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From the Bible

Now faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

—1 Corinthians 13:13

Jesus is the best teacher when it comes to love. Even as a child he studied the Word of God. He learned about the **Law of Love** that God gave to the Jewish people.

While he was growing up, Jesus tried to follow God's Law of Love. Little by little, he found the way to true happiness. It is NOT through riches, or power, or beauty, or being famous. The way to true happiness, Jesus found, is through great love. Jesus spoke

about God's love with the people and he showed them how to love others.

Sit quietly and think about these words. Ask Jesus to help you understand them deep within your heart.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself."

—adapted from
Deuteronomy 6:5 and
Mark 12:31



If you want to be happy, look for God's love in your life. Open your heart to sharing, forgiving, and helping those in need.

THEME: God Gives You Love

FOCUS: Love—God's Law of Love is a joy and never a burden!

Goal To help the children understand that happiness comes from loving God and others; Jesus gives us an example to follow

- Explain that we use the word "love" every day, but what does it really mean to love someone? Invite the children's input. Is love easy? Is it easy to love everyone?
- Then ask: Who can teach us how to love? After they offer answers, read page 18. What did Jesus learn? What did he teach others? How did he show love for God and others?
- Read the Bible words aloud, then have the children say them. Devise a "chant" they can repeat after you. For example: We have Faith! *(they repeat)* We have Hope! *(they repeat)* We have Love! *(they repeat)* We have these three! *(they repeat)* The greatest of these is Love! *(they repeat)*
- Now share how God defines love, reading aloud to them God's Law of Love from Scripture. If possible, make copies of this passage. Invite the children to decorate the page and place it in their prayer corner at home.

A Happy Celebration

One day Jesus came to a town called Capernaum. The people ran to greet him because they had heard about his preaching and healing. Jesus was happy to meet them and tell them about God's love. But the day was hot and in the evening Jesus was very tired. Many sick people were still waiting to see him.

When he saw this, he felt sorry for them. He forgot how tired he was. He took time with each one, blessing them and healing them all. Imagine the celebration that evening in Capernaum!



Something to Think About

- Why didn't Jesus tell the people, "Come back tomorrow. I'm too tired right now"?
- What would you have done when you saw all those people?
- What do you do now when you are tired but someone needs your help?

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THEME: A Happy Celebration

FOCUS: Love means giving to others even when we don't feel like it!

Goal To give the children an example of the meaning of love and of how Jesus offered love to those around him

- Read aloud the words on page 19, then have the children focus on the picture. What do they see? Ask them to repeat, in their own words, what happened.
- Go through the "Something to Think About" questions one by one. Invite the children to share examples from the third question. How did they feel when they helped someone?
- Tell the children you would like to share with them the healing blessing of Jesus. Invite each child to come forward one at a time. Place your hands on his or her head as you pray, "May Jesus bless you and heal you." Each child answers, "Amen."

Did You Know



Healing in the Gospels

Jesus healed many people from disease or disability. Here are some examples:

- **Fever:** Jesus healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law. When other people heard about it, they came to Jesus for healing, too.
- **Long-term bleeding:** When a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years touched Jesus' cloak, she was instantly healed.
- **Blindness:** Jesus met a blind beggar who, identified Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. Jesus gave the man back his sight.
- **Paralysis:** Jesus was in a house teaching when a paralyzed man was lowered through the roof because a crowd blocked the door. Jesus told the man to pick up his mat and walk, and he did! Jesus often said, "Your sins are forgiven." Every part of the person, including the body, is made whole.

A Story of Love and Forgiveness

"Love one another
as I have loved you."
This is what Jesus
asks us to do.

One of Jesus' best friends was Peter. He was a fisherman who worked hard to take care of his family. One day Jesus said to him, "Why don't you change jobs? Come and be my helper." Peter liked that idea. He put down his fishing nets and went with Jesus. He listened and he learned about God's Law of Love.



Something to Think About

- Why do you think Jesus forgave Peter?
- Would you want Jesus for a friend? Explain your answer.



A few years later, when Jesus was arrested, Peter forgot God's Law of Love. He was afraid that he would be arrested, too. So he told people he didn't know Jesus. He lied! He turned his back on his best friend!

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THEME: A Story of Love and Forgiveness

FOCUS: True love always includes forgiveness.

Goal To introduce the children to Peter and his need for forgiveness

- Ask the children if they have ever heard of St. Peter. What do they remember about him? Explain that he was one of the twelve people Jesus picked to be apostles (special followers). Then read the story on page 20.
- Peter was happy to follow Jesus when things were going well, but when Jesus was arrested, Peter was afraid. Ask the children if they have ever been afraid and yet did something brave. Invite them to share their experiences. Then ask if they have ever been so afraid, they couldn't be brave?
- Explain that even if we are not brave, Jesus is with us and forgives us. Read the words in the gold block on the top left of page 20. Then have the children repeat them after you five times.

When Peter realized what he had done, he was so ashamed, he ran away crying.

But the story doesn't end there. After God raised Jesus from the dead, Jesus came to see Peter. Jesus didn't get angry at all. He loved Peter and he forgave him. What a relief! Peter and Jesus were **reconciled**, and Peter kept growing in God's love. Soon Peter became the leader of those first followers of Jesus.



Let Us Pray



Peter was sorry he had failed Jesus. Maybe Peter said a prayer like this:

Lord Jesus,
Son of God,
have mercy on me,
a sinner.



The Church Teaches...

Be merciful and forgiving, as Jesus was,
and love others as he has loved us.

—adapted for children from CCC #2842

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- Focus on the illustrations on pages 20 and 21. Invite the children to describe them.
- Read the rest of the story (on page 21). Then return to “Something to Think About” on page 20. Allow time for the children to share their responses.
- Share what the Church teaches about love and forgiveness. Invite the children to read this section silently, then ask for volunteers to read it slowly and dramatically. Explain that the Church has a special book that contains all its teachings. This book is called the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The teaching on this page comes from that book.
- Now look at “Let Us Pray” on page 21. You will be asking the children to memorize this prayer (or one like it) for their First Reconciliation. Invite them to repeat it after you, then read it aloud together. Ask them to try to memorize the first four lines for your next gathering.

Following Jesus

Before he returned to his Father in heaven, Jesus told his followers:

But can we really love as Jesus did?
Can we forgive as Jesus did? Yes, but only
when we open ourselves to God's Law of
Love as Jesus did.

Read this story about a boy named Thomas.
Was he open to God's Law of Love?

*"I am giving you a
new commandment.
Love one another as
I have loved you."*

—John 15:12



Something to Think About

- What do you think? Did Thomas practise God's Law of Love?
- Would you have done what he did? Why or why not?
- What act of love can YOU do today?

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One day at school, Mrs. Perada had a surprise for the class. A friend had given her a box of candy and she wanted to share it with the children. Everyone took a big bite and said, "Yummy! So delicious!" Everyone but Thomas, that is.

"Don't you like candy?" Mrs. Perada asked him.

"Yes, I do," Thomas said, "but I want to keep it for my little brother, Dylan. He never gets candy."

The teacher said, "It's good of you to think of Dylan, but isn't it hard to give away your own treat?"



Theme: Following Jesus

FOCUS: To be like Jesus is to be loving and forgiving.

Goal To share with the children Jesus' greatest commandment

- Explain that there are many commandments (rules for living) in the Bible, but here (in the gold box) Jesus gives us a new commandment that is greater than all the others. It might sound easy, but it takes courage and daily effort.
- Have the children take turns reading the words on page 22.
- Now invite them to role play the scenario, taking turns as the teacher, the class, and Thomas.
- Go over the "Something to Think About" questions one by one. Does anyone remember "God's Law of Love"? (see page 18)
- Invite the children to write out or illustrate one act of love they can do this week. They can add these pages to their prayer corner at home.

Notes for Catechists

The Way of Jesus

Jesus taught his followers a "way" or path. He saw each person's religious life as a journey. He talked about seeking and entering the kingdom or reign of God. These are active words. They imply doing something, moving from where we are to someplace new. Jesus called people to follow him as a way of living. That is why the earliest members of the Jesus movement were known as "followers of the Way." It is to this vision that the voice of Jesus calls us today. His call to "Come, follow me" still rings out 20 centuries after his death. His life, teachings, and actions were focused on creating a new kind of personal and community life amidst the old one. Jesus set out to transform human life and to challenge the forces that oppress and divide people in every society. This is the journey he invites us to join.

"Yes," Thomas answered, "but if I eat it now, it'll feel good in my mouth. If I give it to Dylan, it'll feel even better in my heart."

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Saint Damian of Molokai was a **missionary** in Hawaii. He took care of sick people called "lepers" who had been left on an island called Molokai because their disease was contagious. Damian treated the lepers just as he would have treated Jesus. He often took care of their wounds himself. Damian loved these suffering people just as Jesus loved them.

To do good things for others as Jesus, and Thomas, and Saint Damian did, you have to keep your eyes and your heart wide open.

Does someone need your help: your parents, your sisters and brothers, your friends, your schoolmates? If they do, act as Jesus did.



Words

to Remember...

Law of Love ~ a way to live that puts God and others first

Reconciled ~ to make things right with God and others when we have done wrong

Commandment ~ a rule in the Bible about how to live

Missionaries ~ people who carry the good news of God's love to all the world

Let Us Pray



Lord Jesus, may I care for others as you care for them. May I love those in need as you love them.

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THEME: Saint Damian

FOCUS: Love in action is the greatest love of all.

Goal

To introduce the children to someone who proved his love for others through heroic service

- Read together the story of Saint Damian. He was an extraordinary example of someone who loves others. For more information about Damian, see below.
- Ask the children what they think it means to keep your "eyes and heart wide open."
- Pray the prayer aloud together, then have individual children read it slowly and dramatically. Read it a final time, adding gestures. For example:

Lord Jesus (*hands folded*),
may I care for others (*arms outstretched*),
as you care for them (*arms lifted high*).
May I love those in need (*arms folded across heart*),
as you love them (*hands folded*).

- Go over the "Words to Remember" one by one. Be sure the children can describe the terms in their own words. (Add them to your chart of "Words to Remember," if you have made one.)

Did You Know



A Martyr for Love

Saint Damian de Veuster was born in Belgium in 1840. Also known as Saint Damian of Molokai, he was a Roman Catholic priest and a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, a missionary religious order. Father Damian is known for caring for people with leprosy, a contagious bacterial disease (now called Hansen's Disease). These people had been dropped off by ship on a remote area of the island of Molokai, in Hawaii. Damian eventually contracted the disease himself, and died in 1889. He is known as a "martyr of charity." His feast day is May 10. Damian was canonized in 2009 by Pope Benedict XVI.

Ways to Show Love



The Church Teaches...

From our childhood on, we grow more and more aware of God's Law of Love. We learn good habits and how to do good deeds.

—adapted for children from CCC #1784



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You are on a journey that is taking you closer to God. You are on your way to celebrating God's forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Before you arrive at this sacrament, you have to practise how to love and forgive.

Read the stories below. What is the best way each child in the stories can show love?

Ned notices that his neighbours Alberto and Rafaela are sad. Alberto is crying.

"Why are you so sad?" Ned asks.

"Our mom just lost her job," Rafaela explained, "and Alberto's birthday is coming soon. He was supposed to have a party and now he can't."

What can Ned do to help? What can his family do?

.....

.....

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THEME: Ways to Show Love

FOCUS: Love is shown through good habits and good deeds!

Goal To help the children learn to show love in action

- Share "The Church Teaches" lesson by reading it to the children. Invite them to repeat it after you and then take turns proclaiming it in a loud and clear voice.

- Invite the children to read the first paragraph on page 24. Explain that the stories that follow will help them practise love and forgiveness—or at least start to think about doing it.
- Allow time for the children to write out what Ned can do. Invite them to share their answers.

Emma is playing in the driveway. Her toys are all spread out. Her neighbour Maria calls out, "Come and play with me!" Emma knows that if she leaves her toys where they are, her dad will have to get out of the car and move them when he gets home from work, but she wants to go and play with Maria right away. What will Emma do?



Eric and Marisol look out the window one day. They see an old woman who lives nearby. She is always walking alone. Today she is carrying two bags of groceries. Eric and Marisol feel sorry for her. They tell their parents about her. How could they help their neighbour?



Look and Listen

Here's a game you can play with your family to help you **SEE** and **HEAR** how to love one another better.

Everyone writes their name on a slip of paper and puts it in a bag. Then they each pick one name out of the bag, without showing it to the others. (If someone picks their own name, they put that slip of paper back and pick again.) For the next week, everyone does secret good deeds for the person whose name they picked. At the end of the week, have everyone try to guess who was doing these loving things for them.

Simon and his friends are playing soccer in the park. Adam is watching from his wheelchair. He wants to play, but he can't run. What will Simon and his friends do?



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- What do they think Emma should do?
- Should Eric and Marisol run right out the door to help their elderly neighbour? Why might that be dangerous? What *can* they do?
- What should Simon and his friends do?
- Encourage the children to be honest and sincere. What would they *really* do in such situations? What *should* they do if they follow Jesus? Ask: What would Jesus do?
- Go over the "Look and Listen" game. Encourage the children to play it with their family. You might want to send copies of it home with a note encouraging parents to participate.

Notes for Catechists

What Should We Examine?

Older Catholics were taught to use an examination of conscience before going to "confession." This practice is still a good idea, but sometimes we must also examine our lives through a larger lens: not just our individual sins, but our way of life as a whole. As catechists, we have been called by Jesus to be followers of the Way: a way of compassion and love, healing and forgiveness. We must start taking Jesus seriously by loving our enemies, turning the other cheek, forgiving seventy times seven, blessing those who curse us, sharing what we have with the poor, and putting all our hope and trust in God. We are called to be the salt of the earth and light for the world.

(For a more theological explanation of conscience, see the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 1776, 1777, 1779 and 1785.)



Something to Think About

- Do you enjoy special celebrations and special meals? Why?
- What are your family's traditions?
- What can you SEE and HEAR around your family table?

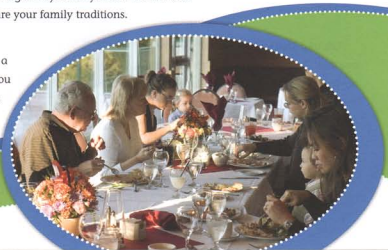
Ask your parents to plan a special meal, a time when you can share love and laughter.

Sharing Family Love

Benjamin is excited. His grandparents are coming for dinner! That means they will all sit at the table for a long time, sharing good food and family stories.

"Hurray!" says his sister Michelle. "I love it when we have special meals."

We all love times of celebration. Every family has its own way of celebrating. Family traditions make special days even more special. A tradition is something passed down from grandparents to parents to children: certain actions, certain ways of celebrating, even certain stories that are told just the right way. Family meals are the best time to share your family traditions.



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THEME: Sharing Family Love

FOCUS: Is sharing family love truly possible without sharing family meals?

Goal To emphasize the importance of family meals and traditions

- Read aloud the first paragraph about Benjamin. Then have the children read the rest of the text silently.
- Go through the "Something to Think About" questions one by one. Allow time for the children to share answers and experiences.
- Explain that "traditions" are things a family does for certain holidays or special occasions. For example, one family always shares birthday cake before opening presents. Another family opens presents first. Ask the children which family traditions they love the most.
- Have the children focus on the picture. Do they share meals as a family, too? Now ask each child to write a note to his or her parent(s), asking for a family meal or meals together on a regular basis. Each should say why they would like this to happen.
- Ask the children: If you were to have a special meal, who would you want to be there? Why? What would you talk about? What prayer would you say before the meal?

Think about the journey you are on. You have already come a very long way. See what you can remember so far.

HINT: Look at the signs.

1. God gave the Jewish people a L ____ of L ____.

2. F ____ g ____ e n ____ is the gift Jesus gave to Peter.

3. To make things okay again is also called R ____ on ____ iati ____.

4. Family meals are a wonderful t ____ d ____ o ____.

5. Jesus said to his followers: Lo ____ o ____ ano ____ r ____.

† Who said, "Oh no, I have betrayed Jesus?"

HINT: His name begins with "P." _____

† Who said: "I'm saving it for my little brother?"

HINT: His brother's name was Dylan. _____

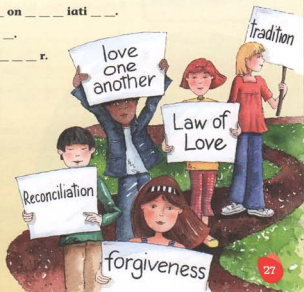
† Who took care of sick people called "lepers" on the island of Molokai? _____

HINT: He was a missionary.

† Who said, "I love it when we have special meals?"

HINT: Her brother's name was Benjamin.

Love is patient.
Love is kind.
Love does good
things for others!



THEME: What Have You Learned?

FOCUS: God's Gift of Love

Goal To reinforce what the children have learned about love

- Invite the children to focus first on the words in the gold box. Have them repeat the words after you. Then invite individual children to proclaim them clearly and dramatically.
- Now focus on the illustration. Read the words on the signs. As you read each one, ask the children to define it in their own words. (Add them to your chart of "Words to Remember," if you have made one.)
- Ask the children to complete the sentences, using the words on the signs as hints. Then go over each sentence to be sure they understand it.
- Now see if they remember the "Who Said" sentences. Encourage them to look back in their books to find the answers. Add some sentences of your own from past lessons if you wish.

Notes for Catechists

The Importance of Family Meals

We focus here on family meals because during meals, conversation happens and relationships between parents and children are strengthened. As part of this program, parents are invited to converse and pray with their child. For many, this will seem an impossible task unless they have a forum for family conversation and prayer; a family meal is a beginning. As a catechist, you can encourage the children to ask their parents to share family meals more often.