

Getting Ready for Chapter 17

Take Home



A New Life and a Coming Messiah

Some years after their return from exile, the Jewish people were ruled by nations that tried to prevent them from practicing their faith. The Temple was filled with statues of pagan gods. A group of Jewish warriors led a revolt and reclaimed the Temple. Out of the struggles of God's people grew the hope that God would send a messiah and reward his faithful ones with peace after death.

ACTIVITY

Family Time Capsule The Jewish people drew strength from recalling past experiences of God. Collect items that remind your family of happy times. Store the items in a decorated box. Set a date to open the box.

WEEKLY PLANNER

On Sunday

Light a candle for someone in your family who is struggling, ill, or deceased. Ask God to give that person happiness and peace.

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 Lucy
(285–304)

Saint Lucy is honored as a young martyr from the early Church. She was denounced for her faith, and the governor ordered her killed. After torture that included being blinded, she was executed. Legend says her eyesight was restored before her death.

Patron Saint of: people with eye diseases

Saint Feast Day: December 13



**A Prayer
for the
Week**

Lord, to believe in you is to believe that even when we walk in darkness, a great light awaits us. Help us to remain firm in our faith. Amen.



Scripture Background

Before the Time of Jesus

Reclaiming the Temple When Antiochus became ruler of the Syrian Empire in 175 B.C., the empire included Palestine. Antiochus wanted to promote Greek culture and suppress Judaism. In 167 B.C., when Antiochus offered a sacrifice to the god Zeus in the Temple, a priest named Mattathias killed the emperor's representative. Mattathias and his sons fled to the hills and gathered an army. By 164 B.C., the Jews again controlled most of Jerusalem, and they cleansed and restored the Temple. The Jewish feast of Hannukah commemorates this event. Read about the purification of the Temple in 1 Maccabees 4:36–56.

OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION in Sacramentals

Lighting Candles Many Catholic churches feature rows of votive candles in front of statues or sacred images of Jesus and the saints. A churchgoer can light a candle and pray for a special intention. The burning candle suggests a continual rising of the intention toward Jesus or the saint who has been asked to intercede.

Burning candles have a long history of religious symbolism. Candles or oil lamps burned outside saints' tombs in the third century. In the Middle Ages people sometimes lit candles as tall as themselves before they prayed, to signify their coming into the light of faith. Lighting candles in a menorah is also an important part of the Jewish feast of Hanukkah.

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Baptism and Repentance

John the Baptist prepared people for the Messiah, Jesus Christ. John preached repentance and the need to wash away one's sins in the waters of Baptism. His story reminds us of the importance of sacraments and of our need to prepare spiritually for Christ. What helps your family live as people who are ready for God's kingdom?

ACTIVITY

The Spirit of Advent Preparation for Christ is appropriate any time of the year. Create an Advent wreath for next Christmas by inserting three purple taper candles, one pink taper candle, and some artificial greenery into a circular plastic foam base.

WEEKLY PLANNER

On Sunday

As you pray the Lamb of God, think of instances in which you need Christ's mercy.

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Saint of the Week



Saint Josephine Bakhita (1869–1947)

As a child, Josephine Bakhita was kidnapped from her village in Darfur, Sudan, and sold into slavery. She was rescued about ten years later and taken to Italy. In 1890, Bakhita was baptized—taking the name “Josephine”—confirmed, and received the Eucharist. In 1896, she took religious vows. She went on to live an exemplary life of virtue.

Feast Day: February 8



A Prayer for the Week

God, thank you for the gift of Baptism and for all the sacraments, as they bring your life and love into our hearts. Amen.



Scripture Background

In the Time of Jesus

John the Baptist Like the prophets of the Old Testament, John the Baptist warned the Jewish people of their need to repent. Yet John stood apart from the prophets of old in that he proclaimed that God's Kingdom was at hand and announced the coming of the Messiah. Similarly, John's baptisms were based on the Hebrew tradition of ritual washings, but they were performed in expectation of the coming Messiah. When Jesus asked John to baptize him, John was reluctant at first, knowing that Jesus was the Son of God. Read how John the Baptist prepared people for the coming of Jesus in Matthew 3:1–11.

OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION in Religious Orders

The Benedictines John the Baptist was called to proclaim to people the news of the coming Messiah. From the Church's early history, there have been Christians with a special vocation to serve and build up the Church. As the Church grew, communities of people sharing this special calling began to develop. One of the earliest of these is the religious order founded by Saint Benedict. In 529, Benedict founded a monastery at Monte Cassino in southern Italy. In the Middle Ages, hundreds of Benedictine monasteries sprang up throughout Europe and played an important role in passing on the Christian faith. Today, Benedictine monasteries can be found in many parts of the world.

Getting Ready for Chapter 19

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Christians and the Reign of God

The New Testament story about the boy Jesus in wise conversation with Temple priests inspires us to reflect upon the great love of God, who let us share in his own divinity through a seemingly ordinary boy. When we value our dignity as Christians and as God's children, we are able to understand that all people deserve our love and that we can become holy people and saints ourselves.

ACTIVITY

The Star Prayer Have each family member draw an outline of a star and write *Holy Spirit* on the left and right of it, *Jesus Christ* in the center, and *God* above its top point. Inside the star, each person should jot down anything for which he or she would like to pray. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the "beams" of your prayers rise up to God through Jesus Christ.

WEEKLY PLANNER

On Sunday

Live the message of the Sign of Peace at Mass by doing something special for a member of your family.

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Saint of the Week



Blessed Teresa of Calcutta (1910–1997)

Mother Teresa of Calcutta worked among the "untouchables" of India's society. With the sisters of the religious order she founded, she cared for the most neglected people of Calcutta. She founded orphanages for unwanted children and homes for the sick and dying, and cared for them physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Mother Teresa died in 1997 and was beatified in 2003.



A Prayer for the Week

Lord Jesus, you became one of us and taught us how to live. Help us learn from your example and from the example of the holy people who live lives of goodness and virtue. Amen.

Getting Ready for Chapter 19

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Scripture Background

In the Time of Jesus

Jesus Before His Ministry Jesus' life is known almost solely from the Gospels, and although the Gospels provide details about Jesus' birth and early infancy, they provide little other information about Jesus before his public ministry. The exception is the story of Jesus in the Temple when he was twelve, where we see him speaking with the teachers. In Luke's story of Jesus in the Temple, we see that even before he began his public ministry, and even as a boy, Jesus was aware of his unique relationship with God. Read about Jesus in the Temple in Luke 2:41–51

OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION in Ireland

Celtic Monks A well-known path called Saints' Road winds through the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, Ireland. Beginning in the sixth century, monks traveled such paths to convert Christians to the monastic life. Christians lived, studied, and worshiped on the Dingle Peninsula between the sixth and tenth centuries. Ruins of early Christian settlements are abundant on the coast, from oratories to holy wells to Celtic crosses to small stone huts once belonging to the monks. Some sites remain remarkably intact from the time they were abandoned in the twelfth century. Saints' Road connects the holy site of Mount Brandon to Gallarus Oratory, a stone church more than 1,100 years old.

Getting Ready for Chapter 20

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Hope for the Ages

Jesus, the hope of the ages, not only taught us how to pray in words but through his actions. Jesus ordinarily prayed alone in silence. He depended on prayer to help him through the most difficult moments in his life. Periods of silence and prayer may be rare in our lives, but Jesus' example shows us how to achieve a richer life of prayer.

ACTIVITY

A Family Prayer Write each line of the Lord's Prayer on a separate slip of paper. Have each family member read a line out loud, and discuss its meaning together.

WEEKLY PLANNER

On Sunday

Listen to what the priest says just after the Lord's Prayer. What should you do when you are worried and why?

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Saint of the Week



Our Lady of Czestochowa

The image of Our Lady of Czestochowa is sometimes called Our Lady of Jasna Góra, after the monastery in Poland in which it has been kept for six centuries. Many miracles have been attributed to the image, including the halt of an impending Russian invasion of Poland in 1920. Polish Catholics have a special devotion to Our Lady of Czestochowa.



A Prayer for the Week

Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, we come to you in prayer for all our needs. Hear and answer us. Amen.



Scripture Background

In the Time of Jesus

The Lord's Prayer The prayer that Jesus taught, the Lord's Prayer, was called "the most perfect of prayers" by Saint Thomas Aquinas. He said, "In it we ask not only for the things we can rightly desire, but also in the sequence they should be desired." The prayer is seen as a model prayer that features essential elements of all Christian prayers. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to call God our Father, bringing us into the relationship he had with God. Read how Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4.

OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION in Film

Alfred Hitchcock The films of late director Alfred Hitchcock often betray his Catholic roots. Educated at St. Ignatius College in London, Hitchcock often relied on Catholic imagery and plots about suffering for other people's crimes. In the 1953 film *I Confess*, his most overtly "Catholic" film, a parishioner confesses a murder to a priest. When the police learn that the murder victim had been trying to blackmail the priest, the priest becomes the main suspect. The sacred seal of confession, however, prevents the priest from revealing the truth. The priest is subjected to a trial and public humiliation. One scene depicts the priest walking past statues of Christ carrying the cross.