with you the story of creation from the Bible, Genesis chapter 1; continue memorization of catechism questions 1-4 from the flash cards. Begin memorization of the prayers found at the beginning and end of this book **or**
 - b. Read Lesson 4 in *Jesus Our Life* from the Faith and Life series. Review questions 10-11 and the “Words to Know.”
2. Older siblings should review Lessons 21 and 22 in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism* on the commandments of the Church.

Friday, Week 1 (Day 5)

Parents: Read pages 32-41 in *The Story of a Family*.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the fourth chapter in *Story of a Soul*.

First Communicants: Complete “Day 5” in your First Communion journal.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter 5 of *The Little Flower*.

Chapter 5—In Which Therese Receives Her First Communion and Confirmation, and Her Prayers for Peace Are Answered

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. How old was Therese when she received her first Holy Communion? How did she prepare? List the resolutions Therese made after her First Holy Communion.
2. How old was Therese when she received the Sacrament of Confirmation? For which gift did she feel a special need?
3. What was the second miracle Therese felt was performed in her life?

Discussion Topics

1. Discuss how Therese felt at the reception of Our Lord in Holy Communion.
2. Explain Therese's idea of our journey toward or away from heaven.
3. Expand on Therese's idea of our union with God as compared to a drop of rain in the ocean.

Growing in Holiness

“. . . I had stumbled on the real meaning of meditation.” (page 42) Set aside ten minutes each day to mediate upon the mysteries of God and our faith. If necessary when beginning, use the verses of the Gospels to provide a starting point and to keep focused. Remember too the words of St. Philip Neri, “The best preparation for prayer is to read the lives of the saints . . . And to pause whenever you feel your heart touched with devotion.”

Optional Catechism Lessons

1. First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - a. Complete memorization of catechism questions 1-4 from Lesson 1 in the First Communion Catechism; continue memory work on the prayers **or**
 - b. Review Lessons 1-4 in *Jesus Our Life* by reviewing questions 1-11 as well as the “Words to Know” from each lesson; begin memory work on the prayers contained at the back of the book.
2. Older siblings should review Lesson 25 on the Sacrament of Confirmation in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism*. Review the following text paragraphs from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 1121, 1285, 1289, 1297-1314—or the “In Brief” section 1315-21—and 2472 (265-270).

Saturday, Week 1 and Sunday, Week 2 (Days 6 and 7)

Parents: Finish any reading necessary so that you are prepared to begin on page 42 in *The Story of a Family* on Monday.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the meditational readings in the Reading Schedule for High School and Middle School Students on pages 77-78 below.

First Communicants: Complete an entry in your journal each day this weekend.

Family: Choose an activity in the “Weekend Projects” section beginning on page 103.

Monday, Week 2 (Day 8)

Parents: Read pages 42-49 in *The Story of a Family*.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the fifth chapter in *Story of a Soul*.

First Communicants: Complete “Day 8” in your First Communion journal.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter 6 of *The Little Flower*.

Chapter 6—In Which Therese’s Soul Thirsts for Sinners and Grows in Grace

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. What prompted Therese’s longing to suffer for the conversion of sinners?
2. Why did Therese join the Carmelites as opposed to a missionary order?
3. Therese delayed speaking to her father for several weeks about her decision to enter Carmel. Why?
4. Who were opposed to Therese’s entrance into Carmel at the age of fourteen?

Discussion Topics

1. “Conversion” is a word most often used by Christians to refer to a change from a pagan or secular lifestyle to a Christian one. In this chapter, Therese speaks of her conversion as a change in attitude within her already-Christian lifestyle. Relate the conversion story of Therese on Christmas of 1886. How did it happen and what was the result? What behavior and attitudes changed?
2. Explain the difference this conversion made in Therese’s life. Outwardly, she had not changed; but inwardly, her attitude was very different. How was she now leading a life much like the nuns in Carmel?
3. Tell the story of Therese’s “first child of grace”, Pranzini.

Growing in Holiness

Until her entrance into Carmel, Therese wanted to “Pray for sinners. Look about and do good.” (page 58) She felt that her first duty in her new life of charity was toward her own family. (page 54) Note some of the activities Therese engaged in, and try to imitate her within your own house. Think of ways you can bring love and kindness to your siblings and parents. Look for opportunities to imitate Therese in acts of charity with your family.

Optional Catechism Lessons

1. First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - a. Read Lesson 2, “God Is Great” and Lesson 3 “The Blessed Trinity” in *The New Saint Joseph First Communion Catechism* **or**
 - b. Read Lesson 5 in *Jesus Our Life* from the Faith and Life series; review questions 12-15 and the “Words to Know.” Begin the recite the Guardian Angel prayer each night at bedtime.
2. In this chapter, Therese prepares herself for Carmel by growing in grace. Review Lesson 23 in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism* on the sacraments—our channels of grace. Corresponding text paragraphs in the CCC include 1113-16, 1121-23, 1129, 1131-34, and 1211-12 (146, 224-232, 237-38, 250-51, 295, and 321).

Tuesday, Week 2 (Day 9)

Parents: Read pages 50-58 in *The Story of a Family*.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the sixth chapter in *Story of a Soul*.

First Communicants: Complete “Day 9” in your First Communion journal.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter 7 of *The Little Flower*.

Chapter 7—In Which Therese Speaks to the Pope Regarding Entrance to Carmel

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. What question was settled in Paris at the church of Our Lady of Victories?
2. State the prayer Therese offered while in the Coliseum.
3. What was Pope Leo XIII’s reaction to Therese’s request to enter Carmel at fifteen?

Discussion Topics

1. Therese and her family spent six days visiting the principal attractions of Rome before Therese’s audience with the Holy Father. List the sites seen by Therese and her family and state the significance of each.
2. Narrate Therese’s encounter with Pope Leo XIII from his point of view. Use “I” to describe this scene as the Holy Father would remember it.

Growing in Holiness

If your family is not yet consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus—or if you have not yet made a personal consecration—consider doing so now. Our Lord has said that He will bless those homes where an image of His Heart is exposed and venerated. He has promised to give peace to their families and abundantly bless all their undertakings. He has further promised refuge in life and especially at the hour of death. For this consecration, a priest should bless a statue, picture, or icon of the Sacred Heart. After it is set in a place of honor, a consecration prayer such as the following should be recited.

Most Sweet Jesus, humbly at your feet, we (make) the consecration of our family to Your Divine Heart. Be our King forever! In You we have full and entire confidence. May Your spirit penetrate our thoughts, our desires, our words, and our works. Bless our undertakings, share in our joys, in our trials, and in our labors. Grant us to know You better, to love You more, to serve You without faltering.

By the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Queen of Peace, set up Your Kingdom in our country. Enter closely the midst of our families and make them Your own through the solemn enthronement of Your Sacred Heart, so that soon one cry may resound from home to home: May the triumphant Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved, blessed, and glorified forever! Honor and glory be to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary in union with St. Joseph! Sacred Heart, protect our families. (Jerome F. Coniker—Compiler, *Family Consecration Prayer & Meditation Book, Divine Mercy Edition*, p. 84)

Renew this consecration annually or monthly at Mass on each first Friday. You may make a daily consecration by using the following prayer each morning:

Sacred Heart of Jesus, remember that we are consecrated and belong to You. Bless and protect us all. May our home be a shrine of Your love and Your grace. Strengthen the bond of affection that unites us together. Help us to bear one another's burdens in peace and harmony and unselfishness. Keep us always near to You and to Your blessed mother. Amen.

Optional Catechism Lessons

1. First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - a. Answer the questions at the end of Lessons 2 and 3 in *The New Saint Joseph First Communion Catechism*; begin memorization of catechism questions 5-13 **or**
 - b. Read Lesson 6 in *Jesus Our Life* from the Faith and Life series; review questions 16 and 17 and the "Words to Know."
2. Review Lesson 27 in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism* on the Mass. Corresponding text paragraphs in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* include 1330, 1357 and 1544-1545. If desired, the entire section on the Eucharist, 1322-1405 (271-294), or only the "In Brief" section in text paragraphs 1406-1419 can be reviewed.

Wednesday, Week 2 (Day 10)

Parents: Read pages 58-65 in *The Story of a Family*.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the first half of Chapter 7 in *Story of a Soul*.

First Communicants: Complete "Day 10" in your First Communion journal.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter 8 of *The Little Flower*.

Chapter 8—In Which Therese Begins Her Life as a Carmelite Nun

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. How long did Therese's trip to Rome take?
2. Why did Mother Gonzago wait until after Easter before admitting Therese to Carmel?
3. Why did Therese wish to enter Carmel?
4. What duty was Therese given for exercise at Carmel?

Discussion Topics

1. Discuss how Therese gave up her will to the Will of God. Watch for further references of this practice.
2. Further detail the lesson Therese learned from the lamb given to her by her father. How can you apply this lesson in your life? How is this lesson related to the required use of the word "our" instead of "my" in the cloister?

Growing in Holiness

"I kept silent. A good religious is not expected to make excuses for herself, even when she is in the right." (page 82. Apply this to your life by not defending yourself against charges, righteous or not. Neither should you make excuses for your behavior or actions. This is especially difficult in a family setting, but remember the graces that will flow from this sacrifice. Offer these sacrifices for the conversion of a great many sinners.

Optional Catechism Lessons

1. First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - a. Write catechism questions 5-13 from *The New Saint Joseph First Communion Catechism* on index cards and review along with questions 1-4 **or**
 - b. Read Lesson 7 in *Jesus Our Life* from the Faith and Life series; review the “Words to Know.”
2. Father Pichon declared that Therese had never committed a single mortal sin. Review Lesson 6 in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism* regarding actual sin. Read the following text paragraphs in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1854-1866* (391-396).

Thursday, Week 2 (Day 11)

Parents: Read pages 66-75 in *The Story of a Family*.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the second half of the seventh chapter in *Story of a Soul*.

First Communicants: Complete “Day 11” in your First Communion journal.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter 9 of *The Little Flower*.

Chapter 9—In Which Therese Continues to Lead a Life of Sacrifice for the Salvation of Sinners

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. When did Therese receive the habit of the Carmelite order? How old was she?
2. What was Therese’s special charge in the chapel?
3. Who delayed Therese’s Profession of Solemn Vows?

Discussion Topics

1. Expand on Therese’s statement that perpetual sacrifice is the “coin with which sinners could be ransomed.” (page 93) What sacrifices can you make to ransom sinners today? Do not “let this wonderful coin slip through (your) fingers.”
2. Discern the meaning of this statement of Therese’s: “Most people find it easy to love the little Christ Child . . . but the true Christian never separates Bethlehem from Calvary.” (page 96) How can you use this insight to enrich your spiritual life?

Growing in Holiness

Re-read Therese’s description of her Little Way from page 88: “I gave myself and all my actions to our Lord . . .” Review too from page 95: “. . . no anxieties or trials of daily life are too small to be offered to God. For instance, I was often tired and cold. Well, I would offer my discomfort to God the Father, in union with Christ’s sufferings and death on Calvary.” Remember her attitude regarding her missing lamp and her beautiful jug. Live the way of St. Therese—not by doing great things but by doing your daily duty with great love. Consider too St. Faustina’s quotation, “I will not allow myself to be so absorbed in the whirlwind of work as to forget God.” (Diary, 82)

Optional Catechism Lessons

1. First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - a. Review “Some Things I See in Church”; if possible, go to your parish church and find these things—what else can you find? Continue memorization of catechism questions 1-13 from the flash cards **or**
 - b. Ask someone to read you the stories of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and David from a children’s story Bible. Draw a picture of one of these stories.
2. Older siblings should review Lesson 31 on confession in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism*. Corresponding text paragraphs in the CCC include 1440-60 (303-306) and 1468-1470 (432).

Friday, Week 2 (Day 12)

Parents: Read pages 76-84 in *The Story of a Family*.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the eighth chapter in *Story of a Soul*.

First Communicants: Complete “Day 12” in your First Communion journal.

Family Read Aloud: Read Chapter 10 of *The Little Flower*.

Chapter 10—In Which Therese Professes Her Vows and Lives Her Vocation

Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. What doubt did Therese have the night before her Profession Day? What caused this doubt?
2. What two thoughts concerning her vocation consoled Therese after the death of her father?
3. What privilege came to Therese because of the influenza epidemic in 1891?

Discussion Topics

Therese notes four new duties she was assigned. What were these duties? How can each of these duties give glory to God?

Growing in Holiness

“He accepted my sufferings, offered in union with those of His Son on Calvary, and applied their merit to souls too lazy or indifferent to pray for themselves.” (page 102) Our Lady of Fatima appeared on August 19, 1917—about twenty years after Therese made this statement—and implored us to “Pray! Pray a great deal and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to Hell for not having someone to pray and make sacrifices for them.” With the shortage of cloistered nuns and monks to pray and make sacrifices, this statement is far more ominous today. Many souls are lost, as there is no one to pray and make sacrifices for them. Pray and make sacrifices each day for those souls who do not pray for themselves that they might be given the grace to convert and obtain heaven.

Optional Catechism Lessons

1. First Communicants should complete one of the following:
 - a. Complete memorization of catechism questions 1-13 from the flash cards; continue memorization of the prayers. Draw a picture of the Blessed Trinity using the picture on page 16 as a guide or creating a design of your own **or**
 - b. Review questions 1-17 as well as the “Words to Know” from Lessons 1-7 in *Jesus Our Life*; continue to work on the memorization of the prayers from the end of the book.
2. Older siblings should review Lesson 28 in *The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism*, which covers the regulations on receiving Holy Communion.

Saturday, Week 2 and Week 3, Sunday (Days 13 and 14)

Parents: Finish any reading necessary so that you are prepared to begin on page 84 in *The Story of a Family* on Monday.

High School and Middle School Students: Read the meditational readings on page 78.

First Communicants: Complete an entry in your journal each day this weekend.

Family: Choose an activity in the “Weekend Projects” section of this guide.

