



LESSONS 12 and 13 CONTENT GOALS FOR APRIL:

- Recite this month's Scripture Memorization
 - "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" (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- Define the following:
 - **Dryness**
 - **Persevere**
 - **Spiritual Combat**
 - **Saint**
 - **Purgatory**
 - **Sacramental**
- Explain ways to overcome obstacles to prayer.
- Understand that we should imitate the saints in prayer.
- Explain how the saints are our friends.
- Tell about Our Lady of Pontmain
- Tell the Story of St. Vincent Ferrer
- ALL: Complete your Monthly Prayer Board Activity!**

I. THE BATTLE OF PRAYER- Lesson 12

MAIN IDEAS: There are obstacles in prayer, and “prayer can even be a battle – not a typical battle, but one against our own weaknesses and lack of faith, all of which the Devil is delighted to exploit so as to turn us away from God. A proper understanding of prayer helps us combat Satan and grow in holiness” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV, p.246*).

SPIRITUAL COMBAT: Prayer is a gift – God calls us and we respond. It is not always easy – **there are obstacles.**

| Vocabulary Word | Definition | In other words... |
|------------------|--|---|
| Spiritual Combat | Our fight against the temptations of the devil | Our battle or fight with temptations that the devil puts before us that try to pull us away from God. |

“Prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. We pray as we live, because we live as we pray. If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name. The ‘spiritual battle’ of the Christian’s new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer” (CCC 2725).

- Battle against ourselves: our weaknesses, temptations, failures, distractions, and laziness
- Battle against the devil: Devil wants to pull us away from God.

“God wants us to bring this battle directly to Him” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 317*). We must recognize that we cannot win this battle without God. “We must trust in God to hear our prayer and we must persevere against all obstacles” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 317*).

MASS CONNECTION: We say the *Prayer of St. Michael* to defend us in battle against the devil at the end of Mass. We can say that prayer everyday!

DISTRACTION: Distraction is one of the most common obstacles to prayer, especially in today’s age of electronics that bombard our senses. Additionally, the mind is not trained to focus on a single activity for a prolonged amount of time.

Example: Having conversation with someone who keeps picking up their phone compared to really having an intimate conversation with someone who is focused only on you and you on them. The latter strengthens the relationship.

In our relationship with God: To grow our relationship with God, we must fully turn toward Him and make ourselves fully present to Him. This shows we value Him above all else.

God understands that prayer is a battle, so He knows we will experience distraction sometimes, but we must do our part to mitigate that distraction.

QUESTION: What are some ways to limit distraction?

- Quiet our minds when beginning to pray or before Mass
- Find a quiet time and place and put your phone away.
- Sit in a traditional prayer posture (kneeling, sitting up, etc.)

*These cultivate an attitude of reverence in our prayer life.

DRYNESS: Dryness is another common distraction to prayer.

| Vocabulary | Definition | In other words... |
|------------|---|--|
| Dryness | The feeling that no one is listening when we pray | The feeling that God doesn’t listen and hear our prayers |

“Sometimes God graces those who pray with the gift of feeling his presences, or feeling united to Him. It is easy to mistake these feelings as the only sign of the presence of God in our lives. Not only that, but we can also fall into the temptation of praying to achieve those feelings, instead of making God the whole reason that we pray” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 318*).

Culturally we measure the goodness of things based on how they make us feel to determine if it is worthwhile, but this should not be so with prayer or for example, Mass. In our relationship with God, it requires our FAITH and TRUST in God. Prayer isn't about US or our FEELINGS. It is about giving God that WORSHIP that is DUE HIM!

God sometimes removes the feeling of His presence to those who are seasoned in prayer to purify their motivation to pray.

Continuing to pray through seasons of dryness is an ACT of FAITH – we trust our prayers are heard without *feeling* like we got a response. This dryness will pass and we will have grown in our relationship with God.

LACK OF FAITH: Lack of Faith is another obstacle in our prayer lives. “Another reason for dryness in prayer, however, is because we lack sufficient faith for God’s Word to take root and live in our hearts. If that is the case, what is necessary is a CONVERSION of the heart” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 318*).

“Sometimes we don’t realize that the way we pray actually stems from a weak faith, for example, if we only pray to God as a last resort, or if we expect Him to answer our petitions when we want and how we want them” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 318*).

-If we only turn to God as a last resort, do we truly believe in Him and His power and presence?

-We may also only pray for God to intercede according to *our* desires, not His WILL.

-Other times we feel “dispirited” if we believe God does not hear our prayer.

*This requires us to examine what we are praying for: Are we praying for the right thing? Is it good for us? Sometimes we don’t know that what we are asking for is not in our best interest. God loves us and won’t answer our prayers in a way that is bad for us.

PERSEVERANCE: When we encounter these struggles, we must persevere through them!

“The Catechism reveals the source of constancy in our prayer: ‘This tireless fervor can come only from love. Against our dullness and laziness, the battle of prayer is that of humble, trusting and persevering love’ (CCC 2742). Our God is a faithful God who loves His children; He will reward those who love Him and faithfully seek a relationship with Him” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 319*).

| Vocabulary | Definition | In other words... |
|--------------|--|--|
| Perseverance | To continue in spite of facing obstacles | To keep doing something even when it is hard |

Hook Questions for Kids and Youth:

What is hardest for you in praying everyday and consistently?

Do you trust that God hears you prayer?

How can you pray more so that you have a solid relationship and friendship with God?

II. PRAYER AND THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS– Lesson 13

MAIN IDEAS: “One of our greatest aids to prayer is to read the lives and writings of the saints. Their lives inspire us to lead holy lives and their instructions can lead us on how to develop our prayer lives. The Church recognizes the saints in Heaven because they lived lives of heroic virtue – lives that should inspire us to imitate them. We know they are holy because they are in Heaven, and the way that they achieved this holiness was through an intimate life of prayer with God.” (*FF Vol IV Prayer, Parent Guide p.247*).

SAINTS ARE A RESOURCES FOR US IN PRAYER:

| Vocabulary | Definition | In other words... |
|------------|--|--|
| Saint | A holy person who lived a life according to God’s will and is in Heaven. | A holy person who lived a holy life and now lives in Heaven. |

Saints are “prayer experts”.

“The Church recognizes the saints in Heaven because they lived lives of heroic virtue – lives that should inspire us to imitate them. We know they are holy because they are in Heaven, and the way that they achieved this holiness was through an intimate life of prayer with God” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 320*).

FRIENDS IN HEAVEN: “One of the greatest aids to prayer is to read the lives and writings of saints. Their lives act as inspiration for us to lead holy lives, and their instructions can guide us on how to develop our prayer lives” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 320*).

The saints are meant to be our friends! Saints have individual spiritualities, personalities, and life experiences. Because of this, they have causes each to their own. We can befriend a saint or saints who model some aspect of life for us and they can pray for us!

Some Saint Patronages: Saint Michael – Protector of the Church, Saint Francis – Animals, Saint Cecilia – Music, Saint Sebastian – Sports, Saint Dymphna – Mental Illness, Saint Andrew – Women wishing to become mothers, Saint Agatha – Breast Cancer, Saint Peregrine – Cancer, St. Jude Thadeus – Desperate Causes

“The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings, and their prayer today” (CCC 2683).

- We can IMITATE the saints
- We can rely on saints for their POWERFUL INTERCESSION (they can pray for us)
“Their intercession is the most exalted service to God’s plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us that for the whole world” (CCC 2683).

MASS CONNECTION: “At every Mass, the needs of others are lifted up to God and we ask for the intercession of all the Communion of Saints. In this way we intercede for others, and seek the intercession of others” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 320*).

Remember: When we ask saints to intercede (or to pray for us) we are NOT worshipping them; worship is meant for God alone! Instead we talk to them as friends and as role models who are also friends of God.

Saints are close to us! Even though we cannot see them, they are close to us. Together, we make up the Body of Christ (also called the Church) to accomplish the mission of bringing about God’s Kingdom! We are all united with one another in communion, especially through the reception of the Eucharist).

The Body of Christ/The Church and Their Respective Roles in Prayer: This includes the saints in Heaven, the souls in Purgatory, and the people on earth. We each have a role to play in bringing about God's Kingdom. Jesus is the Head of the Body or the Church. Additionally, each group plays a special role in the prayer life of the Church.

- **The Church Militant:** "Those on earth are meant to intercede for each other, petition God for our needs according to His will, as well as ask the intercession of the saints in Heaven and the souls in Purgatory (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 321*).
- **The Church Suffering:** "The souls in Purgatory are those who 'though die in God's grace and friendship, but [are] still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven' (CCC 1030). These souls undergo great suffering in order to be purified of any unconfessed venial sins and for the reparation of the remaining effects of confessed mortal and venial sins. They are able to pray for others, but they are not able to pray for themselves. Therefore, we should see it as a special gift to be able to pray for those who are suffering in Purgatory, and remember that we have allies there who will be praying for us in return!" (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 321*).
- **The Church Triumphant:** "The saints in Heaven do not need anyone to intercede for them because they have already received the fulfillment of their being through the vision of God in Heaven, but as mentioned before, they are especially tasked by God to pray for the rest of us. Their prayers are especially holy and pleasing to God because they are not tinged with selfishness, but are motivated by love of God and love for us" (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 321*).

| Vocabulary | Definition | In other words... |
|------------|---|---|
| Purgatory | Where souls of those who died in friendship with God but need to be purified of sins go before entering Heaven. | Where souls of those people who have died in friendship with God but still need to be purified go before they go to Heaven. |

SACRAMENTALS: The Church provides us with sacramentals to aid us in prayer and to give us particular graces (or God's life in us). They ARE NOT SUPERSTITIONS! They help make the invisible visible. They are used with an attitude that faith and humility; that we need God's grace in our lives.

| Vocabulary | Definition | In other words... |
|-------------|--|---|
| Sacramental | A prayer, practice, or object that helps us to receive the grace of God. | A prayer, practice, or object that helps us to receive God's grace or life in us. |

Some Examples of Sacramentals:

- Holy Rosary
- The Sign of the Cross
- Blessings
- Holy Water
- Crucifixes
- Icons
- Scapulars
- "Other items that through the Church, bring reminders of God's love into our lives" (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 321*).

Sacraments versus Sacramentals: Though the words are similar, they do not have the same effects. “A sacramental object does not have the same power of a Sacrament. Nor do sacramentals give us grace the same way that Sacraments do” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 321*). Like sacraments, sacramentals are “signs or physical reminders of a spiritual reality, and they prepare us to receive the grace of the Sacraments and make everyday life holy (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 321*).

- Sacramentals can be a great aid to prayer, be prayers themselves, or “because the particular graces given by that sacramental strengthen our spiritual lives” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 321*).
- Examples: Asking for God’s blessing for safe travel before a trip, praying the family rosary together asks God to strengthen your spiritual lives as a family, wearing a medal or scapular promises particular graces and can serve as a reminder to live a holy life and pray often.

“The graces given to us through the sacramentals and the graces given to us through the intercession of the saints are some of the ways that the Church helps us to deepen our relationship with God” (*FF Parent Guide, Vol IV p. 322*).

Hook Questions for Children and Youth:

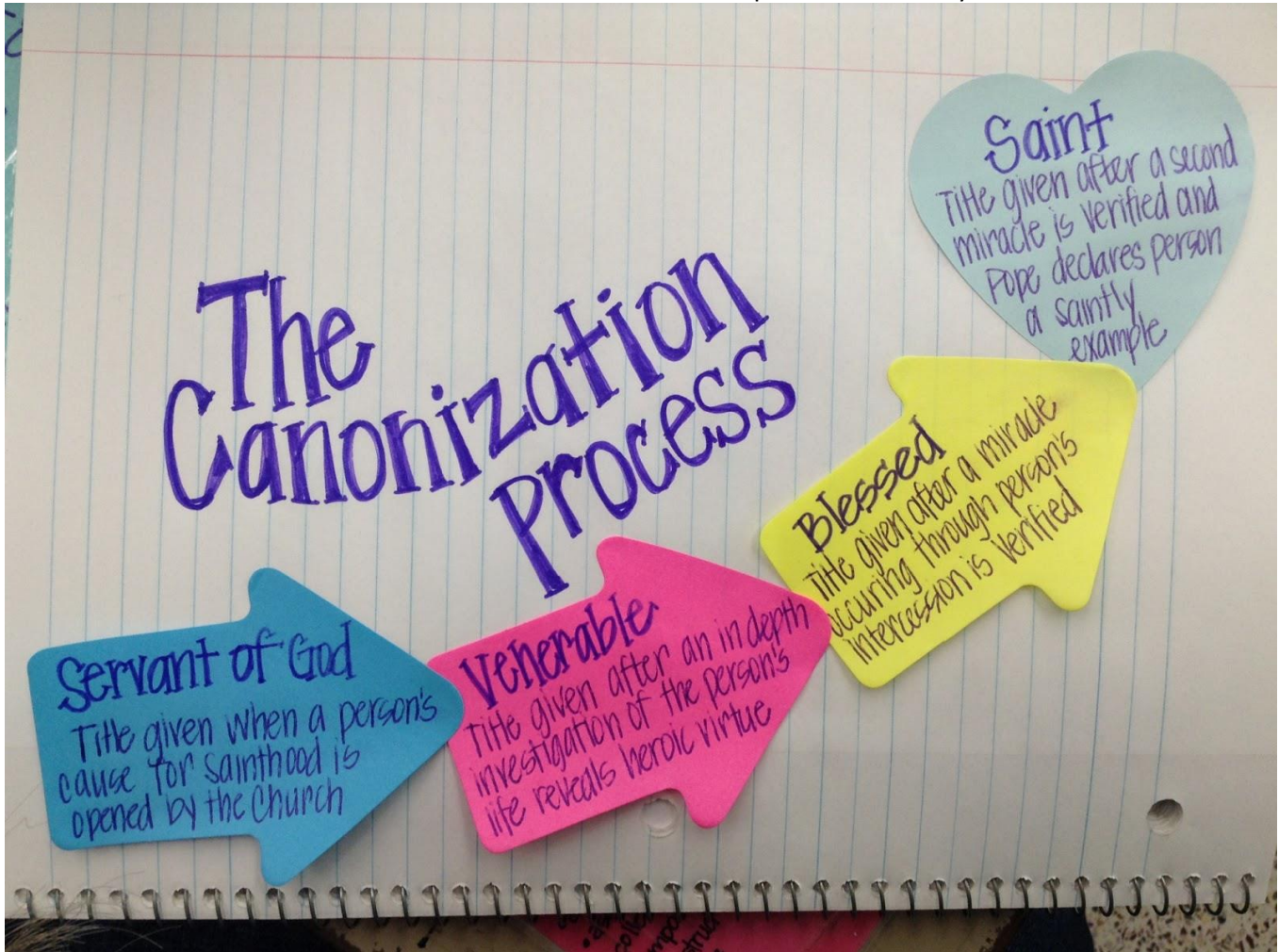
- Do you have a favorite saint to whom you like to pray? If so, to whom do you pray and for what?
- Do you have a favorite sacramental? Where did it come from and why is it special to you?

FAMILY CHALLENGES

1. Parents and grandparents, show some of your special sacramentals to your children and share where they came from and why they are special to you.
2. Pray a prayer together for the souls in Purgatory that they may one day see the face of God. Especially pray for those loved ones in your family who have passed.

IN SUMMARY:

- When we feel distracted, we can ask God to help us focus our minds on Him.
- Persevering in prayer during times of dryness is an act of great faith.
- The Archangel St. Michael will defend us in battle against the devil.
- The saints are the prayer experts of the Church.
- One of our greatest aids to prayer is to read the lives and writings of the saints.
- The saints achieved holiness through a life of intimate prayer with God.



Look to Him and be Radiant: The Making of a Saint



The Communion of Saints