

Catholic Study Guides for Mary Fabyan Windeatt's

*The Curé of Ars,
The Story of Saint John Vianney,
Patron Saint of Parish Priests*

*The Little Flower,
The Story of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus*

*Saint Hyacinth of Poland,
The Story of the Apostle of the North*

*Saint Louis de Montfort,
The Story of Our Lady's Slave*

RACE for Heaven's Grade 7 Study Guides

Janet P. McKenzie

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Spiritual Read Aloud

Spiritual Reading

In *My Daily Bread, A Summary of the Spiritual Life* by Father Anthony Paone, S.J., Christ tells us,

My Child, reading and reflecting are a great help to your spiritual life. My doctrine is explained in many books. . . . Some of these books are written simply, and some are very profound and learned. Choose those which will help you most toward a greater understanding and appreciation of My Truth. Do not read to impress others but rather to be impressed yourself. Read so that you may learn My way of thinking and of doing things.

In her book, *Saint Dominic, Preacher of the Rosary and Founder of the Dominican Order*, Mary Fabyan Windeatt quotes St. Dominic as saying, “A little good reading, much prayer and meditation...and God will do the rest.” Father Peter-Thomas Rohrbach, O.C.D., states that spiritual reading is the “third essential asset for mediation” (after detachment and recollection). The great value he places on the habit of spiritual reading is expressed in his book *Conversation with Christ, An Introduction to Mental Prayer*:

We live in a world devoid, in great part, of a Christian spirit, in an atmosphere and culture estranged from God. Living in such a non-theological environment makes it difficult for us to remain in contact with the person of Christ and the true purpose of life itself. We must, if we are to remain realistically attached to Christ, combat this atmosphere and surround ourselves with a new one. Constant spiritual reading fills our minds with Christ and His doctrine—it creates this new climate for us.

In former ages, spiritual reading was not as essential for one’s prayer life. People lived in a Christian world and culture which was reflected in their laws, customs, amusements, and their very outlook on life. This situation has radically altered in the last two hundred years, and men must now compensate for this deficit through other media, principally reading. And as the de-Christianization of our world continues, the necessity for spiritual reading simultaneously increases. We stand in need of something to bridge the gap between our pagan surroundings and our conversation with Christ—spiritual reading fills this need.

There is today in our country an alarming decline in general reading of all types. It has been estimated that in 1955 an astonishing forty-eight percent of the American adult population reads *no books at all*, and only eighteen percent read from one to four books. The decline in reading is naturally reflected in religious reading as well. And, while the lack of secular reading will occasion a decrease in culture life, the decline in religious reading

will have repercussions of a more serious nature—severe detriment to one's spiritual life. Any serious attempt to better one's life spiritually should, therefore, include the resolution to engage in more spiritual reading.

If we confine our reading to non-Catholic books, magazines and newspapers, we almost automatically exclude ourselves from full development in our prayer life. The maxims and philosophy of life expressed in these avenues of communication slowly begin to seep into our lives until eventually they occupy a ruling position. We will not have surrounded ourselves with a new climate; rather, the non-Catholic climate will have engulfed us.

As this decry of the “de-Christianization of our world” was written in 1956, one can safely surmise that the necessity of cultivating the habit of spiritual reading can only have grown in the past several decades.

Spiritual Read Aloud

As supported above, spiritual reading is an essential element of every Christian's life. However, as demonstrated by the ancient practice within monasteries of spiritual read-aloud, this habit is a powerful tool for shared community growth in the spiritual life. For Catholic families, the practice of reading spiritual books aloud produces four desirable effects:

- I. It reinforces the habit of spiritual reading for each member of the family and allows each member to practice this habit regardless of age.
- II. It reinforces the habit of spiritual conversation if the reading results in even a general discussion of the values and virtues being portrayed in the story.
- III. It strengthens the family as the domestic Church where members exist to learn and live the Faith together for the support and enrichment of all family members.
- IV. It allows the discussion and demonstration of the practical application of the Faith for all age levels.

The Habit of Spiritual Reading

As outlined above, establishing the habit of daily spiritual reading is essential to our spiritual growth. Through read-aloud, children can be taught at an early age that daily spiritual reading is a fun, rewarding exercise. Do make this time together pleasant by allowing the children to do crafts, draw, play quietly with puzzles, toys, etc. As long as their attention is not divided and they can participate in a discussion of the reading afterwards, allow quiet activity. One cannot expect children to sit piously with hands clasped prayerfully throughout the read-aloud session! As the children get older, encourage them to read other spiritual books, including the Bible, during a quiet time of their own. Model this habit by allowing them to observe your habit of daily spiritual reading as well. Although the family read-aloud sessions may be as long as thirty minutes, private spiritual reading times may be considerably shorter depending on the habits and temperament of each child.

The Habit of Spiritual Conversation

This habit, for many families, may begin with spiritual read-aloud. When each member of the family participates in a spiritual discussion of a religious book, the practice of discussing matters of faith and Christ-like living begins to form. If the formation of holy habits and imitation of the saints is the goal, these discussions will become commonplace in the home as each member checks the others on their actions and words. As family members become more comfortable and open about spiritual matters, this practice will soon spread into other areas of their lives. Spiritual discussions with friends and other relatives will become more natural and in fact become important topics to be discussed. Sharing one's own spirituality and encouraging others to become more open about matters of faith will then become an integral pattern of living.

Strengthening the Domestic Church

As we read more about the saints and their lives and begin to share our faith more openly with others, we realize the importance of holy companionship—living with others who share our faith ideas and supporting each other in our attempts to become more like Christ. Families begin to grow together in their knowledge of the Catholic faith and become more willing to support each other throughout the ups and downs of community living. We begin to “bear one another's burdens with peace and harmony and unselfishness.” Just as Christ has His Church to help bring salvation to all, we—as family members—have each other to provide mutual support and encouragement in our efforts to enter the narrow gate. Within our families, we can create the Catholic culture that is missing from our world's culture.

The Practical Application of the Faith for All Age Levels

When lives of the saints are read aloud in the family setting, all aged children can participate in a discussion of the imitation of the saint's virtues and holy habits. Each member can help others understand how to apply the lessons the saints teach us on a practical level. All family members can help choose a particular habit or virtue upon which to focus. A reward system can be established for virtuous behavior. A family “plan of attack” on non-virtuous habits and attitudes can be developed, implemented, checked, and revised. All members can be encouraged and taught to imitate Christ by the imitation of His saints.

Summary

Regular family read-loud sessions that center around the lives of the saints will benefit the family with an increased interest in reading—especially saintly literature, a growth in vocabulary, and an improved sense of family unity. Additionally, family members will be encouraged to develop the habit of spiritual reading on their own, will become more comfortable and experienced with spiritual conversation, and be able to apply the Truths of the Catholic faith, on a practical level, to all aspects of their lives—no matter what their age. The customs, habits, and attitudes of the family will more and more reflect those of the Catholic culture. Perseverance in this simple daily ritual will help to “bridge the gap between our pagan surroundings and our conversation with Christ.”

When Mother Reads Aloud

When Mother reads aloud the past
 Seems real as every day;
 I hear the tramp of armies vast,
 I see the spears and lances cast,
 I join the thrilling fray;
 Brave knights and ladies fair and proud
 I meet when Mother reads aloud.

When Mother reads aloud, far lands
 Seem very near and true;
 I cross the desert's gleaming sands,
 Or hunt the jungle's prowling bands,
 Or sail the ocean blue;

Far heights, whose peaks the cold mists
 shroud,
 I scale, when Mother reads aloud.

When Mother reads aloud I long
 For noble deeds to do—
 To help the right, redress the wrong,
 It seems so easy to be strong, so simple
 to be true,
 O, thick and fast the visions crowd
 When Mother reads aloud.

—*Anonymous*

The Reading Mother

I had a mother who read to me
 Sagas of pirates who scoured the sea,
 Cutlasses clenched in their yellow teeth,
 "Blackbirds" stowed in the hold beneath.

I had a mother who read me plays
 Of ancient and gallant and golden days
 Stories of Marmion and Ivanhoe,
 Which every boy has a right to know.

I had a mother who read me tales
 Of Gelert, the hound of the hills of
 Wales,

True to his trust till his tragic death,
 Faithfulness blest with his final breath.

I had a mother who read me things
 That wholesome life to the boy-heart
 brings—
 Stories that stir with an upward touch,
 O, that each mother of boys were such.

You may have tangible wealth untold,
 Caskets of jewels and coffer of gold.
 Richer than I you can never be—
 I had a mother who read to me.
 —*Strickland Gullilan*

How to Use These Study Guides

Vocabulary

Vocabulary words are listed at the beginning of each lesson. Words on the left are secular words and are given within the sentence structure. Allow students to guess the meaning of the italicized word before looking it up. This helps them to surmise the meaning from context, a skill that enhances reading comprehension and strengthens vocabulary. Vocabulary words listed in the right-hand column are Catholic vocabulary words. Help students identify any suffixes, prefixes or root words that might give clues to the word's meaning. To help with definitions and proper usage, use a dictionary. For Catholic vocabulary words, use a Catholic encyclopedia, dictionary, or catechism.



Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

These questions are appropriate for all age levels. They can be used several ways, depending on a student's ability. For students with difficulty in reading comprehension, read and briefly discuss these questions before reading the chapter. Discuss, too, the sub-title provided under each chapter heading in the study guide. The student will then know what content to watch for within the reading. If read afterward, the questions become a *test of*, rather than an *aid to*, comprehension. For students with adequate comprehension skills, use the questions for oral review after the reading to insure that important content has been absorbed.

Use these questions too as prompts for narration, which is simply the oral retelling of the story in the student's own words. It is a helpful tool to determine the level of each student's comprehension. All ages may benefit from the practice of narration. If done within a mixed age group, begin with the youngest students and have the older students add details to the already-related story.

Answers to comprehension questions are provided in the answer key.



Forming Opinions/Drawing Conclusions

More than relating events, these questions require the student to develop an opinion, or to uncover or discover material not expressly stated in the text. They are designed to develop thinking skills and do not usually require the use of any outside resources. Use this section with children grades five and up as the basis for discussion or as a writing assignment.



For Further Study

Appropriate for upper elementary through high school grades, this section requires the use of additional reference materials. These activities invite students to look more deeply at the historical events and people that shaped the times of each character. Topics in this section may be used for honing research skills, or for oral presentations and/or written reports.



Growing in Holiness

These activities are different from the others in that they do not involve discussion or study as much as personal action and interior reflection. They can perhaps be considered “conversion activities” or “life lessons.” By applying the spiritual lessons of the story to everyday life, the student is encouraged to develop habits in imitation of the saints—which is an imitation of Christ Himself. Remember to reinforce these activities with the student and to comment when they are observed in action.



Geography

The map provided with this study guide serves to orient the students with respect to space—*where* the action of the story is taking place—as well as to acquaint them with common geographical landmarks. Permission is hereby granted to photocopy maps for family or classroom use.



Timeline Work

The creation of a timeline allows students to place the story's events within a wider historical framework. Simple directions for making a timeline are included in the study guide. Students will need plain paper, colored markers, and a ruler.



Checking the Catechism

For older students, these activities require a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* or its *Compendium*. The references for the more concise *Compendium* appear in parentheses after the CCC citations. Older students can read aloud—and then discuss—the stated text paragraphs with an adult.

For younger students, use any grade-appropriate catechism to review the doctrines and terms as specified. An excellent activity book for multi-grades is Ignatius Press' *100 Activities Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* by Ellen Rossini. Discuss together how the specific topics from the catechism are illustrated in the thoughts and actions of the characters in the book.



Searching Scripture

Familiarize the student with the inspired Word of God by studying the biblical passages provided. Strengthen these exercises by occasionally requiring memorization of the verse(s). Stress that knowledge of Scripture is an important part of our faith education.

Note that Ms. Windeatt used the Douay-Rheims translation of the Bible, which was the translation in use in the United States until 1970 when it was replaced by the New American Bible in the *Lectioary of Mass*. The Douay-Rheims translation is taken from the Latin Vulgate, whereas the New American translation comes from the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek (as the case may be for each specific book). For this reason, some of the books' names (as well as some of the Psalms' numbers) differ between these two translations. When these differences occur in the biblical citations

within this study guide, the New American references are given first with the Douay-Rheims references following in parentheses. All biblical references used in this study guide are from the New American translation.



Test

The purpose of the test is to ensure that the student has comprehended the important events in each saint's life as well as the lessons the story intends to impart. An answer key is provided for these questions.

In addition to the test, many students will benefit from the completion of a book report. See RACE for Heaven's *Alternative Book Reports for Catholic Students* for additional information on book reports specifically geared toward saint biographies. Consider requiring each student to choose one of these reports or activities upon completion of the Windeatt biography.

Warning

These study guides are comprehensive. They contain activities for a variety of age levels and areas of study. Do **not** attempt to complete every activity for every lesson. Do only those exercises that are suitable for the needs of your current situation. Resist the impulse to be so thorough that the story line of the book is lost, and the read-aloud sessions become dreaded rather than anticipated. The activities are designed to enhance your reading—not to become the dictating tyrant of your read-aloud time together. If you are using these guides for young audiences, consider just using the comprehension and opinion questions as well as the “Growing in Holiness” section; use the maps as a geographical visual aid. Re-read the books to complete the more advanced activities in later years.

Another suggestion is to use the activities designed for older students in coordination with their history, geography, writing and/or religious curriculum. Each study guide could also be used as a complete unit study for hectic times when regular school may not be in session such as Advent, times of family stress (the birth of a new sibling, for example) or over the summer months. In reading the book and completing the activities, subjects such as religion, reading, writing, geography, and history can all be easily covered.

The most important rules to the successful use of these enrichment activities are

1. Be creative rather than obsessive.
2. Be flexible rather than overly structured.
3. Enjoy!

The Curé of Ars

St. John Vianney, parish priest of Ars, France,
Overcame many obstacles just for a chance
To become God's priest
And then, when deceased,
A saint for His church despite the devil's advance.

The revolution in France affected John's course.
But prayer and hard work he did heartily endorse.
Called to be priest,
His prayers he increased.
His desire to save souls was his driving force.

With the help of his friends and heavenly aid,
He persevered 'til at last, John made the grade.
Ordained as a priest,
His troubles decreased.
Except hearing confessions—this right was delayed.

To Ars he was sent, a small town curé.
He fasted and preached against sin and decay.
They liked not this priest
Who battled the Beast.
The townsmen just wanted to party and play.

John suffered and sacrificed for every soul,
Spent many an hour in his confessional stole.
A priest who heard sin
Again and again,
The reading of hearts became his starring role.

For hours he'd listen; for solitude he'd long.
But wherever he went, the sinners would throng.
They loved this fine priest,
Who battled the Beast.
A model for priests, dedicated and strong.

Think what you can learn from this saint and his tale.
How you can apply it to help you prevail.
Then mold what you do
And boldly pursue
His pattern of holiness. Follow his trail.

Chapters 1 and 2—In Which John Explains Life in France and Begins to Struggle with the Devil

Review Vocabulary

government had driven them into *exile* *rectory*
Murmuring against God's will *theology*



Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. According to John, what makes the struggle against the devil easier?
2. What did John do to help himself work more efficiently? Did it work?
3. John stated that there was a shortage of priests in France in 1802. Explain why.
4. Why did Father Balley refuse to accept John as a student for the priesthood? Who did John think was behind Father Balley's refusal?
5. Look on pages 8, 9, 14, and 19 to see how much formal schooling John had. What was he reading on his own to help prepare himself for the priesthood?



Forming Opinions/Drawing Conclusions

1. Why were so many religious activities—such as Mass and catechism class—done in secret? What it would feel like to attend Mass “as though bent on committing some great crime” (page 5)? How would this change your attitude toward Mass?
2. In what ways must we “struggle” to win Heaven? Who or what do we struggle against? What has God provided us as aids in this struggle?
3. Name three things that can be done to show what an honor and privilege it is to be present during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If a “big name” star were coming to visit your church, would the church be full? How much excitement would there be? Jesus, our Savior, is present there at all times. Could you go visit him?



For Further Study

John speaks of the difficult times of the Church in France during the late 1700's. Research the political climate of France during the late 1700s. What was France's relationship with England, Austria, Spain, Sardinia, and Prussia as well as the Catholic Church? Include in your research the following: King Louis XVI, Napoleon Bonaparte, Pope Pius VI, Pope Pius VII, and the “Reign of Terror”.



Growing in Holiness

1. Memorize the last paragraph of Chapter 1 and use it as a morning offering. Recite it often throughout the day.
2. Outline a plan to ask the Blessed Virgin Mary for her help in a job you find difficult to do. List specifically what you want help with and how you plan to accomplish this through our Lady's help.

Chapters 3 and 4—In Which John Continues His Struggle to Become a Priest

REVIEW Vocabulary

boxed my ears
My *woebegone* face

Major Seminary
grace of perseverance



Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. How did John travel on his sixty-mile pilgrimage to La Louvesc?
2. Name four obstacles the devil used to discourage John from becoming a priest.
3. Why was John not excused from military duty as most seminarians were?
4. How did John come to be a deserter in the Army? What was his reaction to realizing that he was a deserter? What was his plan should the police come looking for him while he was a deserter?



Forming Opinions/Drawing Conclusions

What did John mean when he confided to Father Balley that “only through pride could I have undertaken such an impossible venture” (page 24) as the priesthood? What virtues are demonstrated in this conversation?



Growing in Holiness

God places great importance in obedience—doing the will of another before your own. Remember that He views this action as even more important than prayer and suffering. Try to receive as many graces as possible by being obedient.



Geography

Trace the map from page 3 of this study guide. Color these seas, oceans, and rivers blue: Atlantic, North, Mediterranean, Bay of Biscay, Rhine, and Danube. Also color the Pyrenees Mountains brown. (The map will be completed in Chapters 7 and 8.)



Checking the Catechism

Older students may read text paragraphs 1830-45 (390) in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* regarding the fruits of the Holy Spirit. If desired, complete Activity #62, in *100 Activities Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church (100 Activities)*. Younger students may reference this topic in their own catechisms.



Searching Scripture

...”an act of mortification can be tinged with pride, but never an act of obedience.” (page 28) Read these Scripture texts: Samuel (1 Kings) 15:22, Psalm 40 (39):7-9, Micah (Micah) 6:6-8, and Hebrews 10:5-7. Use these readings to reinforce your growth in holiness as discussed above.



Book Summary Test for *The Curé of Ars*

Directions: Answer in complete sentences. If necessary, use the back of the page for additional writing space. 100 possible points, 20 points for each answer.

1. Name several obstacles that John Vianney had to overcome in order to be ordained a priest. How did he overcome these obstacles?

2. When John Vianney was first ordained a priest, what priestly function was he considered unfit to perform and why?

3. Describe Saint John Vianney's encounters with the devil.

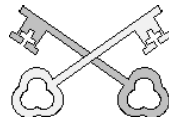
4. For what gift did the Curé of Ars become known? How many hours did he spend in the confessional each day? About how many confessions did he hear each month?

5. "...let me bring Him souls" (page 86). Saint John Vianney sacrificed daily to save souls. What can you begin to do on a daily basis in imitation of Saint John in order to save souls?

In Honor of God's Priests

The Beautiful Hands of a Priest

We need them in life's early morning. We need them again at its close;
We feel their warm clasp of friendship. We seek them when tasting life's woes.
At the altar each day we behold them, and the hands of a king on his throne
Are not equal to them in their greatness; no, their dignity stands all alone;
And when we are tempted and wander, to pathways of shame and of sin,
'Tis the hand of a priest 'twill absolve us—not just once, but again and again.
And when we are taking life's partner, other hands may prepare us a feast,
But the hand that will bless and unite us—'tis the beautiful hand of a priest.
God bless them and keep them all holy, for the Host which their fingers caress;
When can a poor sinner do better, than to ask Him to guide thee and bless?
When the hour of death comes upon us, may our courage and strength be increased,
By seeing raised o'er us in blessing—the beautiful hands of a priest.
(From an old prayer card, author unknown)



Thou Art a Priest Forever

To live in the midst of the world, without wishing its pleasures;
To be a member of each family, yet belonging to none;
To share all sufferings, to penetrate all secrets, to heal all wounds;
To go from men to God and offer Him their prayers;
To return from God to men to bring pardon and hope;
To have a heart of fire for charity and a heart of bronze for chastity,
To teach and to pardon, console and bless always.
What a glorious life! And it is yours, O Priest of Jesus Christ.
(From an old prayer card, author unknown)