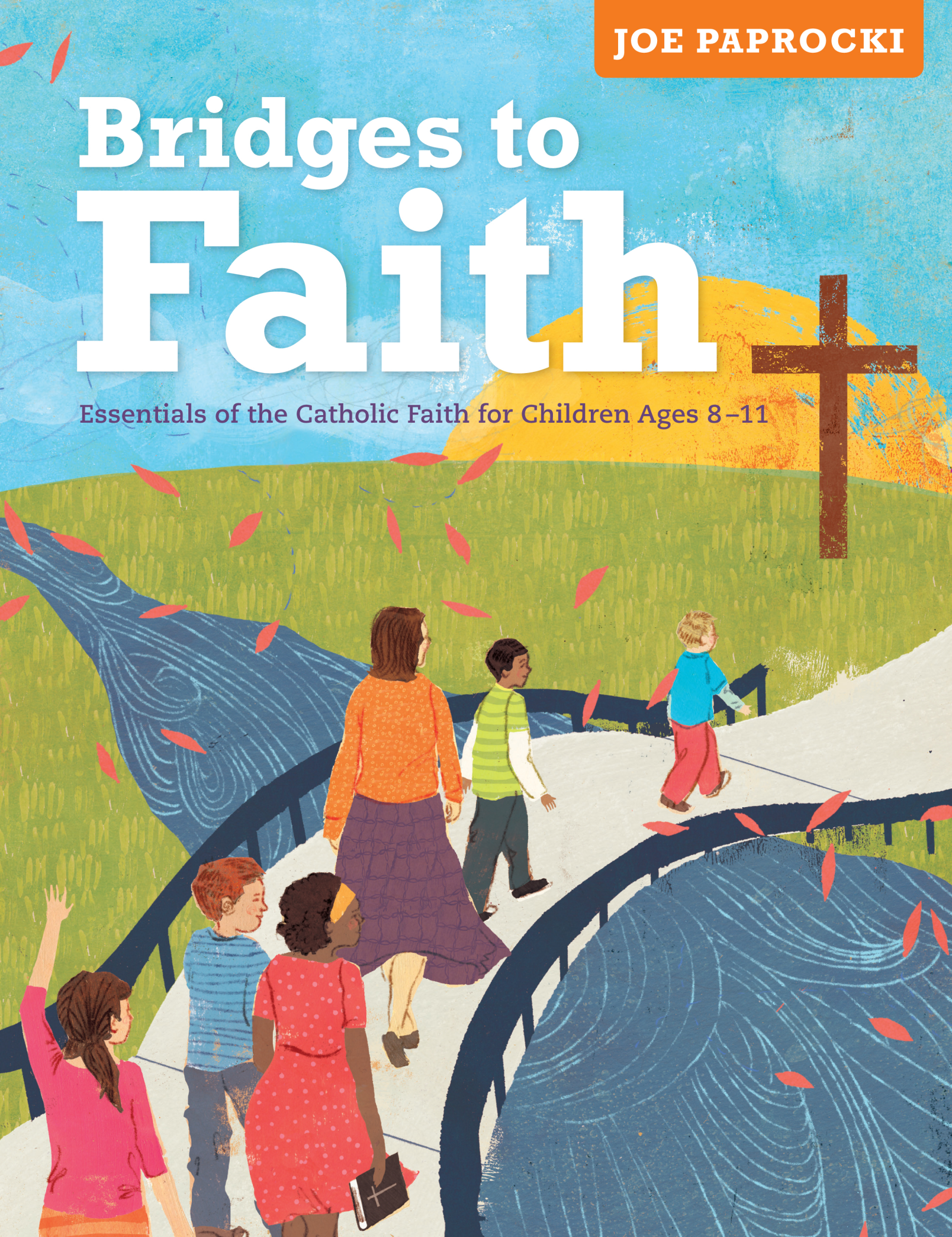


JOE PAPROCKI

# Bridges to Faith

Essentials of the Catholic Faith for Children Ages 8–11





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## CHAPTER 1

# Passing On Faith



### **Have you ever been part of a relay race team?**

Each team member passes the baton to the next person in line, trying not to drop the baton. The race cannot continue unless one team member carefully passes the baton to the next. Just as we pass the baton to our teammate, Catholics take care to pass on our faith, although our faith is more precious than a baton. We pass on our faith by staying close to God and teaching others about our faith. This begins at Baptism, when we first become members of the Church. We commit to learn about the Church and to share what we learn with others. We pass on our faith.



## Making Christians

A long time ago, just 200 years after Jesus ascended to Heaven, a Christian writer named Tertullian wrote that “Christians are made, not born.” Tertullian was saying that the Church uses certain methods to make **Christians**. Tertullian’s reminder was saying the same thing that Jesus said right before he ascended to Heaven:

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”* (Matthew 28:19–20)

Jesus is telling us to go out and baptize and teach others what he taught us. He showed us through his own life that good Christians should be examples of faith, hope, love, forgiveness, compassion, mercy, and justice. We are called to show others how to be a follower of Jesus’, a **disciple**. The word *disciple* comes from a Latin root word that means “to learn.” We need to learn about our faith so that we can show others what it means to live as disciples.

**Christians are made, not born.**

[Tertullian, Church Father,  
Third Century AD]



### Think and Write

Write what the word *Christian* means to you.

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### Looking Ahead

You are on a journey to being formed as a Catholic. So what does a Catholic look like? You have probably seen pictures or drawings of saints. All Catholics are called to become saints. **Saints** are holy, faithful people. But we don’t have to perform miracles or do amazing things to be saints. The early Church called all the faithful followers of Jesus “the saints.” And how did the saints live? The saints devoted themselves to holding on to their faith, expressing their faith, living their faith, and praying their faith.

*“They followed the teachings of the apostles, they lived together, they celebrated the breaking of the bread, and they prayed.”*

(adapted from Acts of the Apostles 2:42)

# The Four Pillars of Our Faith

Think about a sturdy wooden chair. What makes that chair sturdy? Each leg holds some of the weight of the seated person. Just like that sturdy chair, Catholics have four legs to stand on that help us live out and share our faith. The following are the four pillars of our faith:

1. the Creed
2. the sacraments
3. the moral life
4. prayer

The saints were the first followers of Jesus. They believed in these pillars and lived according to them. When we are baptized, we enter into a loving relationship with God and with others. These four pillars help us act as disciples in all that we do.



## Facts of Our Faith: *The Nicene Creed*

We pray the **Nicene Creed** at Mass. It is based on the Creed developed by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. The Creed was given its final form in 381 at the Council of Constantinople. The Creed is a reflection of the unity of the members of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is a reflection of the unity we are called to have with one another.

Friendship Example	The Catholic Faith
Think about how you treat a friend.	Our close and loving relationship with God and with one another is supported by:
1. You love your friend because you believe certain things about him or her to be true, such as your friend is kind or forgiving.	1. what we believe about God (the Creed).
2. You express your love for your friend, such as through hugs, sharing, or helping.	2. how we express our love for God and how God shows his love for us (the sacraments).
3. Your actions show your love and respect for your friend.	3. how we act toward God and toward others (the moral life).
4. You communicate with your friend.	4. how we communicate with God (prayer).

## 1. The Creed

Who are some people that you believe in? Why do you believe? To believe in someone is to have a relationship with that person and to trust that person. The trust that a baby has for his or her mother is a good example. The baby learns to trust because the mother changes diapers, feeds, bathes, and comforts the baby. The baby has faith in the mother because of the mother's loving actions.



Our faith in God is like that. The stories in the Bible show that God has always been faithful to his people. The stories of the saints are great examples of God's love and trust. People in our lives show us faith by sharing their own experiences. Our own life experiences can lead us to believe that God can be trusted. In the Creed, we say what we believe.

## 2. The Sacraments

Humans express their love in many ways other than words, such as smiles or kind actions. As Catholics, we worship at Mass and participate in the **sacraments**. We use signs, symbols, and rituals to experience God and to express our love for him. Sacraments are sacred signs of our faith and are instituted by Jesus Christ.



### Live It!

Just as the Sacrament of Baptism welcomes us into the Church, describe one way you can welcome someone new into your parish community.

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## 3. The Moral Life

Think about how you feel when you do something you know you shouldn't do. Think about how you feel when you do something thoughtful for someone for no reason. You might do it just to show someone that you care about him or her. God loves us. He is inviting us to love him and others. Because we love God, we are called to show that love. We try to avoid actions that don't show love. That is how we can live a moral life. It's that simple.

Living a moral life should be easy. There are only 10 rules to follow—the **commandments**—and God is so wonderful and loving, who would ever do something he would not like? The truth is that we can forget how good God is to us. This can lead to bad choices.

Living the moral life is not just avoiding bad things and choices. It is a matter of recognizing how God loves us and then responding to that love by loving our neighbors. God is faithful to us, and we cannot hurt God through our bad choices. We can only hurt ourselves.



### Facts of Our Faith: *The Commandments*

The first three commandments teach us about loving God. The last seven commandments teach us about loving our neighbors.

**Live It!**

Write about one way you can show God's love to someone in need in your community.

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**4. Prayer**

How do we communicate with people we love? We talk and listen to them. Prayer is the best way to communicate with God. Communication is both speaking and listening. People sometimes forget to listen. If we don't listen, we are missing the voice of God. We will learn more about how God speaks to us and what it means to hear God's voice later in this book. For now, know that prayer is the fourth pillar of our Catholic faith. Without prayer, that sturdy chair would have only three legs, and it would collapse.

**If we don't  
listen, we  
are missing  
the voice  
of God.**

**Think and Write**

Describe times when you talk to God and when you listen to God.

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**So What?**

So what difference does it make for Catholics to believe that "Christians are made, not born"? It means that we are called to respond to God by living our faith. If we follow the four pillars of our faith, we can be examples for others. Faith is something that we receive. It does not belong to us; it is passed on to us. We care for, protect, and pass on our faith. We can think of God as the potter and ourselves as the clay. God, through the Church, shapes us.



## Review

### Scripture

*“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to observe all that I have given you. Know that I am with you forever and always.”* (adapted from Matthew 28:19–20)

### Prayer

*Lord God, each day is a new chance for you to make me into one of your disciples. Help me to stay close to you through prayer and to share your love with others. Amen.*

### Chapter Highlights

- “Christians are made, not born.”
- We are called to be disciples.
- The four pillars of our faith are the Creed, the sacraments, the moral life, and prayer.

### Terms to Remember

Christian    commandment    disciple    Nicene Creed    sacrament    saint

### React

One way I can follow the Creed this week is:

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One way I can participate in the sacraments this week is:

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One way I can live out the moral life this week is:

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One way I can communicate with God through prayer this week is:

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### At Home

Discuss this question with a grown-up. Write your answer.

*Name a person you think is a role model of faith. What can we learn from him or her?*

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