

Take Home



We Can Choose What Is Good

Saint Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican priest and great theologian, proclaimed that humans always tended toward the good. But how do we figure out what the good is? It may feel good to finish the last of a box of candy, but others in our family might not see it as good. We try to form a good conscience to help us identify what is good and then try to conform our behavior to our conscience.

Being Catholic helps us understand that God gives us free choice, and yet he is always ready to forgive us when we choose to sin.

ACTIVITY

Pick-up Sticks Did you ever play pick-up sticks? If so, you know that the sticks fall and you have to pick them up moving only the stick you are taking away. Play pick-up sticks with your child. Discuss how the game is like making moral choices. You need to choose carefully in order to succeed.

WEEKLY PLANNER

On Sunday

During the Penitential Rite, reflect on the choices you made during the week. Thank God for his guidance.

On the Web

www.blestarewe.com



Visit our Web site for the saint of the day and the reflection question of the week.

Saint of the Week



Saint Peter of Saint Joseph Betancur
(1619–1667)

Peter lived as a shepherd. He moved to the city to become a Third Order Franciscan. In 2002, San Pedro de San Jose Betancur became the first canonized native of Guatemala.

Patron Saint of: Guatemala
Feast Day: April 18



A Prayer for the Week

Lord, thank you for giving us the freedom to choose. Help us to use this gift to make right choices. Help us to be caring like Saint Peter of Saint Joseph Betancur. Amen.

Getting ready for Chapter 5

Take Home



✚ Scripture Background

In the Time of Jesus

Inheritance Israelite tradition held that the eldest son would inherit the property and holdings of the father.

The primary aim was to preserve the territory within each clan. Further biblical legislation also established the right of the firstborn to inherit twice as much as his brothers. In the Parable of the Forgiving Father, the younger son has already taken his share. So when the elder son is told that all that the father has is his, it literally means everything.

You can read this parable in Luke 15:11–32.



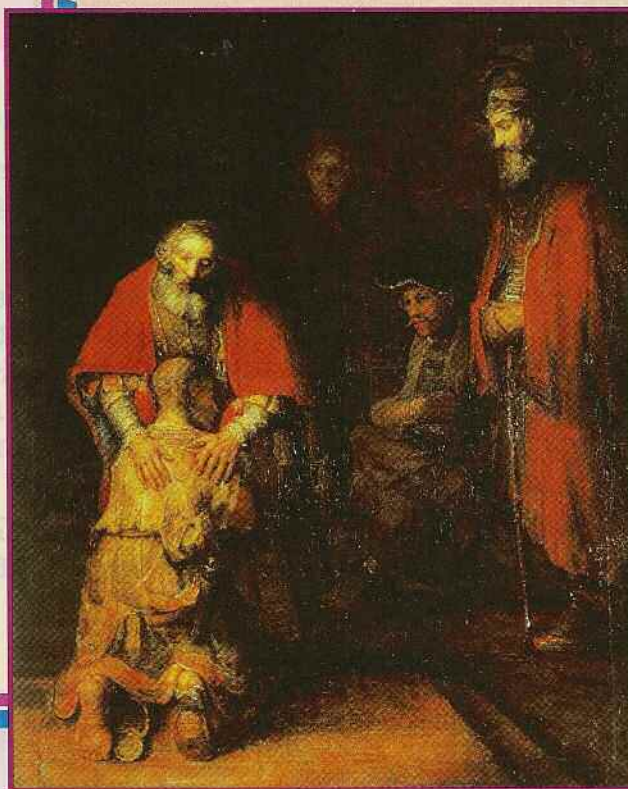
OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION

in Art

Return of the Prodigal Son

The Rembrandt painting titled *Return of the Prodigal Son* depicts the story Jesus told of the young man who left his family and squandered his fortune. Thinking he would be better off as a servant on his father's farm than living as he was—poor, hungry, and alone—he returned home. As this painting shows, his father welcomed him back as a son, not as a servant.

Henri Nouwen based his book, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* on Rembrandt's painting.



Getting ready for Chapter 6

Take Home

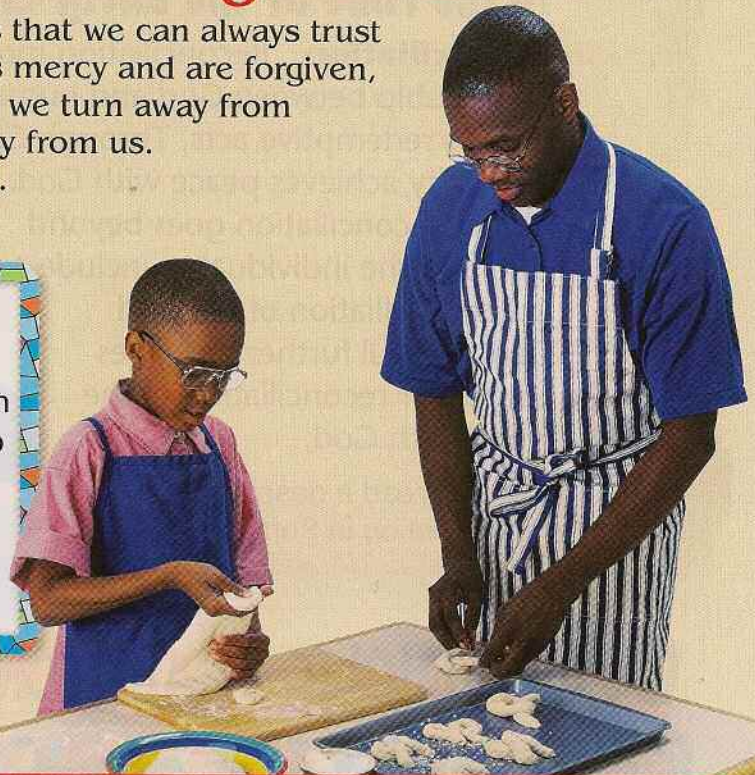


We Celebrate God's Forgiveness

One of the great joys of Christian life is that we can always trust in God's mercy. When we ask for God's mercy and are forgiven, we are reconciled to God. Even though we turn away from God when we sin, God never turns away from us. He is always ready to welcome us back.

ACTIVITY

Pretzels Buy some frozen bread dough and thaw it. With your child, break off small pieces and roll them into ropes. Form a loop and then bring the ends of the loop up and cross them. Sprinkle salt on the pretzels and bake them. Share with your child that the pretzel shape represents an attitude of prayer, with arms crossed.



WEEKLY PLANNER

On Sunday

During the prayer before Communion, "Lord, I am not worthy....," remember that God is always ready to forgive.

On the Web

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Saint of the Week



Saint Edith Stein
(1891-1942)

Edith Stein converted from Judaism to Catholicism and became a Carmelite nun. She was captured by the Nazis and taken to Auschwitz where she helped others until her death. She was canonized in 1998.

Patron Saint of: World Youth Day

Feast Day: August 9



A Prayer for the Week

I'm sorry, Lord,
for the things
I have done to hurt
others. Help me forgive
others when they hurt
me. Merciful God, I
trust in your love and
forgiveness. Amen.

Take Home

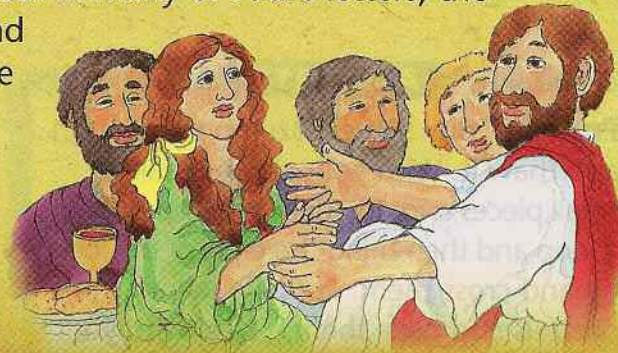


Scripture Background

In the Time of the Early Church

Reconciliation Reconciliation most often refers to the new relationship between God and humanity brought about by Christ's redemptive acts. Through Christ's death on the cross, humanity achieves peace with God. In many of Paul's letters, the idea of reconciliation goes beyond God and the individual to include the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile. Paul further describes a need for reconciliation of the world with God.

You can read a description of reconciliation in Romans 5:8–11.

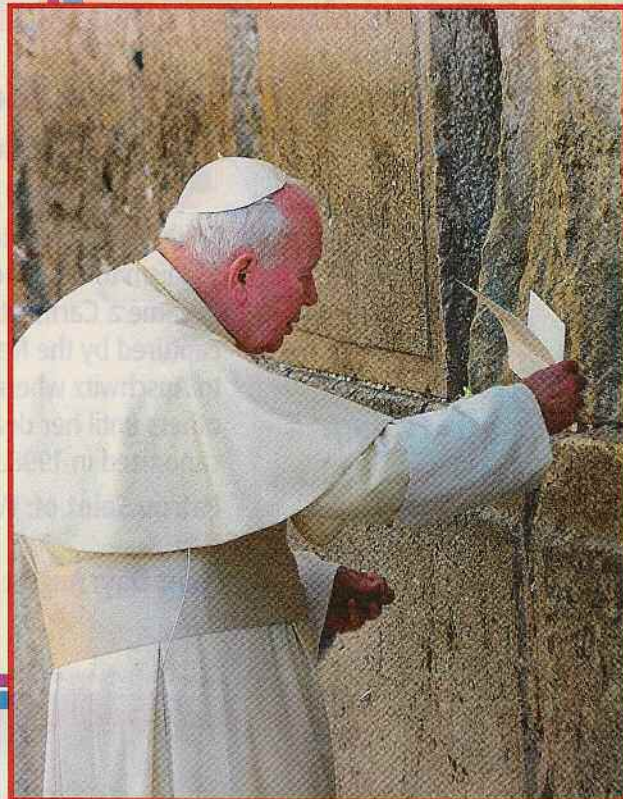


OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION

in Interfaith Relations

Jewish-Catholic Relations

Pope John Paul II apologized to the Jewish people for the prejudice some Catholics have shown them throughout history. He asked the Jews for forgiveness. This was an important decision. The Pope was speaking as the head of the Catholic Church, in the name of all its members. In speaking to all of the Jewish people, he apologized for all the injustices inflicted upon the Jews by any Catholic people. It was an important move toward reconciliation between two peoples who worship the same God.



Getting ready for Chapter 7

Take Home



We Think About Our Choices

This chapter deals with making choices and presents the Ten Commandments. The Commandments serve as a guide against which we measure our choices. Children learn that they are responsible for their actions. They learn that when they choose to do wrong, they sin. They also consider the differences among mistakes, venial sins, and mortal sins.



ACTIVITY

Choose a Game Play a board game as a family. Board games that involve choices help to illustrate the point of this chapter. Playing one of these games will demonstrate how the choices we make lead to consequences.

WEEKLY PLANNER

On Sunday

Talk with your family about ways to honor the Sabbath, such as going to Mass, avoiding conflict, and thinking about what God wants you to do.

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Saint of the Week



**Saint Andrew
the Apostle**
(first century)

Andrew and his brother Peter fished for a living in the Sea of Galilee. A disciple of John the Baptist, Andrew was the first apostle called by Jesus. He then brought Peter to Jesus.

Patron Saint of: Russia and Scotland

Feast Day: November 30



A Prayer for the Week

Jesus, help us to follow the example of Andrew by placing our trust in you. Help us to take responsibility for our actions. Amen.

Take Home

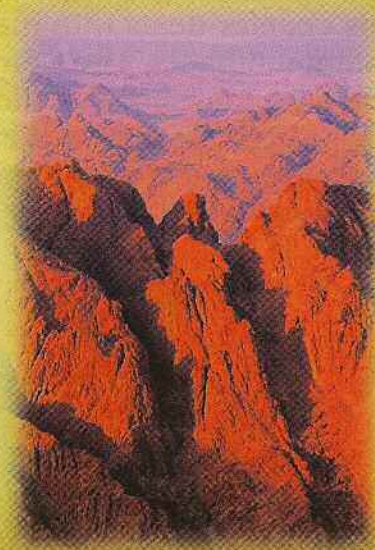


Scripture Background

Before the Time of Jesus

Mount Sinai Mount Sinai is part of the mountain range of Mount Horeb. It is sometimes called Mount Horeb. The Israelites believed that God dwelt on Sinai because Moses received the Ten Commandments from God there. During the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites lived at the base of the mountain. In Galatians 4:21–27, Paul compares Mount Sinai to the Heavenly Jerusalem to show Jesus' fulfillment of the redemptive promise.

For an account of Moses' experience, you can read Exodus 20:1–17.



OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION

in Film

The Spitfire Grill This 1996 film offers a moving story of forgiveness and reconciliation. A young woman, Percy Talbot, has no home to return to after serving prison time. The owner of *The Spitfire Grill* gives her housing in exchange for her services as a waitress. Percy touches the lives of many in the town. She forms a strong relationship with the owner and another woman. They share issues of sorrow, loss, and ultimately redemption.



Getting ready for Chapter 8

Take Home

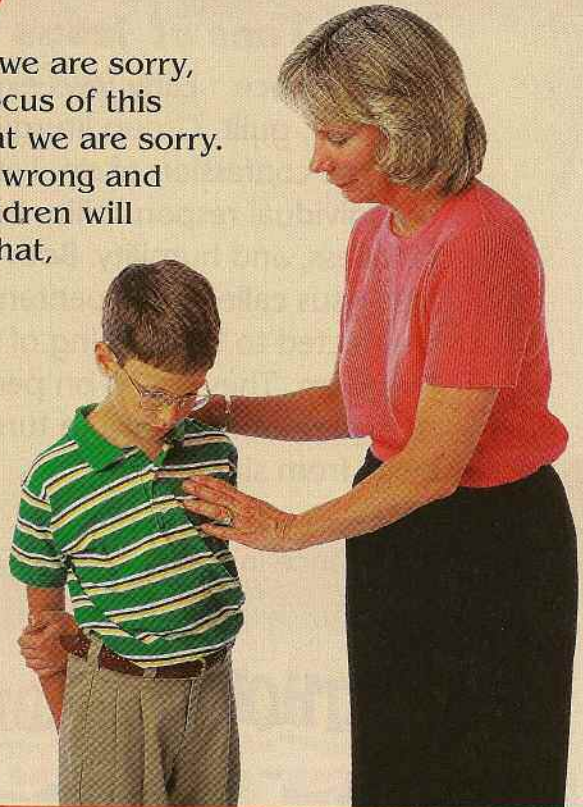


We Say We Are Sorry

When we choose to do wrong, we need to say we are sorry, to God and to any person we have hurt. The focus of this chapter is to learn to use prayer to tell God that we are sorry. When we do this, we admit that we have done wrong and recognize that we need to acknowledge it. Children will learn that prayer brings us closer to God and that, with the Holy Spirit's help, we can change.

ACTIVITY

How Many Ways? With your child, think of several ways to say or show that you are sorry. Some examples are "Please forgive me," "I didn't mean to hurt you," giving a hug, and shaking hands. You might want to make a list of all the expressions and actions you have identified.



WEEKLY PLANNER

On Sunday

During the Sunday liturgy, ask God's forgiveness for wrong choices you made last week.

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Saint of the Week



Saints Elizabeth and Zachary (first century)

Elizabeth was Mary's cousin. She and Zachary were the parents of John the Baptist. The angel Gabriel told Zachary their son would be filled with the Holy Spirit. John's parents trusted God.

Patron Saints of: pregnant women

Feast Day: November 5



A Prayer for the Week

O Lord, may our family be as close as that of Elizabeth and Zachary. Help us to recognize wrongs we have done to family members. Strengthen us to admit our faults and say we are sorry. Amen.

Getting ready for Chapter 8

Take Home

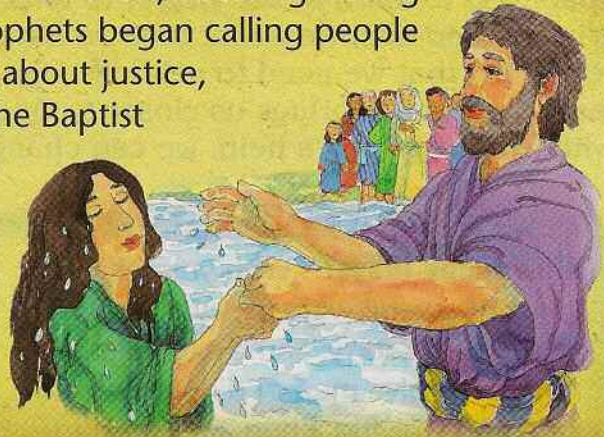


✚ Scripture Background

In the Time of Jesus

Repentance Early Jews expressed collective, rather than personal, guilt. Group liturgies were common, stressing fasting and the confession of sin. Later, prophets began calling people to individual responsibility to bring about justice, kindness, and humility. Both John the Baptist and Jesus called for repentance connected to the coming of the Kingdom. They called on people to express sorrow and to turn away from sin.

You can read of John's call to repentance in Matthew 3:1–17.



OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION in Music

Fiddler on the Roof *Fiddler on the Roof* was a Broadway musical and a movie. It tells the story of a Russian Jewish family before the Russian Revolution. One of the most poignant songs, "Sunrise, Sunset," sung by the mother and father, is about how quickly time passes in a family and how quickly children grow up. This song echoes the sentiment of Catholic parents as well. How do children grow up so fast? This timely song reminds us that we should nurture our relationship with our children, because they won't be with us forever.

