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## Running Toward God

Saul was a young man who knew what he was after. He thought, as a committed Jew, his vocation was to use his gifts and talents to stamp out the growth of Christianity in the first century. One day Saul was traveling earnestly toward Damascus with arrest warrants for the Christians living there. Suddenly, he was stopped in his tracks by the voice of Jesus (see Acts of the Apostles 9:1–9). That extraordinary experience guided Saul, who now is known by his Roman name, Paul.

From then on, Paul had a new understanding of his vocation. Using those same gifts and talents, Paul worked single-mindedly for Jesus Christ by spreading the Gospel. At the end of his life, Saint Paul looked back on his life and knew that he had honestly and faithfully worked at fulfilling the vocation he had received. He had accomplished the work God had given him to do. He wrote, "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

## Healthy Habits in the Home

Spend time together as a family identifying and planning some short-term and long-term goals for the family. Build the goals on the talents and traits of the members of your family. Be sure to include input from each family member and assign responsibility to each as well.

## Family Blessings

Come, Holy Spirit, strengthen us with your grace to face with courage the challenges in life, to attain our goals even beyond our needs and to work faithfully to reach our final goal of everlasting life with you, the Father, and the Son. Amen.



The Conversion of St. Paul, c.1601  
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610 Italian)

## Taking the Lesson Home

Establish family goals by asking the following questions of each other. Then discuss how to achieve these goals.

### What are our goals in regards to:

1. family time?
2. prayer?
3. service?
4. enjoyment?
5. education?



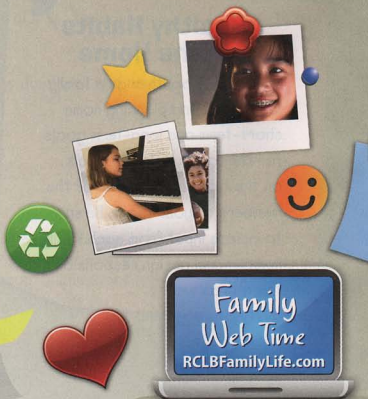
## Making Connections

Help your family plan for the future. Have family members respond to and share ideas about each of these questions:

- ▶ What past experiences have taught you about yourself?
- ▶ How have you dealt with past failures?
- ▶ Who has helped you along the way in achieving your goals?

## Faith on the Fridge

The Christian family is a sign of the Holy Trinity. It is a sign of the love of one God in three Divine Persons—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.





# Know Thyself

## LESSON 3

### Creativity at Work

Imagine that X marks where you are right now in your life. You know about your family background. You inherited a genetic package. You have an ethnic, social, cultural and religious background. At this point in your life, you might also have some ideas about your future. But all of this information still does not fully explain who you are.

One important thing to understand is that you are changing all the time. In fact, you will be changing for the rest of your life. You will always be learning about yourself, about life and about God's plan for you.

You bring a unique perspective and your own style to everything you do. As you mature, everything you do affects yourself and the people around you. The world is waiting for you to make your contribution!

The gift of creativity enables you to explore and develop different ways of doing things. Your creativity can help you choose where you are going in life. All along the way, your creativity flows from the unique person you are. Your use of this gift is as unique as your thumbprint—no two people use it in exactly the same way.

God desires that you use all of your gifts and talents in a loving and good way. Maybe you will be the one to discover a medical breakthrough in cancer research or maybe you will find a creative way to reach out to a lonely person.

Learn to use your creativity to deal with people, make decisions and solve problems. Look to the saints as models of people who used their gifts creatively in service to others. Help build the Kingdom of God as announced by Jesus.

This lesson will help you to:

- **explore** creative ways to express yourself.
- **appreciate** yourself as a person of integrity and virtue.
- **develop** ways to improve and use your abilities.



What is one important quality you see in yourself that helps you to understand who you are?



## Growing in Virtue

The virtue of **humility** leads to us acknowledge God as the Creator of all. This virtue strengthens us to be honest with ourselves and to accept ourselves and our relationship with God. A truly “humble” person is a person of integrity.

## Being You in All Honesty

Many sixth-graders want to be somewhat like everyone else. They want to please others and to be accepted. While it is important for you to learn how to get along with others and to have friends, it is also very important for you to be honest with yourself and be the wonderful you God created you to be.

God calls you to get to know yourself honestly, to grow in that understanding, and to share the goodness of yourself with others. Knowing and accepting yourself, with all of your strengths and limitations, will give you an advantage in life. Knowing yourself can help you build self-confidence. Accepting yourself will strengthen you to face life with integrity and courage—and not give into the temptation to run yourself down.

You have a unique purpose, or vocation, in life. God calls you to know and accept that vocation. He has given it to you and is with you each day giving you the grace to know it and fulfill it. God desires for you to seek what is true, beautiful and good. So while you might face difficulties and challenges in life, you will have the strength in God’s grace to deal with life’s ups and downs. Saint Paul teaches us that God does not give us more than we can handle (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).



**Think about times when you had to be honest with yourself. How well did you do? Why?**

## Integrity

Integrity is the personal quality of being true to the person God created you to be. The virtue of humility strengthens you to be a person of integrity and to seek God and what is true, beautiful and good in the world.

The vocation God calls and invites you to freely accept is an important part of who you are. As you mature, you will more clearly discern God’s vocation for you. It is like putting together a picture puzzle of who you are. There are various tools for learning about yourself. While psychologists and counselors certainly can help you discover certain aspects of your personality and how to relate to others in loving responsible ways, you must above all seek God’s help.



God's help, his grace, comes to us through the Church. The sacraments, the reading of Sacred Scripture and prayer are sources of God's grace. The wisdom and teaching of the Church guide us in our search to know God and ourselves and to live according to his will.

## "Self Discovery"

All of these tools can help you see that you are a person with dignity. Read below and act accordingly to discover the wonderful person God calls you to be.

### Activity

**Self-awareness.** This means knowing and being conscious of your own personality and individuality. It means taking time to think about who you are, how you feel about things and what you've done.

**Your own experience.** Sometimes, when you've yearned for something such as a bicycle, you think that's the only thing that will ever make you happy. Yet you discover that the bicycle didn't really make you happy after all. Things aren't usually what make people happy. Look at your own experience and ask yourself, "What *does* make me happy?"

**Trust.** If you trust yourself and others, you'll be able to say what you really think and to be who you really are. You'll be free to be yourself because you trust that you're a good person.

**The experience of others.** As you talk with your friends and family, you'll discover that you're a lot like them because you share many of the same dreams, struggles and fears. Another's experience may teach you how to avoid some mistakes or to keep trying when you want to give up.

**Freedom to choose.** An important part of growing and learning is following the directions of other people who are older and wiser than you. But within that framework and within your own heart, you have many decisions to make. You can choose how you'll grow and change. You can begin now to follow your own dreams.

**Honesty.** When learning about yourself, it's important to be honest with yourself. You have to be brave enough to "own" everything about yourself, whether you like it or not. This means admitting your faults and mistakes as well as recognizing your talents and abilities.

**Perspective.** Step back and look at some of the choices you've made. Ask yourself, "Why do I do the things I do?" Gradually you will be able to observe your own life a little more objectively, and this helps you understand who you are.

*All of these tools can help you see that you're a person with value and dignity, and that is a great discovery.*

## Catholics Believe

One of the results of chaste living is achieving integrity of life and love. Chastity respects the unity of the whole person, body and soul.



## Catholic Family Album

### Saint Hyacintha of Mariscotti

(1585–1640) was not always recognized as a saint. In fact, through much of her life, the opposite was true. As a child Hyacintha was so unbearably self-centered, her parents sent her to live in a convent. While there she took vows to live as a nun, but for many years did not live out those vows. When she became seriously ill, Hyacintha took an honest look at her life and changed directions. With God's grace she became a model for younger nuns. She reached out to people in need and became well known not for being self-centered but for reaching out to elderly people who were poor. She was named a saint of the Church in 1807.



## Seeing the True Me

Sometimes it is easy to see the good things about yourself. And at other times, it is more difficult. Some days it is easier to see what you would like to change about yourself. And at other times, you may be less than honest with yourself.

When you prepare for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, you take the time to honestly examine your conscience. You take the time to ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern what you have done well and not so well, the right and wrong that you have done. You look honestly at how you need to change and grow to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Use the chart below to take a good look at yourself. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see yourself clearly. Remember, he knows you more than you know yourself. Briefly describe three of your best qualities or talents. Then, for each, write a plan of action. Include in your plan ways you will use that talent to help others. Be practical and specific in your planning.

TALENT	PLAN OF ACTION
1.	
2.	
3.	

# Looking to the Future

LESSON

4

## Walk First

When Wilma Rudolph was sixteen years old, she made the United States Olympic track team. At twenty, she became the first female to win three gold medals in the same Olympic Games. Her skills were in track and field. Yet early in her life doctors had said she would never be able to walk.

When she was four years old, Wilma's left leg was paralyzed as the result of scarlet fever, a condition that was complicated by double pneumonia. Her mother refused to believe that Wilma would not walk. She took her daughter for weekly therapy treatments. She herself massaged Wilma's leg for hours each day; she taught Wilma's brothers and sisters how to massage her leg, too.

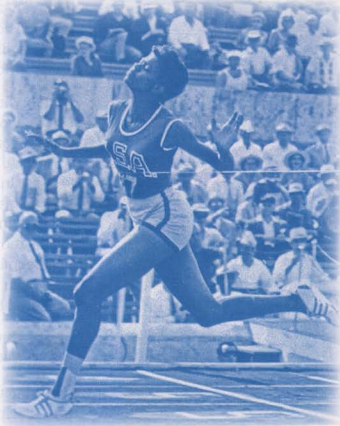
When she was eight, Wilma could walk with the aid of a brace. A year later, she began to wear a reinforced shoe. When she was eleven, Wilma threw away the shoe and, shortly after that, began playing basketball with her brothers. Wilma became a basketball star in high school and started running track.

In her first Olympic Games, Wilma was part of a relay team that won a bronze medal. Wilma's success certainly was due in part to talent. But she was able to use that talent fully because of desire, dedication and the faith of her family.

The life stories and achievements of many people tell of similar determination.

### This lesson will help you to:

- **explore** the life story of a person with determination and dedication.
- **understand** the importance of achieving goals.
- **use** your imagination in setting and achieving goals.



**How do you relate to the dedication and determination of Wilma?**





## Growing in Virtue

The virtue of fortitude, or courage, is also one of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. It strengthens us for doing good. **Determination** takes courage of the heart, grounded with a sense of integrity, a capacity for resilience and an attitude of humility.

## Reaching Beyond Yourself

Achieving any goal is like crossing the finish line. Some goals are easy to reach. Others are more difficult. Reaching goals requires determination, dedication, patience and perseverance. Having goals gives direction to your life. Goals help you focus on what you are doing and where you would like to head. Having clear, good goals can help you do your very best.

You must work hard to reach a goal you have set for yourself, as Wilma Rudolph did. You will not reach your goals immediately. For example, if you have set the goal of becoming a concert pianist, you will have to devote time toward learning the skills necessary for achieving your goal. You will have to practice, practice and practice.

Reaching your goals takes planning. You must think ahead and have a vision and “see the future.” This vision will help you discipline yourself to work at achieving your goal. This vision will help you set priorities and make sacrifices.

You will have to put off certain other things that you would like to do now in order to reach your future goals. This means that you are willing to wait for the future reward. This is called delayed gratification. Instant gratification works the opposite. It means demanding and receiving your wants and desires immediately—right here, right now. Instant gratification is a dead end. It is a path leading to little or no personal growth. It prevents you from achieving future goals. Your success at achieving your long-term goals will be measured by your dedication and determination.



**Think about how well you deal with waiting for what you need or want.**

Achieving the bigger goals in one's life often takes more time, discipline, planning or practice than it takes to achieve smaller goals. Working to achieve bigger goals require inner strength or determination. It requires using the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God.

Determination has to do with three qualities of the heart: a sense of integrity, a capacity for resilience and an attitude of



humility. Your integrity comes from your sense of self-worth. You gradually accept that your self-worth and that of others come from God.

Resilience is the courage to deal with failure, to bounce back and move ahead despite failure or difficulties. This kind of courage enables you to move past the temporary obstacles and focus on ways to improve for the future.

The virtue of humility allows you to accept yourself with all your God-given strengths and your limitations and to admit that you need the help of others. Everyone, at times, needs the assistance of someone who will listen and support their efforts.

Wilma Rudolph would never have achieved her Olympic goals without her dedication and determination and the support of her family and friends. You too can reach beyond yourself.

## “Defining Success”

With a partner, write a definition of success in the space provided. Keep in mind integrity, resilience and humility. Share your definition with the class.

### Activity

#### Matching It Up

In each line, write the letter of the description in Column B that best goes with the term in Column A.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Humility

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Integrity

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Resilience

A. Human power that helps you overcome difficulties

B. The courage to do what is right

C. Being true to the promises you make

D. Being honest about yourself and your God

E. Being strong-willed and steady in the face of difficulties

### Catholics Believe

Jesus announced the good news of the Kingdom of God. At Baptism, every Christian receives the mission, the responsibility and the grace to work toward the goal of the establishment of the Kingdom.

## Catholic Family Album

**Matt Talbot** (1846–1925) lived in Ireland. His family was very poor and Matt began working for a liquor company when he was only twelve years old to help his family. He began drinking very soon after he started working. It quickly became the most important thing in his life and he could not stop. When he was thirty years old, Matt set the goal to stop drinking and was determined to achieve it. He turned to God for help, began to go to Mass each day and often spent his free time praying to Mary. Matt achieved his goal and remained sober for the rest of his life. The Catholic Church has named Matt Talbot “Venerable.” This is the first step in naming him a saint of the Church.



## Making My Dreams Come True

When Wilma Rudolph was twelve years old, she could not have known that she would be an Olympic champion. But she could have imagined how it would be to run with strength and grace. Wilma's dreams may also have included being a teacher or a mother or a coach, for she was all of these things after her competitive athletic career ended.

Your imagination lets you dream. Imagination is the ability to form a mental image of something that is not present or that does not exist. Your imagination helps you plan and dream about the future that may be yours someday. Your imagination is a gift from God—a gift that is a truly human power. Your imagination lets you “try on” different roles and ideas for yourself.

Consider for a moment that Wilma Rudolph's story might be found in a book entitled “Great Athletes of Our Time.” Below complete the title of a book, in which your story might be told. Then imagine your future and write your story. Include two things you will do now to work toward that future.

Great \_\_\_\_\_ of Our Time

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Name .....

## Summary

Remember what you have learned in each of the lessons in God's Gift of Self.

### LESSON 3: Know Thyself

- God invites me to accept a vocation to use my gifts and talents in a loving and good way.
- I can discern the vocation God offers me by knowing myself and the talents and gifts he has given me.
- Integrity enables me to be the person God calls me to be.

### LESSON 4: Looking to the Future

- Having goals gives direction to my life; achieving goals requires hard work, patience and perseverance.
- Determination takes courage of heart and is based on integrity, resilience and humility.
- God has given me the gift of imagination to help me plan and dream about my future.

## Thinking It Through

1. How does humility help me know myself?

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2. How does a strong sense of my self-worth help me achieve my goals?

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3. How can the gift of creativity help me plan and attain my goals?

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## Matching It Up

On each line, write the letter of the description in Column B that best goes with the term in Column A.

**A**

- ..... Humility
- ..... Integrity
- ..... Resilience
- ..... Imagination
- ..... Gifts of the Holy Spirit

**B**

- Human power that helps a person set long-term goals using their gifts and talents
- The courage to deal with failure
- Being true to the person you are
- Being honest about yourself before God
- God-given powers and strengths that enable us to work toward the establishment of the Kingdom of God

Name .....

## Recalling Key Concepts

Circle the T if the statement is true. Circle the F if the statement is false.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Once you make a goal, you cannot change it.                                      | T | F |
| 2. It is healthy to accept your strengths and your limitations.                     | T | F |
| 3. The Church teaches that a sixth-grader is too young to bring goodness to others. | T | F |
| 4. No two people think and respond exactly the same.                                | T | F |
| 5. Achieving goals is simple, easy and quick.                                       | T | F |

Fill in the missing words in these sentences.

6. Studying before watching TV is an example of ..... gratification.
7. Skipping practice to watch a movie is an example of ..... gratification.
8. Knowing yourself can help build .....
9. .... was the first female to win three gold medals in the same Olympic Games.
10. Your ..... lets you “try on” different ideas and dream about the future.

## Working Together

Create a class booklet about people who have achieved their goals. Keep in mind the class’ definition of success. Brainstorm as a class, a list of names. Include people from all walks of life, regardless of their notoriety or popularity. Working individually or in pairs, research and write a short article about one of the people named by the class. Use your creativity in doing this project.