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## The Word of God

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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.



## Overview of the Mass

Each time you go to Mass there are many things that happen. Behind each prayer and each action is enormous meaning; everything in the Mass happens for a reason. In our spiritual journey as Catholics we are always uncovering new layers of meaning, so we never stop learning about the Mass.

The Mass is made up of four parts:

1. **The Introductory Rites**
2. **The Liturgy of the Word**
3. **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**
4. **The Concluding Rites**

There are two words for us to pay special attention to here: rite and liturgy.

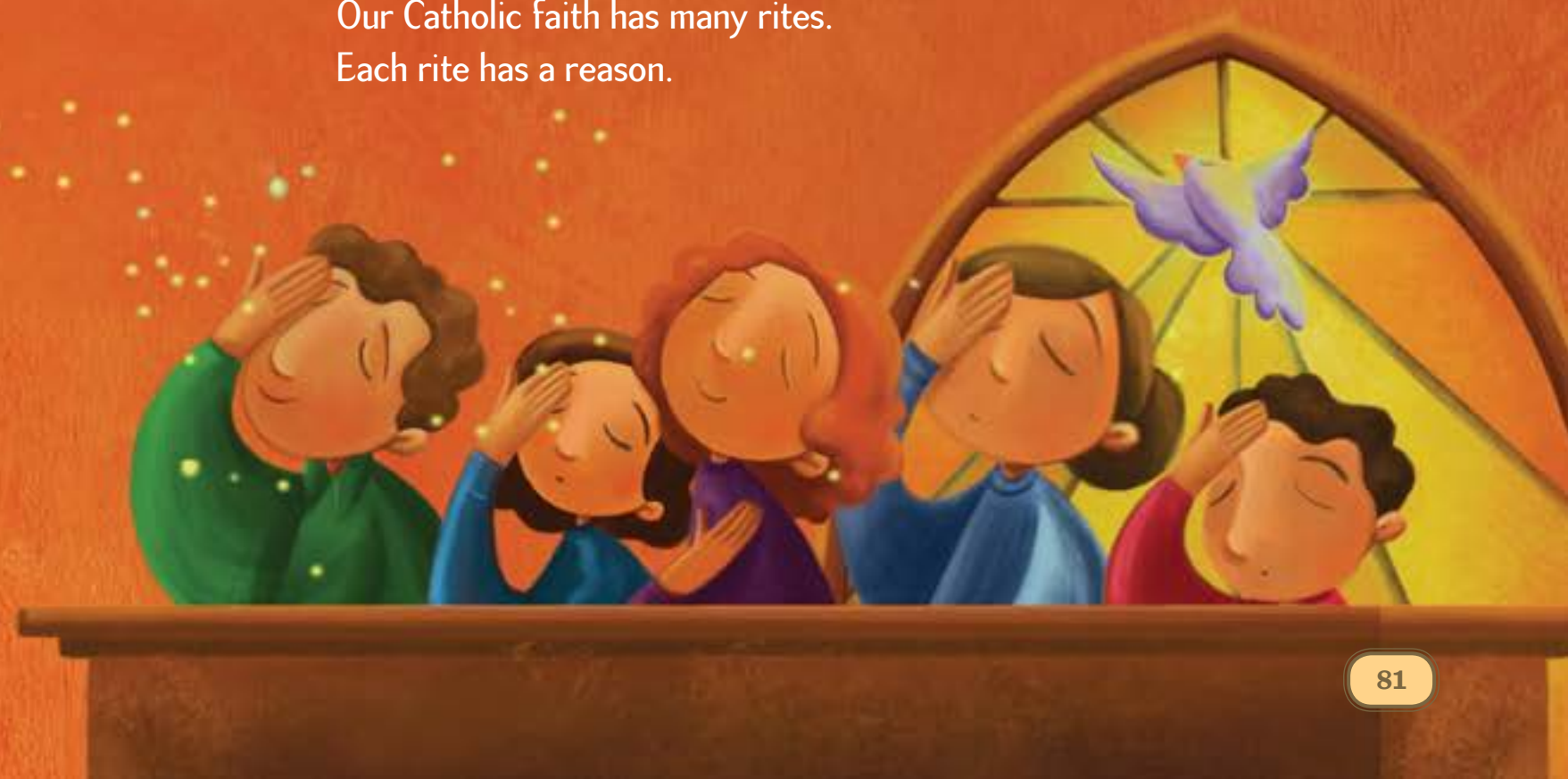
## What Is a Rite?

A rite is something that is said or done the same way every time for a reason. For example, the Sign of the Cross is a rite. We do it the same way every time. We say it the same way every time: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

The order is for a reason. God the Father is the first person of the Blessed Trinity. God the Son is the second person of the Holy Trinity. And God the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity.

If you went to Mass and the priest began by making the Sign of the Cross and saying, “In the name of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and of the Father. Amen,” you would know that something was wrong.

Our Catholic faith has many rites. Each rite has a reason.





## What Is Liturgy?

Liturgy is a prayer we participate in as a community. During the Mass we experience two types of liturgy: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

During the Liturgy of the Word we listen to readings from the Bible and a homily from the priest or deacon, then we pray the Creed together and offer our petitions to God.

During the Liturgy of the Eucharist we offer our lives and our gifts to God, prepare the altar, pray the Eucharistic Prayer, and receive Holy Communion.

Liturgy is a beautiful way to spend time with God and our parish family.

## Where Do We Celebrate Mass?

We celebrate Mass at church. Our parish church is a very special place because it is God's house. We gather at church with our family, friends, and all our parish family to worship God in the way that Jesus taught us to.

The Mass is a beautiful ritual made up of prayers, liturgies, and rites. During the Mass we use many special items to help us celebrate. Do you recognize any of these items?





## The Introductory Rites

We come to church on Sunday to celebrate Mass. It's a great way to thank God for all the blessings he has given us.

During the Mass we remember Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection, and the most amazing thing happens, something that doesn't happen anywhere else: the priest changes bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus.

How can he do this? God gives priests special powers. At your First Reconciliation God forgave your sins through the priest. During Mass God transforms the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus through the priest.

Another amazing thing that happens at church is that we get to receive Holy Communion. We get to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. This is an amazing blessing.

When you go back to your pew after you receive Jesus in the Eucharist, kneel down, close your eyes, and pray. This is a very special moment because God is inside you.

Now let's talk about the four parts of the Mass. Do you remember what they are?

1. The Introductory Rites
2. The Liturgy of the Word
3. The Liturgy of the Eucharist
4. The Concluding Rites

## The Introductory Rites

Mass begins with this procession. The priest, deacon, readers, and altar servers walk together in procession toward the altar. This procession is usually accompanied by music. Music helps us to raise our hearts to God in praise and thanksgiving.

Have you ever noticed that music can make you very joyful? This is your heart and soul leaping for joy. Music is a powerful way to pray. Saint Augustine said, "Singing is like praying twice."

Once the priest gets to the altar he begins with the Sign of the Cross: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The Sign of the Cross is a rite.





## We Say Sorry

God loves healthy relationships, and a very important part of healthy relationships is saying sorry when we do or say something that hurts the other person. Catholics say sorry. The reason is because our friendship with God and our friendships with each other cannot thrive if we don't say sorry.

If you were playing on the playground with a friend yesterday and he pushed you over and didn't say sorry, how would you feel? You might wonder if he was really your friend. But if he came up to you and the first thing he did was say, "I'm sorry I pushed you over yesterday. I won't do it again. Please forgive me."

How would that make you feel? You would be reminded that he really does want to be your friend.

That's why, after the Sign of the Cross, the first thing we do at Mass is say sorry to God. We want him to know that we are his friends and that we want to be really good friends to him.

We say sorry to God and ask for forgiveness at the beginning of Mass with a really simple and beautiful prayer:

**Priest: Lord Have Mercy**

**Congregation: Lord Have Mercy**

**Priest: Christ Have Mercy**

**Congregation: Christ Have Mercy**

**Priest: Lord Have Mercy**

**Congregation: Lord Have Mercy**





## Glory to God

Next we say or sing The Gloria.

At different times in life we pray for different reasons.  
And at different times in the Mass we pray for different reasons.

Sometimes we pray to ask God to help us. This is called a prayer of petition. Sometimes we pray to ask God to help other people. This is called a prayer of intercession. Sometimes we pray to thank God for all the ways he has blessed us. This is called a prayer of thanksgiving. And sometimes we pray to praise God for his goodness. This is called a prayer of praise.

The Gloria is a prayer of praise. Sometimes we sing it and sometimes we say it, but always for the same reason —to praise God!



**Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.  
We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you.  
We give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.  
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God,  
Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;  
You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;  
You are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.  
For you alone are the Holy One,  
You alone are the Lord,  
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

After the Gloria, the priest reads the opening prayer from the Roman Missal. Then the whole congregation responds with “Amen,” and we sit down to listen to the Word of God.



## The Liturgy of the Word

During the part of the Mass we call the Liturgy of the Word, we listen to the Word of God and reflect on how we can live our lives as God invites us to.

The Liturgy of the Word includes readings from the Bible, the homily, the Creed, and the intercessory prayers.

At Mass on Sunday we listen to four readings from the Bible:

1. **The First Reading, from the Old Testament**
2. **The Responsorial Psalm**
3. **The Second Reading, from the New Testament**
4. **The Gospel Reading, from one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**

Each reading is specifically selected to connect with a theme that the Church wants us to reflect on that week. And guess what: Every Catholic parish reads the same readings each Sunday.

So if you have a friend on the other side of the country, you can talk about the readings because they heard the same ones you heard at Mass.

Different people read different readings. Perhaps one day you will become a reader at Mass. There are so many ways to be involved in the life of the parish—reading at Mass is just one of them.

You are a layperson. A layperson is an unordained member of the Church, and he or she usually reads the First Reading, the Responsorial Psalm, and the Second Reading. The priest or the deacon reads the Gospel. Both the priest and deacon are ordained members of the Church.





Some parishes don't have Mass every Sunday because there are not enough priests. This is very sad. Some Sundays these parishes have to have Eucharistic services instead of Mass. During a Eucharistic service we still listen to the readings of the Mass and the Eucharist is distributed from the tabernacle. In this case a layperson can read the Gospel.

After the Gospel, the priest or deacon delivers the homily. During the homily, the priest or deacon explains the readings, shows us how they apply to our lives, and inspires us to live what we have just heard from God's Word.





## We Believe

After the homily, we stand and proclaim the Creed together, and then we have the prayers of the faithful.

Everyone believes something. There are many things we believe as Catholics. We believe in God, we believe God loves us, we believe God has blessed us, and we believe in the power of prayer. But there are many other things we believe.

At Mass each Sunday we proclaim the Creed. The Creed is a summary of the core beliefs that make up our Catholic faith.





## *The Creed*

I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD, **THE FATHER ALMIGHTY,**

*maker of heaven and earth*

**OF ALL THINGS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE.**

I BELIEVE IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST,

THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD, BORN OF THE FATHER BEFORE ALL AGES.

**GOD FROM GOD, *Light from Light,***

**TRUE GOD FROM TRUE GOD,**

BEGOTTEN, NOT MADE, CONSUBSTANTIAL WITH THE FATHER;

**THROUGH HIM ALL THINGS WERE MADE.**

FOR US MEN AND FOR OUR SALVATION *he came down from heaven,*

**AND BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

*was incarnate of the Virgin Mary*

**AND BECAME MAN.**

**FOR OUR SAKE HE WAS CRUCIFIED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE,**

HE SUFFERED DEATH AND WAS BURIED,

*and rose again on the third day*

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES.**

**HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN**

AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER.

**HE WILL COME AGAIN IN GLORY**

*to judge the living and the dead*

**AND HIS KINGDOM WILL HAVE NO END.**

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,*

WHO PROCEEDS FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON,

**WHO WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON IS ADORED AND GLORIFIED,**

*who has spoken through the prophets.*

**I BELIEVE IN ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH.**

**I CONFESS ONE BAPTISM FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

*and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead*

**AND THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME.**

*Amen.*



## From the Bible: The Sower of Seeds

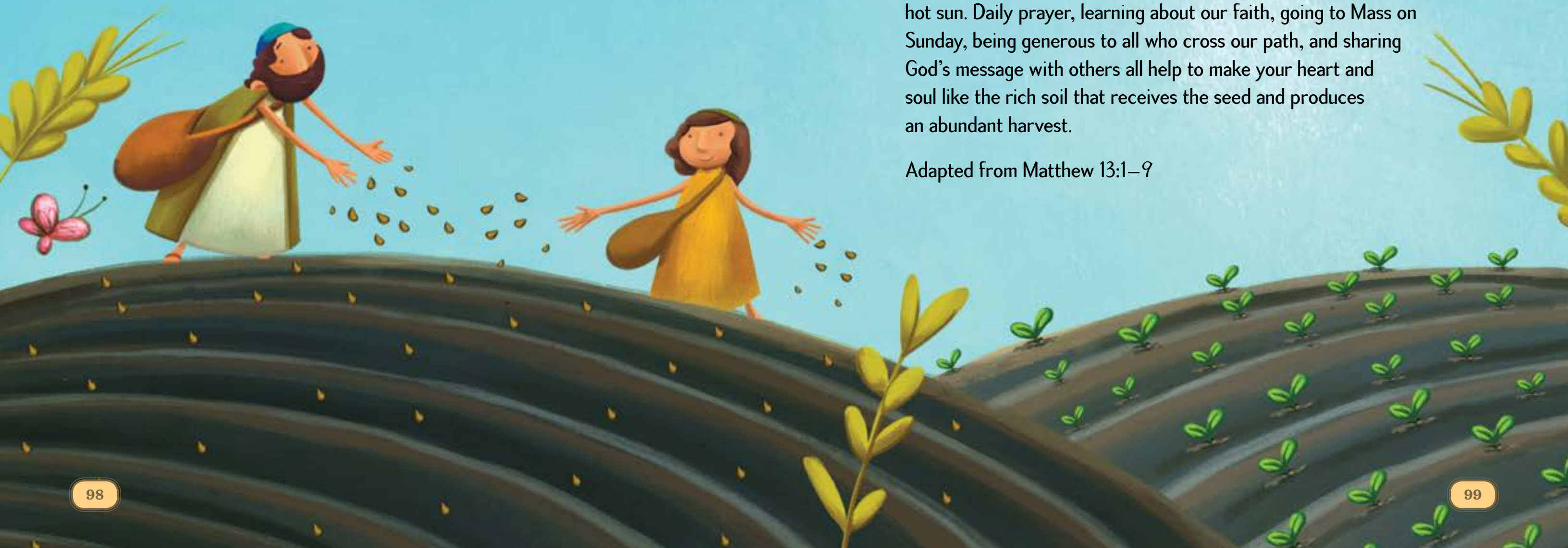
As Jesus made his way from village to village, word about his great deeds spread very quickly. He became very famous as a great teacher and healer, and so everywhere he went huge crowds of people would gather around him.

One day Jesus was sitting by the lake, and a large crowd gathered around him. They wanted him to teach them and heal them. So Jesus sat in a boat at the water's edge, the people stood around, and he told them parables. One of those parables was about a farmer sowing seeds.

A farmer went out to sow seeds in his field. As he sowed the seeds, some fell on the path beside the field, and birds came down and ate them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where there was not sufficient soil. These seeds sprang up quickly, but because of the shallow soil, when the sun rose it scorched them and they died. Still other seeds fell among thorns, and as they grew they were choked by the thorns. But some seeds fell on the rich, good soil, and these grew strong and healthy, and brought forth an abundant harvest.

God is the farmer. Our hearts and souls are the soil. The world, selfishness, and evil are the birds, the thorns, and the scorching hot sun. Daily prayer, learning about our faith, going to Mass on Sunday, being generous to all who cross our path, and sharing God's message with others all help to make your heart and soul like the rich soil that receives the seed and produces an abundant harvest.

Adapted from Matthew 13:1–9





## Wear It Out

All of the readings at Mass come from the most famous book in the world: the Bible. It is the best-selling book of all time. When you pick up the Bible it may seem like you are holding one big book, but in fact, it is a collection of 73 books.

The Bible is made up of two main sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. There are 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament.

One of the many ways God speaks to us is through the Bible. God has an amazing plan for your life, and one of the ways he reveals that amazing plan is through the readings we hear at Mass every Sunday.

If you were going on a long journey it would be a good idea to take a map with you. It would be even better to take a guide with you who has made the journey before. The Bible is like that map and

the Church is like that guide to help you make your journey through this life into the next so that you can live with God in heaven forever.

Over and over throughout the Bible God speaks to people, guiding them, encouraging them, and warning them. He spoke to Adam and Eve, Moses and Abraham, Noah and Jacob, Rebecca and Ruth, Mary and Paul. God spoke to each of them in different ways, but he spoke to them all. And now, God wants to speak to you.

Jesus is the central figure in the Bible. In the Old Testament we read over and over again about how the people were waiting for Jesus, the Messiah, to come. The New Testament is about Jesus and his teachings and about the life of the early Church and how the first Christians tried to live the Gospel message.

I have had some wonderful teachers in my life, and I am sure you have too. Jesus is the greatest teacher who ever lived. His favorite way to teach was to tell stories. He told stories that ordinary people could understand.

Do you have a favorite Bible story?





Do you have a favorite shirt or sweater? Do you have a favorite pair of shoes? I have an old sweatshirt that I just love. It is all worn out. The color is fading and there are a couple of holes in it, but it is so comfortable. It has been with me in good times and in bad times, and it comforts me in ways that a new sweatshirt cannot.

Many years ago a good friend inspired and challenged me. He said, "One of my goals in life is to wear out a Bible." I thought to myself, "What a fabulous goal."

Now I want to challenge you. Get yourself a Bible to carry with you throughout your life. Ask your parents or grandparents to

read a little to you each day. As you get older, read a little yourself each day. Wear that Bible out by reading it, reflecting on what you learn, and praying for the grace to live what you learn.

Over a lifetime Jesus and the other great people in the Bible will become great friends of yours. They will teach you how to grow in virtue, become the-best-version-of-yourself, and live a holy life.

Somewhere down the road, I hope we meet, and when we do, I hope you will show me your worn-out Bible.

God wants you to have many companions on your journey to heaven. He wants you to have friends who help you become the-best-version-of-yourself. But he also wants you to be friends with the saints because they have already made this journey and can teach you so much about which path to take and the paths to avoid. God also gives us our guardian angels to accompany us on the journey. And God gives us the Bible and the Church as great companions along the way too.





## Show What You Know

### True or False

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The Bible is a great companion for your journey to heaven.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ We should never say sorry even when we've done something wrong.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ There is no purpose or meaning behind each prayer and each action at Mass.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ God speaks to you through the Bible.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus is the greatest teacher who ever lived.

### Fill in the blank

1. God has an amazing \_\_\_\_\_ for your life.
2. Our parish church is a very special place because it is God's \_\_\_\_\_.
3. God reveals his amazing plan for your life through the \_\_\_\_\_ you hear at Mass every Sunday.
4. Going to Mass on Sunday is a great way to thank God for all the \_\_\_\_\_ he has given you.
5. At Mass we get to receive \_\_\_\_\_ in the Eucharist.

6. Music helps us to raise our hearts to God in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. God loves \_\_\_\_\_ relationships.
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the most famous book in the world.
9. One of the many ways God \_\_\_\_\_ to you is through the Bible.
10. The Bible is your \_\_\_\_\_ and the Church is your \_\_\_\_\_ on your journey to live with God in heaven forever.

### Word Bank

THANKSGIVING HOUSE GUIDE HEALTHY SPEAKS PRAISE PLAN  
READINGS MAP BIBLE JESUS BLESSINGS



## Journal with Jesus

Dear Jesus,

You are the greatest teacher in history; I need your help understanding . . .

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## Closing Prayer

Throughout your life, you will come across many teachers. But none of them will ever love you more or possess greater wisdom than Jesus.

From time to time you will really want to become the-best-version-of-yourself, grow in virtue, and live a holy life but you won't know how to do it. Those are the moments when you go to Jesus, the greatest teacher who ever lived, and ask him for help.

St. Ignatius of Loyola was a great priest and teacher. He founded one of the largest and most influential religious orders in history, the Society of Jesus (better known as the Jesuits). He was a spiritual master because he knew how to ask Jesus for help.

Together let's use the words of St. Ignatius and ask God to teach us to become all he created us to be:

**Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I do your will.**

**Amen.**

