



1

Sunday is Special

God, our loving Father,
thank you for all the ways you bless me.
Help me to be aware that every person,
place, and adventure I experience is an
opportunity to love you more.
Fill me with a desire to change and to grow,
and give me the grace to become
the-best-version-of-myself in
every moment of every day.

Amen.

Keep Counting Your Blessings

Welcome. It is time to set out on another great adventure together.

One of the greatest blessings you will ever experience in this life is the Eucharist. So this journey toward your First Communion is very important.

God is inviting you to a great banquet. You are blessed.

You are blessed in so many ways. But every blessing you experience flows from the first blessing. You are a child of God; this is the original blessing.

And now God wants to bless you with the Eucharist!

When you count your blessings before you go to bed tonight, remember to include your favorite foods, the people you love, your talents, your favorite activities and places, and most of all God for giving you all these blessings.



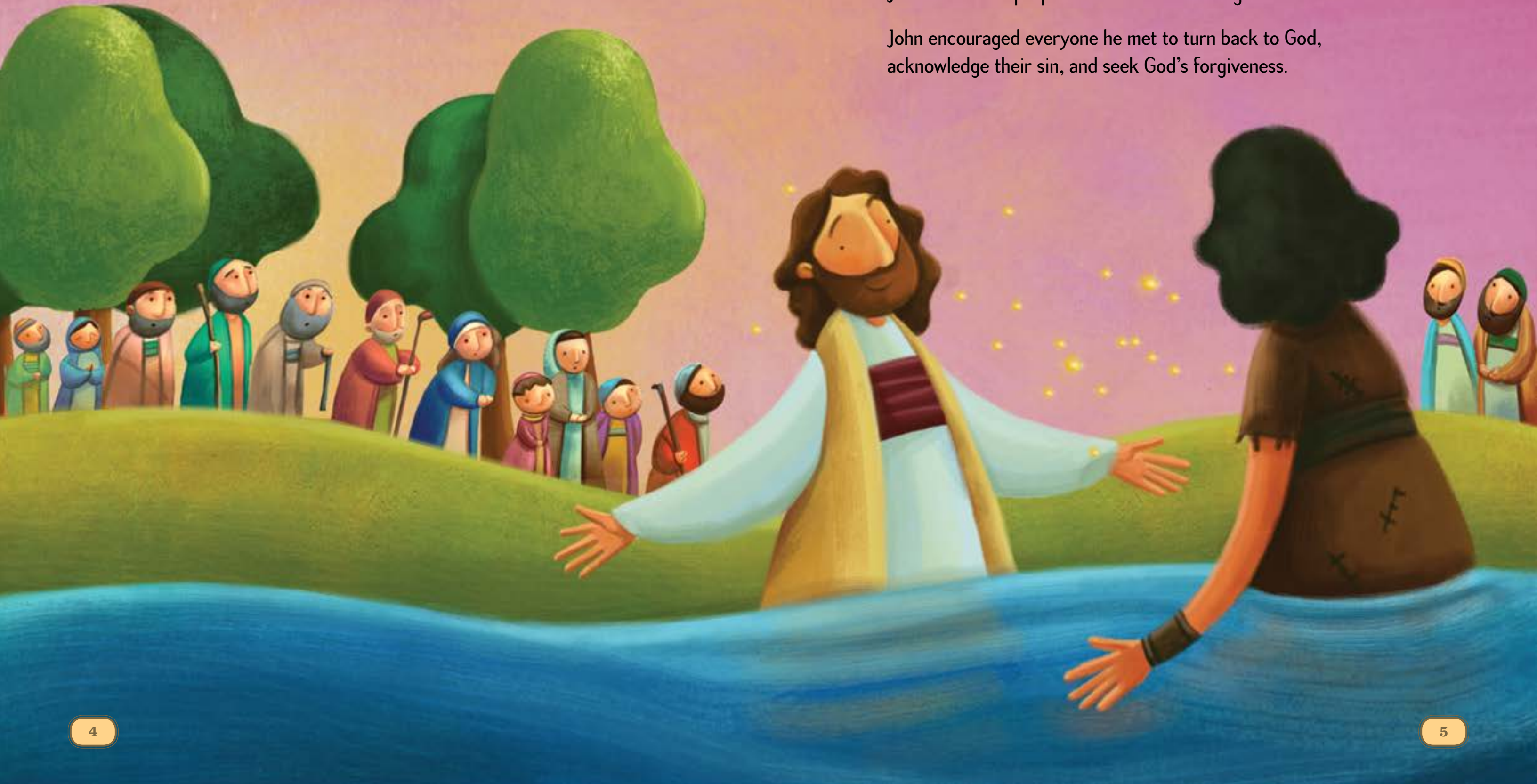
Your Journey with God Continues

We are continuing our journey with God. So, let's review where we have been and where we are going.

Baptism

Before Jesus began his ministry he visited his cousin, John the Baptist, in the desert. John was baptizing many people in the Jordan River to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah.

John encouraged everyone he met to turn back to God, acknowledge their sin, and seek God's forgiveness.



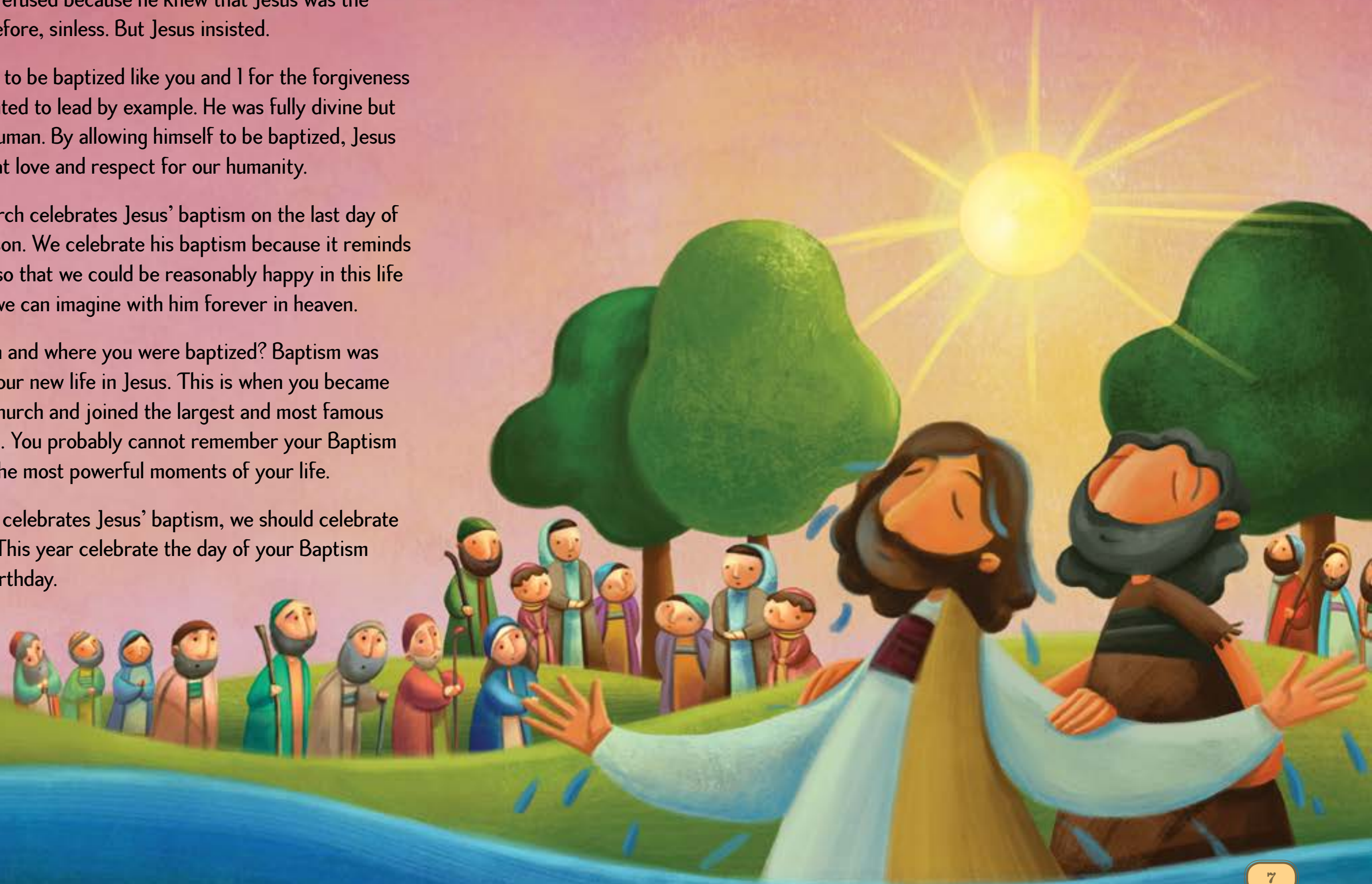
When Jesus arrived at the Jordan River, he asked John to baptize him. At first John refused because he knew that Jesus was the Messiah and, therefore, sinless. But Jesus insisted.

Jesus did not need to be baptized like you and I for the forgiveness of sins, but he wanted to lead by example. He was fully divine but he was also fully human. By allowing himself to be baptized, Jesus demonstrated great love and respect for our humanity.

Each year the Church celebrates Jesus' baptism on the last day of the Christmas season. We celebrate his baptism because it reminds us of all Jesus did so that we could be reasonably happy in this life and happier than we can imagine with him forever in heaven.

Do you know when and where you were baptized? Baptism was the beginning of your new life in Jesus. This is when you became a member of his Church and joined the largest and most famous family in the world. You probably cannot remember your Baptism but it was one of the most powerful moments of your life.

Just as the Church celebrates Jesus' baptism, we should celebrate our own baptism. This year celebrate the day of your Baptism like you do your birthday.



First Reconciliation

Joseph was one of thirteen children. His older brothers disliked him very much because he had fabulous dreams. One day while he was working out in the fields, Joseph's brothers tricked him and sold him into slavery. He was sent to Egypt and forced to stay there, far from his family and friends.

A few years later, a terrible famine spread through the land and Joseph's family was starving. Egypt was the only country that had prepared for the famine, so the Pharaoh appointed a governor to be in charge of all the food. Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to beg the governor for food. They didn't realize that the governor was Joseph, the brother they had sold into slavery.

Joseph had a choice to make. He could either hold a grudge against his brothers for being so mean to him or he could choose to forgive them. What would you do? It wouldn't be easy to forgive them. He had suffered so much because of what his brothers had done to him, but Joseph was kind and merciful and chose to forgive them.

When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers they were amazed!



Life can be messy. We all make mistakes and from time to time we all do things that we know we shouldn't. We may not sell our siblings into slavery, but we do offend God and hurt others. We call this sin, and the thing about sin is that it makes us unhappy. Sin separates us from God, and we simply cannot be happy when we are separated from God. Reconciliation reunites us with God and fills us with joy again.

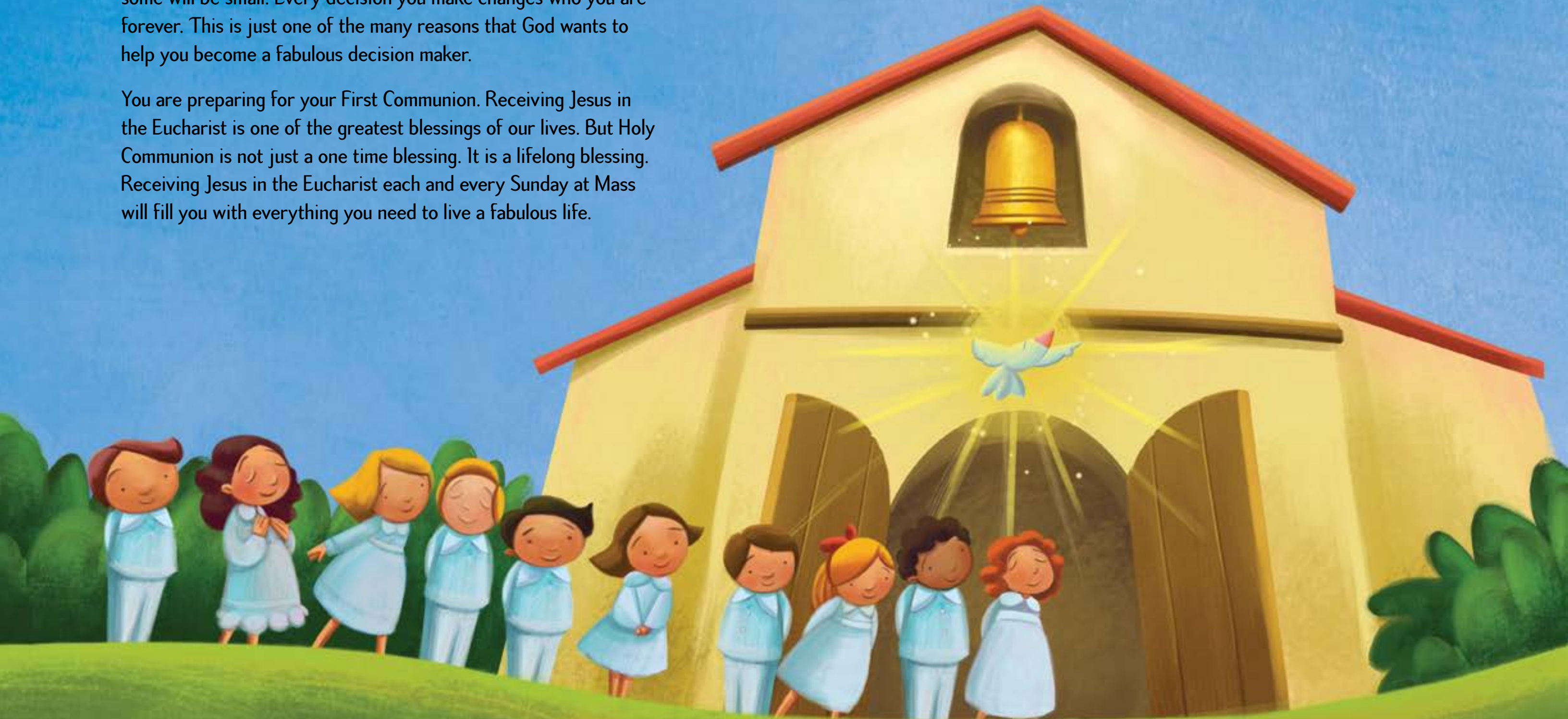
When did you receive your First Reconciliation? Your First Reconciliation was a great blessing and it is a blessing you can receive as many times as you wish for the rest of your life. I encourage you to go to Reconciliation and pour your heart out to God anytime you feel far from him. He will give you peace and courage to press on.



First Communion

Your journey with God is a great spiritual journey. Along the way you will have many decisions to make. Some will be big and some will be small. Every decision you make changes who you are forever. This is just one of the many reasons that God wants to help you become a fabulous decision maker.

You are preparing for your First Communion. Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist is one of the greatest blessings of our lives. But Holy Communion is not just a one time blessing. It is a lifelong blessing. Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist each and every Sunday at Mass will fill you with everything you need to live a fabulous life.



Jesus gives himself to you in the Eucharist. He gives you his encouragement so that you can persevere in times of difficulty. And he gives you his wisdom so you can become a great decision maker.

After your First Communion you will be able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist every Sunday for the rest of your life. In the Eucharist, Jesus wants to encourage you. He wants to help you persevere in times of difficulty, he wants to give you the wisdom you need to become a great decision maker, and he wants to teach you how to be a good friend to others.

One of the promises Jesus made to the disciples before he ascended into heaven was that he would always be with us. Jesus keeps this promise in the Eucharist. We go to church on Sunday to be with Jesus. In fact, anytime you are confused or upset or have some great news to share, it's great to stop by church and sit with Jesus for a few minutes. He waits for us in the tabernacle. It is a great blessing that Jesus will always be with us in the Eucharist.



Confirmation

God wants a dynamic collaboration with you. He doesn't just want to wave his hand and have everything happen exactly as he wants it to. God loves friendship and he wants to be your friend.

Before Jesus came to earth, an angel appeared to Mary and asked her if she would be willing to be mother to the Savior of the world. Mary said, "Yes!"

God didn't need Mary. He could have saved the world all by himself. But God didn't want it that way. God wanted a dynamic friendship with Mary.

God wants a dynamic friendship with you too.

But imagine what the world would be like if Mary didn't say yes? What would have happened if she said no to the mission God created her for?



God has created you for a special mission. There is a whole lot of need in the world. People are hungry and lonely and sick and scared. Your mission is to respond to some of that need. Your mission is going to ease the suffering of many. But, just like Mary, you have to choose whether or not you accept God's mission for your life.

Some people wonder why the world got to be such a mess. They wonder why is there so much pain and suffering in the world. The reason is simple: the world is a mess because lots of people said no to God and rejected their mission. When people say no to God and yes to selfishness, the world becomes a mess.

Just like Mary and the saints, you were made for mission. Say yes to God.

When you are a little older, you will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is another amazing Sacrament. Through the Sacrament of Confirmation God will fill you with the Holy Spirit so that you can discover and fulfill the mission God has entrusted to you.



Marriage

God loves relationships, and he has a great desire for you to have fabulous relationships. One of the relationships he may choose to bless you with is marriage.

In the Sacrament of Marriage, God brings a man and a woman together to cherish each other, to love one another, and to help each other become the-best-version-of-themselves, grow in virtue, and live a holy life together.

If you go to a wedding, you might hear a passage read from St. Paul about love. His words have inspired every generation to love as God loves:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

1 Corinthians 13:4–7



Holy Orders

Each Sunday the priest celebrates Mass. He blesses you, leads you in prayer, teaches you, sings with you, and nourishes your soul with the Body and Blood of Jesus.

But have you ever wondered what your priest does during the week?

Throughout the week, your priest visits the sick, prays for you and everyone in your parish, says Mass each day, buries the dead, spends time with the lonely, and encourages those in despair. But he does lots of ordinary things too, like exercise and eat, read and visit with family and friends.

Jesus laid his life down for us. He laid his life down for us on the cross, and he calls us all to lay down our lives for each other. A priest lays down his life to love God and serve God's people. It is the mission of the priest to love God by serving his people.

Since the time of Jesus, God has been choosing men to serve his people. In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the Church ordains these men as deacons, priests, and bishops.

On the night before he died on the cross, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. In Jesus' time only servants and slaves washed the feet of those in power. But Jesus was different. By example, Jesus showed that everyone is called to serve.



Anointing of the Sick

Every day miracles are dancing all around us. We read in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John about Jesus' miracles: turning water into wine; healing the sick; making the blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame walk; casting out demons; feeding thousands; raising people from the dead; calming storms; and walking on water.

One day, four men carried their paralyzed friend on a mat to see Jesus. But when they arrived at the house where Jesus was teaching, they couldn't get inside. There were too many people.

The four men wanted so badly to help their friend that they went up on the roof and lowered him into the house before Jesus. Seeing the faith of these men, Jesus healed the paralyzed man, who immediately stood up and walked away.

You are on a great journey with God. If along the way you get sick and need God's healing for body, mind, or spirit, you will be blessed with the Anointing of the Sick.



Throughout your life, you will experience these great Catholic Moments we call Sacraments. Each of them is a blessing and they are all connected. These great Moments are designed by God to help you live a good life here on earth and prepare you to be blissfully happy with God forever in heaven.

You are blessed!



God Loves to Celebrate

We celebrate a lot as Catholics. We celebrate Easter and Christmas, we celebrate feast days and birthdays, we celebrate God, and we celebrate each other. Have you ever wondered why we celebrate so much as Catholics? The reason is because God loves to celebrate.

Favorite Days

Every day is special in its own way because life is special. Every day of life should be treasured. Life is precious. Life is sacred. Life is special.

Still, we all have favorites—favorite colors, favorite songs, and favorite foods. Do you have favorite days?

Some of my favorite days each year are Christmas, Easter, my birthday, and the feast days of my favorite saints. What are your three favorite days each year?

Your Special Day

God gives everyone a special day each year. We call this your birthday. What do you like to do on your birthday? What is your favorite birthday memory?



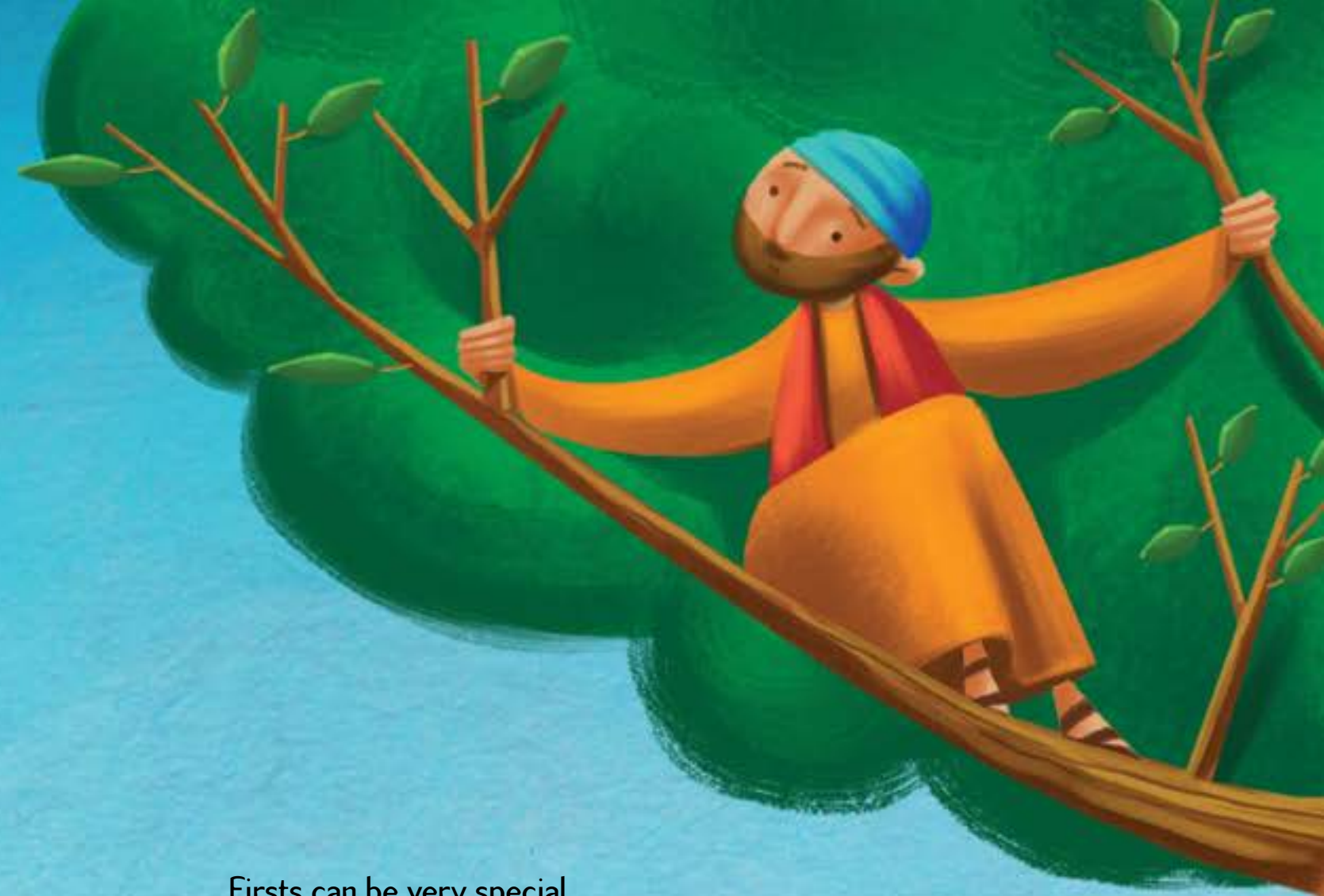
The First Time

Firsts matter. The first time you get to do anything is important. You never get that first time again.

Throughout the Gospels we often hear fabulous stories about the first time people met Jesus. One of the great examples of this is the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who was known for being a dishonest man.

One day when Jesus was walking, a huge crowd followed him, making it very difficult for anyone to see him. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so badly that he climbed a tree just to catch a glimpse of him!

That first meeting with Jesus completely changed Zacchaeus' life. He renounced his dishonest ways and did his best to make up for all he had done wrong.



Firsts can be very special.

As we prepare for your First Communion, let's remember that you will never have this first again.

Every Sunday when you go to Mass you will be blessed to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. But there is something very special about the first time. So it is important for you to pay attention to everything that your parents and teachers are sharing with you about this very special event in your life.

You will never have this first again. Cherish it.



Feast Days

Catholics love to celebrate. So we have a whole year of celebrations planned. The high points of the Church's year are Christmas and Easter. But we also celebrate the great spiritual champions in our Catholic family. We call these men, women, and children saints!

Who is your favorite saint? When is his or her feast day?
Why does this saint inspire you?



God's Favorite Day

God loves spending time with us. He loves it when we take a few minutes each day to talk to him. He loves it when we come to visit him at church on Sunday. He loves spending time with you. God smiles when he sees you at Mass on Sunday.

Sunday is God's favorite day.



What Makes Sunday Special?

Sunday is a special day.

Most people only get to enjoy about four thousand Sundays in their lives. Now, that may seem like a lot, but they go quickly. You have probably already experienced about 420 Sundays. So don't waste a single one. Make every Sunday a special day.

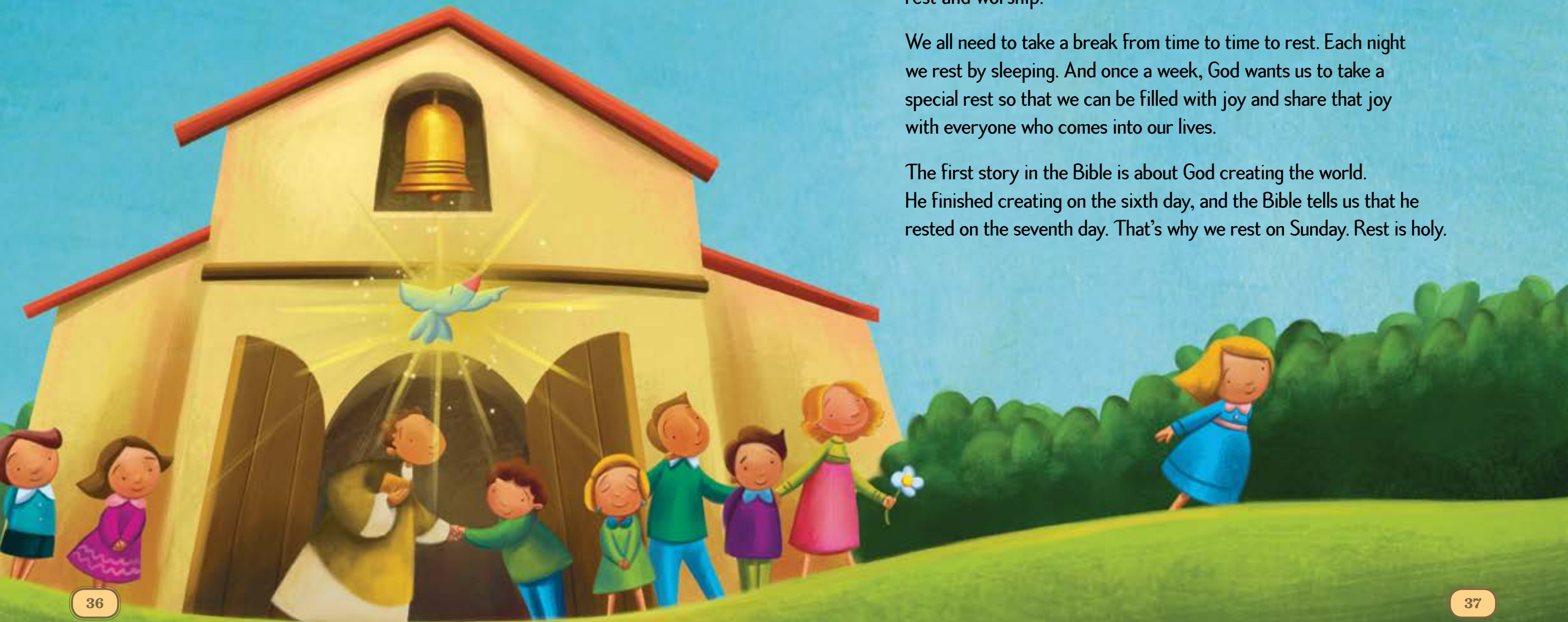
What are three ways you make Sunday a special day?
Go to church. Spend time with your family. Rest.

There are lots of special days, but most of them happen just once a year, and some of them only happen once in your lifetime. One of the beautiful things about Sunday is it happens every week.

Sunday is the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a special day of rest and worship.

We all need to take a break from time to time to rest. Each night we rest by sleeping. And once a week, God wants us to take a special rest so that we can be filled with joy and share that joy with everyone who comes into our lives.

The first story in the Bible is about God creating the world. He finished creating on the sixth day, and the Bible tells us that he rested on the seventh day. That's why we rest on Sunday. Rest is holy.



God loves you so much that he wants you to take good care of yourself.

We take care of ourselves by:

- **Eating well**
- **Drinking plenty of water**
- **Exercising regularly**
- **Praying each day**
- **Getting enough sleep**
- **Resting on Sundays**

Sunday is also a day of worship. We go to Mass to worship God. There are many ways to worship God, but one way we can do this every day is by thanking him for the many ways he has blessed us.

Have you counted your blessings today? What are you most grateful for today?

One of the things that make Sunday a special day is that we go to church. We praise and thank God by going to Mass each Sunday. What is the name of the church you go to for Mass on Sundays?



From the Bible: Creation

On the first day God created day and night, light and time.

On the second day God created the sky.

On the third day God created the earth, the seas, plants, and trees.

On the fourth day God created the sun, the moon, and the stars.

On the fifth day God created birds and fish.

On the sixth day God created cattle, insects, wild animals, and human beings.

And God didn't just create us; he created us in his image.

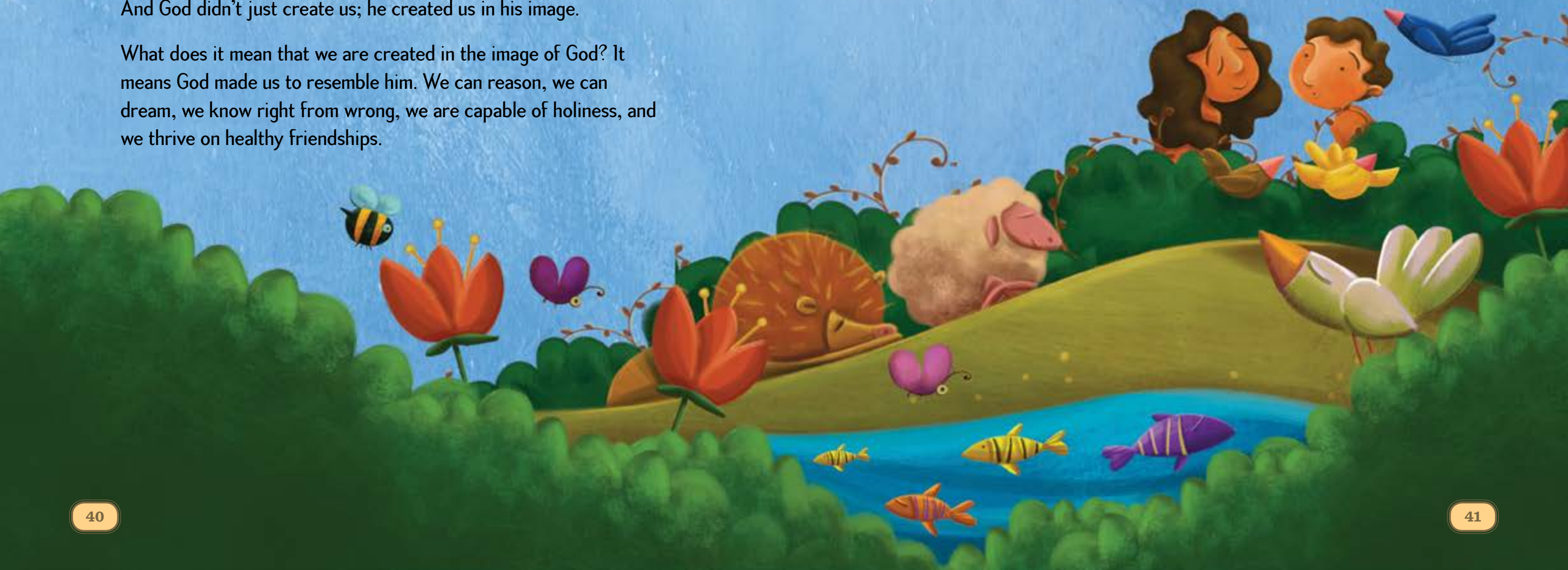
What does it mean that we are created in the image of God? It means God made us to resemble him. We can reason, we can dream, we know right from wrong, we are capable of holiness, and we thrive on healthy friendships.

To be made in the image of God is a great blessing, and blessings come with responsibility. God made humanity responsible stewards of all creation. He gave us the mind and the morality necessary to take care of all of creation.

When God had finished the work of creation, “he saw everything he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

God said—It is good! God blessed creation.

On the seventh day God rested. We call this the Sabbath, which means a day of rest and prayer.





Sunday is a day of rest. God blessed rest by resting himself.
By blessing rest he teaches us that rest is holy.

Sunday is also a day of gratitude.

One Sunday on the way to church, Max asked his dad, “Why do we go to church every Sunday?” His dad smiled and replied, “Lots of reasons. But one very important reason is to say thank you to God for all the ways he has blessed us this week.”

Every blessing comes from God!

Did you ever give someone a gift and he wasn’t grateful? Perhaps he didn’t say thank you, or maybe he tossed the gift aside as if it were a piece of junk. How did that make you feel?

God has blessed us with so many gifts. Going to Mass on Sunday is a great way to show God that we are grateful.

Listening to God at Mass

Have you ever wondered, “What is God really like?” It’s a great question. We know many things about God and still he is a beautiful mystery because we do not know everything about him.

We know that God is love. We know God keeps his promises. We know that God cares about every single person. We know that God knows everything. We know that God is holy. We know that God is all-powerful. We know God has a plan. And we know that God is unchanging.

In the Bible we read about God speaking to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Jacob, Rebekah, Mary, and many others.

Remember the last thing we said we know about God?
God is unchanging.

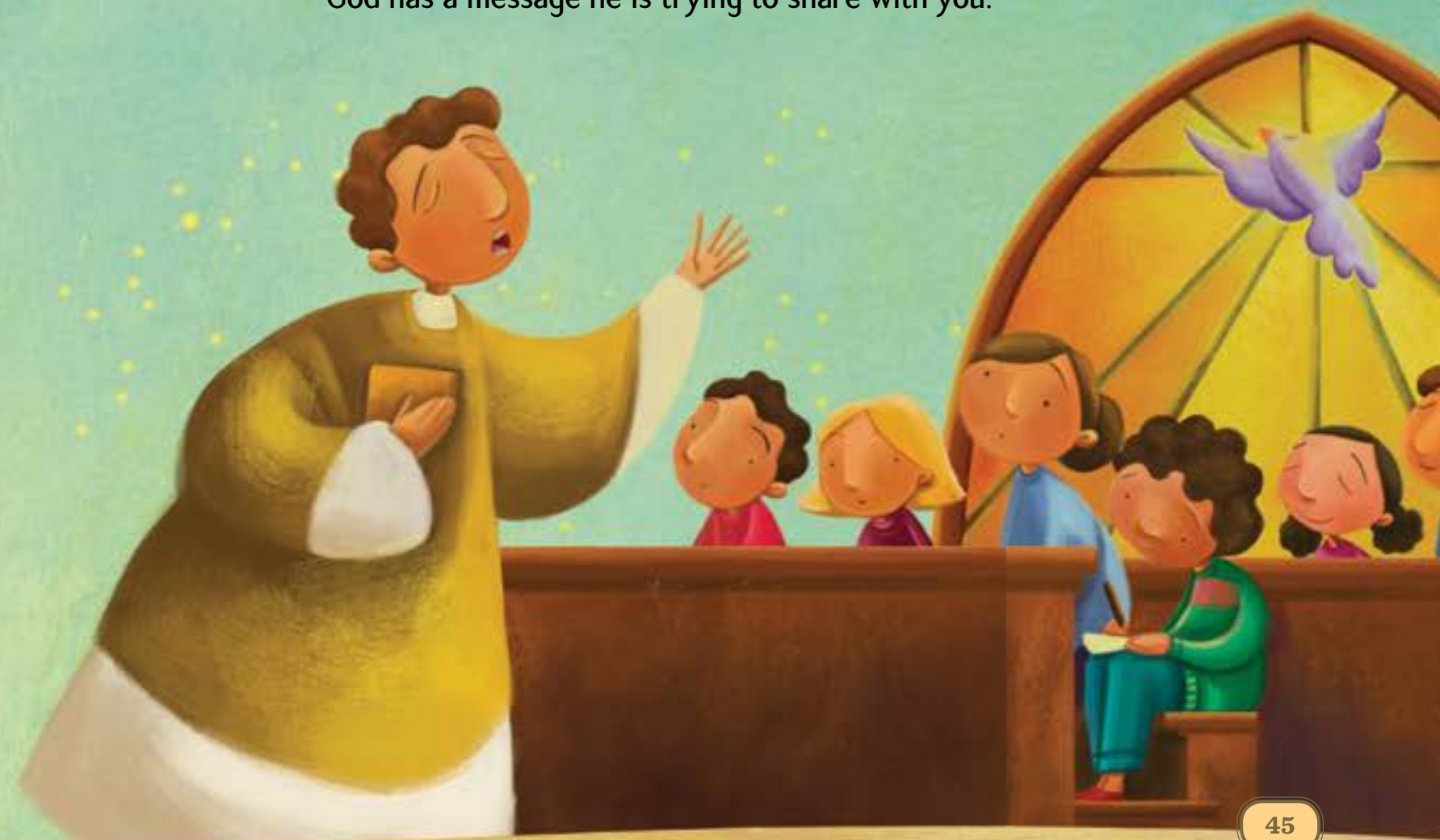
And just as he spoke to people in ancient times, he speaks to people in every time, and he speaks to you and me today. He speaks to us through the Scriptures. He speaks to us through other people. He speaks to us through the Church. And he speaks to us in our hearts.

At Mass on Sunday God wants to speak to you. I like to bring a little journal with me to Mass to jot down the things he says to me in my heart.

I ask him at the beginning of Mass: “God, please show me one way in this Mass I can become a-better-version-of-myself this week.” Then I listen to the readings, the prayers, the music, the homily, and the quiet of my heart, and write down the one thing that I sense God is saying to me.

Every Sunday at Mass, write the one thing God says to you in your Mass Journal. You will be amazed how God encourages you and challenges you to become the-best-version-of-yourself, grow in virtue, and live a holy life.

Every day is a new day in your journey with God—and every day God has a message he is trying to share with you.



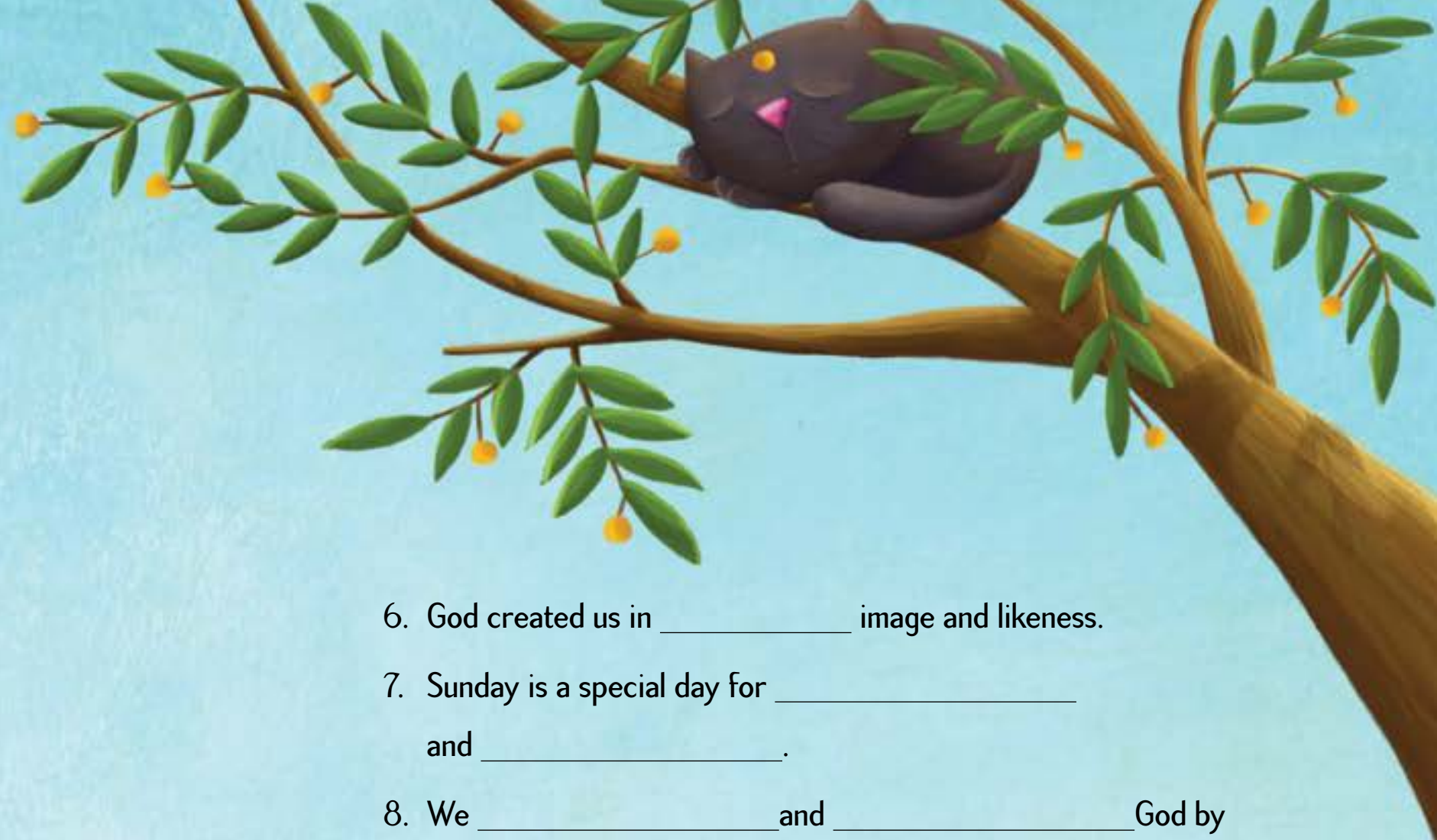
Show What You Know

True or False

1. ____ You are on a journey toward your First Communion.
2. ____ You are blessed.
3. ____ God never likes to celebrate.
4. ____ You will only have one First Communion in your life.
5. ____ Sunday is a day for gratitude.

Fill in the blank

1. You are on a great _____ with God.
2. One of the greatest blessings you will ever receive in your life is the _____.
3. God is _____ you to a great banquet.
4. One way you can worship God every day is by counting your _____.
5. After God finished the work of creation, he said that everything was _____, even insects!



6. God created us in _____ image and likeness.
7. Sunday is a special day for _____ and _____.
8. We _____ and _____ God by going to Mass each Sunday.
9. Just as he did in ancient times, God _____ to you and me.
10. Going to Mass on Sunday is a great way to show God we are _____.

Word Bank

PRAISE SPEAKS JOURNEY GOOD THANK INVITING REST HIS
GRATEFUL EUCHARIST WORSHIP BLESSINGS

Journal with Jesus

Dear Jesus,

Sundays are special because . . .



Closing Prayer

When Zechariah's son, John the Baptist, was born, he was overwhelmed with gratitude. After months of not being able to speak, Zechariah burst into a song of praise, thanking God for all the incredible gifts he had been given.

Zechariah reminds us of the importance of voicing our gratitude to God.

Jesus is with us always in the Eucharist. This is an incredible gift! To show God how grateful we are for the gift of Jesus, let's praise him using the words of Zechariah:

**Blessed be the Lord,
The God of Israel;
He has come to his people and set them free.**

**He has raised up for us a mighty Savior,
Born of the house of his servant David.**

**Through his holy prophets he promised of old
That he would save us from our enemies,
From the hands of all who hate us.**

**He promised to show mercy to our fathers
And to remember his holy Covenant.**

**This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
To set us free from the hands of our enemies,
Free to worship him without fear,
Holy and righteous in his sight
All the days of our life.**

From Luke 1:68–75