



The 5 Minute Game Plan

A Catechesis Supplement for Youth Sports

Complete Winter Edition - All Grades

Created by Peter Piscitello, Executive Director, CYO of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties.

5 Minute Game Plan

August 1, 2013

Dear CYO Coaches,

Greetings and welcome to a new year of CYO Sports! We're thrilled you have taken the time out of your busy schedule to be involved in such a fantastic ministry; by coaching our youth and helping them to develop as persons and athletes, you are making an impact that is larger than you probably even imagine. We sincerely appreciate your efforts to this end and look forward to working with you in the coming season.

The most important part of developing any child is helping that child to grow in his or her relationship with God. With that in mind, we have created the enclosed materials. Titled *The 5 Minute Game Plan*, the goal is for this to be exactly that: a 5-10 minute supplement to CYO practices that creates a curriculum for faith formation in our CYO. We have worked our Archdiocesan schools and School of Religion programs to create a program that supplements the specific themes and curriculum addressed in your child's primary faith formation. Of course, we have also taken into account that their primary formation begins at home. On this page and the one that follows, I will provide an overview of your role as a coach, and instructions on how to implement this new requirement within your team.

First, a quick word of encouragement. We understand that the majority of our parents weren't theology majors or may not even be comfortable praying in front of a group of children. I can assure you that this program has been developed so that it can be implemented by anyone. Simply follow these instructions and you will be on your way to a truly fulfilling addition to practice each week. It's as simple as following each week's lesson in this packet.

As you may have already noticed, this packet is split into a couple of parts. First you will find an overview of the entire year that includes the theme, scripture and saint for each week. Then you will find the individual "lessons." The requirement is simple: at your team's first practice of each week, you will need to begin practice with the lesson for that week. Lessons begin with the second week of preseason and go until the end of the season for each sport. Within each lesson, you will find the following:

- Theme: based on age-appropriate themes from school and religious education curriculum
- Scripture: a weekly scripture passage based on the theme
- Saint or Topic: a relevant Saint or topic that helps convey the scripture and theme
- Discussion Question: 1-2 Questions that help connect the theme to individual and team
- Practice Plan: A tip for coaches on how to make this theme come alive during practice
- Prayer: A prayer that will close the lesson and lead into practice
- Post-Practice Prayer: A simple reminder of the week's theme and closing prayer

That's it, a full lesson that should take 5-10 minutes depending on discussion and is fully scripted. We also encourage you to involve the children by having them take turns reading the scripture each week and say the prayers. Either the head coach or assistant should usually lead the saint/topic and discussion, but you can simply read the material on the page. You can certainly take some time to prepare prior to practice if you desire, but the program is designed so that you can simply take the lesson to practice and use it without preparation. We have also

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encouraged parishes to adjust practice times so that this time is “added” to the allotted time and not a part of your hour or so of practice time. Remember that this only takes place at the first practice of each week, though following up during other practices that week is a great idea.

Again, we appreciate your time as a volunteer coach and your implementation of this new requirement. Our goal is not to add to anything to your already busy schedule, but rather to create a program that can be easily implemented each week to greatly enrich the spiritual element of practice and supplement a child’s primary faith formation curriculum. As you probably already understand, the impact that sports has on children is dramatic and can be very positive; by connecting sports to concrete topics from scripture and theology, we hope to draw parallels that can help transform lives and deepen the relationship each child has with God. We hope that you’ll find this process to be fruitful and rewarding for your children and you as a coach.

Of course, if you have any questions do not hesitate to contact your Athletic Director or our CYO Office. Our office can be reached at (913) 384-7377 or by email at admin@cyojwa.org. More information about this initiative, including lessons for all ages and seasons, is available online at www.cyojwa.org. Best wishes this season and know I will be praying for you and your team!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter J. Piscitello". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "J".

Peter J Piscitello
Executive Director, CYO

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Season and Practice Week Number



SAMPLE PLAN WITH INSTRUCTIONS

Fall Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: The Trinity

Scripture: 1 John 5:7-9

Scripture length may differ based on curriculum in schools (if a specific verse is required in school, entire verse was generally placed here)

Read aloud by coach or child

"And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth. There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son."

Saintly Example: Saint Patrick

Coach reads written script aloud to team.

Saint Patrick is most well known for his work teaching the people of Ireland about Jesus, but he also gave us important teachings about the Holy Trinity. When he was teaching people in Ireland, he used a local plant called a Shamrock to teach about the trinity. He showed that the Shamrock has three leaves, but is still one plant; just like the Holy Trinity has three persons (God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit) but is still one. The people of Ireland were so inspired by St. Patrick's teachings, they asked to be baptized and have carried their love of Jesus and Mary all over the world! St. Patrick was known as a courageous man who worked his entire life to help people grow closer to God and to know about the Holy Trinity.

Discussion:

Read each bullet point aloud to generate discussion. Try to get 2-3 answers each or more if time and participation allows.

- Explain that the sign of the cross is a constant reminder of the Holy Trinity. As we say "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we remember that God is three persons and are praying that He will guide us in our prayer!
- St. Patrick used the shamrock to teach people about God, what are some ways that you can show that you believe and God and teach others about God at school and during our sports season?

Coaches are encouraged to try to get different kids involved with discussion each week so that all are being included in discussions through year.

Practice Plan

- Ask the kids to remember the Holy Trinity every time they make the sign of the cross and to think about ways they can help spread the gospel like St. Patrick did.

A tip or theme for the coach to consider in order to connect theme through practice. Don't read aloud.

Prayer

- Jesus, we thank you for bringing us together as a team in this new season. We pray that during all our practices and games this year that we can put you first and remember you in all that we do. Help us to be safe and to have fun this year. We ask this as we pray together the Glory Be prayer: Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen.

Prayer can be read by coach or by child and ends "before practice" portion.

End of Practice: Remind kids about the example of St. Patrick and ask them to think about the Holy Trinity every time they make the sign of the cross. Say the following prayer to close practice:

Reminder of theme by coach.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Patrick, Pray for us!

Closing prayer read by coach or child.

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Winter Outline

- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** Loving God Above All **Scripture:** Deut 6:5-7 **Saint:** St. Francis of Assisi
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** God's Mercy **Scripture:** Luke 7:11-17 **Saint:** St. Peter
- Preseason Week 3 - **Theme:** Confession **Scripture:** Luke 15: 11-24 **Saint:** St. Augustine
- Preseason Week 4 - **Theme:** Signs & Miracles **Scripture:** Luke 6:6-11 **Saint:** St. Philomena
- Preseason Week 5 - **Theme:** Spiritual Works of Mercy **Scripture:** Matthew 25: 31-36, 40 **Saint:** None (List Spiritual Works of Mercy)
- Preseason Week 6 - **Theme:** Forgiveness **Scripture:** Luke 5:17-26 **Saint:** St. Maximillian Kolbe
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** Divine Mercy **Scripture:** None - Discuss Communion of Saints and Pray Divine Mercy **Saint:** St. Faustina Kowalska
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** Corporal Works of Mercy **Scripture:** Luke 4:38-41 **Saint:** None (List Corporal Works of Mercy)
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** Caring for the Sick **Scripture:** Luke 5:12-16 **Saint:** Fr. Damian of Molokai
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** Feeding the Hungry **Scripture:** Isaiah 58:10-11 **Saint:** St. Katherine Drexel
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** Peace and Justice **Scripture:** Matthew 7:12 **Saint:** St. Vincent de Paul
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** Service to Others **Scripture:** 1 Peter 4:10-11 **Saint:** John Bosco
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** Living Holy Lives **Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 4:7 **Saint:** St. Dominic Savio

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3rd Grade - Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: Loving God Above All

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:5-7

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

Saintly Example: St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis is a great example of how we are called to live our life: by loving God above all things. St. Francis was born into a wealthy family and had all the material things he could want. Yet Francis always found himself wanting more from life. Finally, when he began to listen to God's call, he realized what he was meant to do. He left his life of wealth behind and set out with absolutely nothing, only the clothes he had on. From that moment on he lived a life full of joy and happiness because he loved God above everything else and always put God first. As a result, God blessed St. Francis and he began the Franciscan order of monks. He is also known as the patron saint of animals, because he loved them and was said to be able to communicate with them better than anyone.

Discussion:

- What things can we do to make sure we put God first in our lives each day?
- How do we put God first in our sports practices and games?

Practice Plan: Focus on making God the focus of practice today. Remind the kids often that He is always with us, no matter what we're doing. Remind them that He is present here at practice and ask the kids to glorify Him by trying their absolute best.

Prayer:

- Dear God, you teach us to put you first each day, in everything that we do. Help us to put you first at home, at school and in practice. May we glorify you by trying our hardest in everything we do and giving thanks for your many blessings. Teach us how we can put you first in our lives by giving up things that aren't that important or by making sure we pray often. Bless us with a safe and fun practice, we pray. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind children to put God first in everything they do. As they head home, remind them that prayer is a great way to learn from God how they can make him the center of each day. Close with the following prayer:

- Father, you give us everything we have. Help us to put you first in all things as we remember you always and pray the prayer you taught us: Our Father, Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Francis of Assisi, Pray for us!

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3rd Grade - Sports Preseason Week 2

Theme: God's Mercy

Scripture: Luke 7:11-17

"Soon afterward he went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has visited his people!' And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country."

Saintly Example: St. Peter

St. Peter is a wonderful example of God's Mercy and a great figure in our Church. As Christ was being punished and died on the cross, Peter denied that he knew him three times so that he could protect himself. Yet God knew that Peter loved Jesus and so he showed him great mercy and forgave him when he repented of his sins. Though St. Peter made mistakes like anyone else, with great mercy and love Christ made St. Peter the first leader of the Catholic Church. St. Peter is considered the first "Pope". He is a great example of faith in God and how God can pour out His mercy on all of us.

Discussion:

- Who needs God's mercy and love? (Answer: All of us!) How does God show His mercy in the gospel story we read about Jesus raising the young man from death?
- How can we show other's God's love and mercy in sports? How do you think Jesus would want us to treat others with this in mind?

Practice Plan: Highlight during practice ways in which participants can be recipients of God's mercy. Remind them that one of the great sacraments is confession, which allows God to pour out his mercy upon us when we tell him our sins. If any disagreements happen, remind the kids about God's mercy and love and that we are called to forgive each other.

Prayer:

- Lord, we thank you for your great mercy and love for us. We thank you that we may be at this practice and participating with our friends in this game. Help us to forgive others as you forgive us and may we always be grateful for the times when you have showed us mercy and saved us from sin. Bless our practice with safety and fun today so that we can learn and work to the best of our abilities. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind children that God is all loving and merciful. Reinforce last week's lesson about putting God first in their life and tell them to remember that they can ask God for forgiveness when they sin or pray to him for help when things go wrong. Close with the following:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Peter, Pray for us!

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3rd Grade - Sports Preseason Week 3

Theme: Confession

Scripture: Luke 15:11-24

“And he said, “There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.’ And he arose and came to this father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to make merry.”

Saintly Example: St. Augustine

Augustine was not a very good person when he was young, he did not listen to God and did lots of things he was not supposed to. But God loved Augustine just like He loves everyone and one day Augustine had a conversion. St. Augustine stopped living a life of sin and committed himself to God. He confessed his sins to God and asked for forgiveness. God heard him and had mercy on him. Then St. Augustine became a great saint! He was very smart and began using his intelligence to write great books about God. He became a priest and then a bishop. He is a great example of how all of us can ask forgiveness for our sins and become closer to God.

Discussion:

- When we go to confession God cleanses us of our sins so that we can live holier lives. How might this help us in sports? If we aren't weighed down by sin, can we be more free to focus on sports? Do we treat teammates better? When we are spiritually "fit" we can perform better physically!

Practice Plan: Encourage all the kids on the team to go to confession. In fact, your team might even be practicing at a time when confession is offered at your church, or you could ask a priest to come to practice and offer confession somewhere in the gym during practice! What an amazing gift this would be to have a sacrament available for kids who could excuse themselves from drills for a minute to go to confession!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you forgive us our sins in the great sacrament of confession. Have mercy on us and help us to be cleansed of our sins so that we can lead more holy lives each day. As we strive for holiness, help us to do our absolute best in everything, especially here at this practice. Bless all our teammates and coaches with a safe and fun week. Amen.

End of Practice: Encourage the kids to go to confession and to forgive others when they do wrong to them. Then close with the following prayer: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever, a world without end. Amen. St. Augustine, Pray for Us!"

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3rd Grade - Sports Preseason Week 4

Theme: Signs and Miracles

Scripture: Luke 6:6-11

“On another sabbath, when he entered the synagogue and taught, a man was there whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Come and stand here.’ And he rose and stood there. And Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?’ And he looked around on them all, and said to him, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he did so, and his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.”

Saintly Example: St. Philomena

Not much is known about Philomena's life except that she died a martyr very long ago, around 300 A.D. as a young girl. Yet we know that St. Philomena is responsible for great miracles since a shrine was dedicated to her by a priest in Italy. That priest was struck with great joy when he heard about her and since he created this shrine, people have been cured of cancer, healed of wounds and even had their heart problems stop! Many saintly people have since had great devotions to her and people often ask for her intercession while praying a rosary or a novena, which is a prayer that repeats over nine days.

Discussion:

- Jesus did many miracles during His ministry here on earth. What can these miracles teach us? Do they help our faith by reminding us that God can do anything?
- Many times great comebacks or plays in sports are called "miracles." Can you think of any? (Coaches might need to help) Why do we call these miracles? Could these be a sign in sports that if we believe in God then He can do anything? If we can make great plays in sports or come back from being down many points, how much greater are the things God can do in our lives?

Practice Plan: Remind the kids that if they try their hardest, God can make anything possible. At the same time, let them know that God is always watching over us and that we can always pray to him and ask him to heal a sick friend or family member. Reinforce these things during practice.

Prayer:

- Lord, we love you with all our heart. You worked great miracles during your life on earth and through your saints. Help us to believe and increase our faith through these miraculous events. Bless and protect all those who need our prayers or who might need a miracle. Teach us how to give our best effort and have fun during practice this week. Help us to pray always. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids that God works miracles great and small each day. One of the greatest gifts He gives us is the Eucharist. Encourage them to pray to God if they have family or friends in need or sick, for God can do all things. Close with the following prayer:

- Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Saint Philomena, Pray for Us!

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3rd Grade - Sports Preseason Week 5

Theme: Spiritual Works of Mercy

Scripture: Matthew 25: 31-36, 40

"When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my bretheren, you did it to me.'

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

Admonishing the sinner
Instructing the ignorant
Counseling the doubtful
Comforting the sorrowful
Bearing wrongs patiently
Forgiving all injuries
Praying for the living and the dead

Discussion:

- How can living out the spiritual works of mercy help us to be closer to God? How can they help others become closer to God?
- How do these apply to our participation in sports? Which ones might we remember during practices and games?

Practice Plan: Incorporate these principles into your coaching, whether it's a reminder to "bear wrongs patiently" when you feel a call goes against your team in a game, or to "counsel the doubtful" if any of the kids has a doubt about their faith that comes up in practice or game - this could even apply on a smaller scale to being positive and alleviating doubts kids might have about athletic performance.

Prayer:

- Lord of Love and Mercy, help us to remember the Spiritual Works of Mercy each day, so that we may grow closer to you and help others to come to know you more fully at home, at school and on our team. Teach us to always treat others with love and respect, remembering that everyone is a child of God. Bless our efforts during practice and grant us a safe week. Bless our families and friends this week as well. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids of the Spiritual Works of Mercy and that God wants them to always lead people to Him. Ask them to remember these lessons in sports as well as at home and school. Close with the following prayer.

- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever, a world without end. Amen.

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3rd Grade - Sports Preseason Week 6

Theme: Forgiveness

Scripture: Luke 5:17-26

"On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they sought to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith he said, 'Man, your sins are forgiven you.' And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, 'Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?' When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, 'Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say 'Rise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins' - he said to the man who was paralyzed - 'I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home.' And immediately he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, 'We have seen strange things today.'"

Saintly Example: St. Maximilian Kolbe

St. Maximilian Kolbe was a Franciscan priest in Poland. As a young priest, he traveled the world and worked to open monasteries and encourage people to pray the rosary, starting a movement of people devoted to the rosary he called the "Knights of the Immaculata." During World War II, he was taken prisoner for being a Catholic priest and taken to the concentration camp known as Auschwitz. There he offered himself to face death instead of another man. While forced to starve, St. Maximilian Kolbe was actually extremely joyful, and led his fellow prisoners in singing songs of praise to God! The guards in the prison were amazed at his faith and his confidence that he would soon be with God in heaven. He encouraged his fellow prisoners to forgive those who wronged them and to praise God always.

Discussion:

- Great saints and even Jesus Himself were known to forgive those who did harm to them, even unto death. If they can forgive, we must follow this example every day! How often are we called to forgive those who do wrong to us? (Answer: Always.)
- How does this apply to our team? Are there times when we must forgive teammates or opponents? Do we tell them we forgive them?

Practice Plan: Reinforce the importance to a team of practicing forgiveness. If we don't forgive each other when we sin, our team will be broken and hurt. But if we forgive each other through the year, our team can compete together well. Relate this to the importance of each of us forgiving others as Jesus taught in our everyday lives.

Prayer: Jesus, you forgive our sins in the sacrament of Confession and you taught us to forgive others through your ministry and the lives of your saints. Help us to always be forgiving and loving in our interactions with our friends, family and even those against us. In sports, help us to forgive those who might hurt us verbally or physically. Help us to remember that we are all one body in Christ. Bless our team and lead us this week. Amen.

End of Practice: Pray the following prayer: Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Maximilian Kolbe, Pray for us!

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3rd Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 1

Theme: Divine Mercy

Devine Mercy Prayer: The Devine Mercy Chaplet is a prayer based on the vision and prayers of St. Faustina Kowalski. It is prayed on the traditional rosary using different prayers on the beads. The Chaplet begins by reciting the *Our Father, Hail Mary and Apostles Creed*. Then the *Eternal Father* prayer is prayed on the traditional *Our Father* beads and the *For the sake of His sorrowful Passion* is prayed on the traditional *Hail Mary* beads. Pray a decade with the kids using the prayers below (like the rosary, the prayer can be split by leader/group as noted by the / below):

Leader Begins with *Eternal Father* prayer: "Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ / In atonement for our sins and those of the whole world."

Ten "Hail Mary" Beads: "For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, / have mercy on us and on the whole world."

Conclude with *Holy God* repeated 3 times: "Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, / have mercy on us and on the whole world."

Saintly Example: St. Faustina Kowalski

Saint Faustina was a Polish nun who lived between 1905 and 1938. She received visions of Christ throughout her life and wrote about having conversations with Him in her diary. One of these visions was the image of the Divine Mercy, where she noted that Jesus appeared wearing a white robe, with red and pale white rays coming from His heart. She was told to have the image painted and this is now the Divine Mercy image we can find in our churches throughout the world. St. Faustina's prayers also became the Divine Mercy prayer you learned above. She was known to be a holy and cheerful nun to those around her, many of whom knew nothing about her visions of Christ until after her death.

Discussion:

- God clearly wants to teach us and show us His mercy, which means treating others with love and forgiveness, as well as praying for them and remembering the "Spiritual works of Mercy and the Corporal Works of Mercy. How do we see his mercy in our daily lives? In our sports?

Practice Plan: Remember the concept of Mercy and apply it to your team and practice. Take a look at the Spiritual and Corporal works of mercy if necessary as a refresher, then determine how you can apply those to teach young athletes. For example, comforting the sorrowful is a Spiritual Work of mercy. Practice this, even if it's just comforting an injured team member or encouraging team members to show comfort for a teammate who experiences a loss during the season.

Prayer: Father of Mercy, we thank you for the lessons of mercy and love which you have showed us through your son and the many saints who have followed you throughout the ages. Bless our team on this day and help us to be examples of your love and mercy whenever we can. Help us to learn how we can show mercy and follow you. Make us joyful like St. Faustina and help us to learn from her. Help us to always learn to know you better, Lord, in all that we do this week. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team about the Divine Mercy chaplet and encourage them to research it and learn it, as they will need to know it in school. Then close with the following prayer: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Saint Faustina, Pray for Us!

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3rd Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 2

Theme: Corporal Works of Mercy

Scripture: Luke 4:38-41

“And he rose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they besought him for her. And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her; and immediately she rose and served them. Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.”

Corporal Works of Mercy: The Corporal Works of Mercy are 7 specific ways in which we can help our "neighbors" by showing them God's love and mercy:

To feed the hungry;
To give drink to the thirsty;
To clothe the naked;
To shelter the homeless;
To visit the sick;
To visit the imprisoned;
To bury the dead.

Discussion:

- In what ways can we practice the Corporal Works of Mercy above in our daily lives? Are there small ways to help clothe those who need clothing, or to feed those who are hungry?
- What about as a team? What ideas do we have to live out one of these works? (Coaches, See below)

Practice Plan: Put one of these Works of Mercy into practice. Preferably by utilizing an idea that comes from a team member, arrange a plan to do one of these things. Perhaps the easiest would be to have a small canned food drive within your team, volunteering to collect the food as a coach and donate. Or perhaps a used clothing drive. If one of your schools is doing this, work as a team to donate as much as possible to the school from this team. Work to have the kids come up with the idea so it's them putting this into practice.

Prayer:

- Father, we learn of Jesus healing the sick and you teach us the Corporal Works of Mercy so that we can live out the lessons of Christ in today's world. Help us to do this as a team through the ideas we have discussed and the actions we have planned. May our compassion for others help us to bring Your love into the world. Grant that we may have a fun and safe week of practice and bless our efforts to show your mercy and love to the world. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind kids about whatever initiative you have come up with to live out a Corporal Work of Mercy. Encourage them to really seek out ways to follow these works in their daily lives. Then close with a decade of the Divine Mercy Chaplet as learned last week.

5 Minute Game Plan

3rd Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 3

Theme: Caring for the Sick

Scripture: Luke 5:12-16

"While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and besought him, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.' And he stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean.' And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one; but 'go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to the people. But so much the more the report went abroad concerning him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed."

Saintly Example: Fr. Damien of Molokai

Father Damien of Molokai was a priest from Belgium in Europe who lived in the 1800's. He was sent on a mission to Hawaii to help evangelize and care for those in need. After several years there, he made the decision to go to the island of Molokai and tend to a group of people there with leprosy. Leprosy affects people by causing lots of painful skin sores and weakening muscles. It can be caught by coming into contact with someone who has leprosy, so in many places in history people with the disease are outcast and made to live in groups away from most people. Like Jesus, Fr. Damien had compassion for these people and wanted to share the love of God with them. He built hospitals and cared for the sick, particularly the children. Eventually, Fr. Damien got leprosy himself and died. He taught many people about God and cared for many sick, just as Jesus taught.

Discussion:

- What ways have you (the children) cared for those who are sick? What did Jesus teach about caring for the sick? In what ways can all of us be like the example Fr. Damien and care for the sick?
- How does this apply to injuries in sports? How do you think Jesus wants us to treat an opposing player who gets injured during a game?

Practice Plan: Encourage the kids to care for the sick and make this a team activity through the year as a team member comes down with illness. It can be as simple as having the team make/sign a card for one of their teammates when that child is sick and unable to attend practice. Also apply this to injuries suffered during games, assuring the kids know how to react teammates and opponents who are injured, especially by praying for them during practice.

Prayer:

- *First, ask for any special intentions from the kids for family or friends who are sick.
- Heavenly Father, you teach us to care for the sick and gave us the example of St. Damien of Molokai and all the great saints who cared for those who were sick. We ask that you remember now those for whom we offer this prayer, all our family and friends who are sick. Help us to care for them as Jesus taught us. Bless our practice that we may be kept safe from injury and bless all those in our classes and on opposing teams that they may be healthy and safe this season. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids to pray for all those who are sick and especially the special intentions mentioned prior to the prayer at the beginning of practice. Explain that our Mother Mary can often be a great source of intercession, just like our own mothers who care for us when sick. Close with prayer: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Saint Damien of Molokai, Pray for Us!"

5 Minute Game Plan

3rd Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 4

Theme: Feeding the Hungry

Scripture: Isaiah 58:10-11

"If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire with good things, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."

Saintly Example: St. Katherine Drexel

St. Katherine Drexel was born in 1858 to a very wealthy family in Philadelphia. She could have had anything she wanted and lived a life away from the poor and oppressed, but she loved God and chose to give herself to the service of others through her life. She founded an order of nuns dedicated to helping the African and Native Americans living in the United States, particularly those in most need. She donated all of her money she inherited to these works and helped to open schools and missions across the country. She was canonized a Saint by Pope John Paul II in the year 2000 and became only the 2nd American born saint.

Discussion:

- In what ways do we help feed the hungry? Do our parishes and schools have ways to help feed those in need? What are some ways we can help others going forward?

Practice Plan: Encourage the kids to help "feed the hungry" by looking for ways they can help those in most need. Whether it's donating food in a school or parish food drive, or sharing a snack with a friend who is hungry, there are many ways each child can make a small (or large) difference even at a young age. Make this mentality of helping others a focus of practice by pointing out ways that each child can help his or her teammates during practice drills or plays.

Prayer:

- Lord, you teach us to feed the hungry and care for all those in need. Help us to follow your example and learn to give of ourselves to others both from our material goods and from our own service. May we be devoted to helping others in our home, our school and on this team. Bless our practices and game this week, keep us safe and help us to have fun by doing all things in Your name. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind kids to help those in need and encourage them to treat all their friends and classmates with love and respect. Close with a decade of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, per previous lesson. Offer this decade for those in most need of food on this day.

5 Minute Game Plan

3rd Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 5

Theme: Peace and Justice

Scripture: Matthew 7:12

“So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.”

Saintly Example: St. Vincent de Paul

St. Vincent de Paul was born in France and became a priest in the year 1600. He quickly took to caring for those most in need from infants to the elderly and was known for many works of charity during his life. Though he was honored even during his life for all his generous works, he always remained humble and gave glory to God. He is perhaps most known for his works caring for the poor and for prisoners. He helped to create hospitals and shelters for those in need and devoted his entire life to these causes.

Discussion:

- Do you (children) know the "Golden Rule"? (Do unto others as you would have them do to you.) Does that sound a lot like the scripture passage we read above? Do you try to follow this rule?
- How do you think this scripture applies to sports and to this team? Does it affect the way you treat teammates? What about opponents?

Practice Plan: Consider how you as a coach can promote the virtue of Justice in your team's practices and games. This can be as simple as reminding them of the Golden Rule or encouraging them to build relationships with their teammates and have compassion for both their teammates and opponents. Consider how you approach the topic of opposing teams and assure this meets with instilling the virtue of justice in young children.

Prayer:

- Jesus, you taught us by your actions and words to love our neighbor and care always for those in need. Help us to care for our brothers and sisters in Christ and to show them your love in our own actions and words. Help us to treat others how we would want them to treat us. May we be good teammates and opponents this week in practices and our game. Bless our efforts and help us to do as you wish, Lord. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team about doing unto others as you would want them to do and encourage them to remember that at home, in school and with the team. Remind them to think about what Jesus taught us about how to treat people. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen. St. Vincent de Paul, Pray for Us!

5 Minute Game Plan

3rd Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 6

Theme: Service to Others

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:10-11

“As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

Saintly Example: St. John Bosco

St. John Bosco was blessed with dreams throughout his life that helped him to understand God's will and learn God's mission for him. He was an Italian priest who lived in the 1800's and spent most of his life ministering to poor and neglected children - often those who were in serious trouble or were disadvantaged. He focused on helping these children through great love, rather than punishment. Many people in his town thought he was crazy for wanting to help such troubled or needy kids, but worked hard to listen to God's will and care for the children he was called to care for.

Discussion:

- Our scripture today teaches that God has given each of us talents that we are called to use to serve others. What might these talents be? Can you (children) think of any talents you have that God may be calling you to use to serve others?
- How does this apply to our team? What talents do each of us have that serve the good of the entire team? Are some people better at different skills than others? How can we serve others on our team each time we practice and play?

Practice Plan: Focus on the idea of players individual "gifts" or skills and praise them during practices and the game this week for being talents given to them from God. Pick out individual children and point out a skill they have during practice that can help the team. Help them to understand how they can use this particular talent to serve the good of the team and help their teammates. Use this example to help show them how they can serve others in their lives in other ways.

Prayer:

- Heavenly Father, you have given us each unique and special talents and gifts that we can share with others. Help us to understand how we can use these gifts to serve our family and friends. Help us to understand what skills you have given us on our team so that we can use these skills to serve our teammates. May you help us to have fun this week using the talents you have given us and to always be grateful for whatever skills you bless us with, understanding that all of us will have different talents we can use to serve others. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind them to think about the skills you have pointed out in each child during practice and how they can help the team. Then encourage them to think about how they can use their talents and gifts to serve others in their family or community at home, school or elsewhere. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen. St. John Bosco, Pray for Us!

5 Minute Game Plan

3rd Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 7

Theme: Living Holy Lives

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:7

“For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.”

Saintly Example: St. Dominic Savio

Dominic Savio was 12 years old when he met St. John Bosco and helped to organize a group of boys who would hope to become priests and follow John Bosco's mission work. Dominic was known as an exceptionally bright and talented boy who remained humble and focused on God. He was known for his amazing devotion to prayer and holiness as young as five years old! Among the boys at his school, he treated all of them with great love and worked daily to help them to avoid sin and lead holy lives. When his friends would sin or begin to fight, Dominic was almost always there to remind them of God's presence. He lived a holy life and was an example not only to other boys and girls but also to those much older. When he was 15, he got tuberculosis and had to be sent home from the school where he studied and worked with John Bosco. He kept his amazing faith even when he died of the illness. He was named a saint and became known world-wide for his extraordinary love of God.

Discussion:

- St. Dominic Savio was not much older than you when he created a group of boys to study under John Bosco and become priests. What does his example of prayer and devotion to God teach us about how we should act as young boys and girls?
- God calls us to holiness, how do we try to be holy each day at home? During school? What things can we do to strive for holiness during practice?

Practice Plan: Focus on how "living holy lives" can begin at practice. Help the children to understand that by setting the example of prayer at practice, they can become better praying on their own. Or by listening to their coaches, they can learn how to better listen to parents at home. Think of ways to help children see that by growing in physical skills at practice, they can learn how to grow in other skills and become better students and children of God.

Prayer:

- Lord, you give us the example of St. Dominic Savio as a child who demonstrated great holiness and love for his friends and family. Help us to be like him and to treat all our friends at school, our teammates and our families with great love and respect, always striving to lead others to heaven. May you help us to lead "extraordinary" lives of holiness so that we may glorify you in all that we do. Bless us in this practice and help us to learn how to become better athletes as well as better friends, brothers, sisters and children. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids about the example of St. Dominic Savio and encourage them to strive for holiness. Close practice with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Maximilian Kolbe, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade Year - Winter Seasons

- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** Our Father **Scripture:** Luke 11:1-4 **Saint:** St. Luke the Evangelist
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** Prayer **Scripture:** Luke 11:5-8 **Saint:** St. Benedict
- Preseason Week 3 - **Theme:** Prayer **Scripture:** Luke 11:9-13 **Saint:** St. Scholastica
- Preseason Week 4 - **Theme:** Spontaneous Prayer **Scripture:** Matthew 18:20 **Saint:** St. Ignatius
- Preseason Week 5 - **Theme:** The Moral Teachings **Scripture:** None **Saint:** St. Dominic
- Preseason Week 6 - **Theme:** Beatitudes **Scripture:** Matthew 5: 1-14, 21-26, 38-48 **Saint:** None
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** Beatitudes **Scripture:** Matthew 6: 1-26 **Saint:** None
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** Beatitudes **Scripture:** Matthew 7: 1-5, 7-11, 15-27 **Saint:** None
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** Living a Moral Life **Scripture:** Philippians 4:8 **Saint:** St. Frances Xavier Cabrini
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** Making Mistakes (Sin) **Scripture:** 1 John 1:8-9 **Saint:** St. Mary Magdalene
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** Sacraments **Scripture:** Ephesians 3:8-12 **Saint:** St. Kateri Tekakwitha
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** The Eucharist **Scripture:** John 6:35 **Saint:** St. Andrew Kim Taigon
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** Heaven **Scripture:** Revelation 22:4-5 **Saint:** St. Charles Lwanga

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: Our Father

Scripture: Luke 11:1-4

He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ² And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread; ⁴ and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation."

Saintly Example: St. Luke the Evangelist

St. Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, so he holds a very important place in our Church history. Many of the events we hear about from Jesus' life come from what Luke wrote. For example, Luke's gospel is where we find the story of the Annunciation, Mary's Magnificat, her visit to Elizabeth, the Presentation and many of the miracles Jesus performed. Two of our most well known prayers come from Luke's gospel, as we know the words to the Hail Mary and the Our Father because Luke wrote them down long ago.

Discussion:

- Jesus taught us to pray the Our Father prayer, but there are many other prayers we can say. Do you have a favorite prayer? (See if you can get all the kids to say their favorite prayer to say - perhaps even ask for suggestions of prayers to say at practice).
- What is the importance of praying at practice and before games? When else is a good time to pray?

Practice Plan: The important thing here is encouraging the practice of prayer in the kids lives. Whether it's the Our Father, Hail Mary or any other prayer, it's important that the children gain an understanding of how important prayer is through the CYO experience. Really highlight the prayers at the beginning and end of practice, reminding the kids that when they pray they are truly talking to God.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, you taught your apostles to pray and you teach us how to pray so that we might speak to you and have a relationship with you. Hear our prayers at practice, at home and at school and help us to learn to pray always. Bless our team with a safe and fun practice today; we pray that we may learn new skills and grow in our relationship with you through our participation in this sport. We ask all this through Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Reiterate the importance of prayer to the kids and tell them that the team will be praying before and after practices and games, but they can pray any time they want. Close with the following prayer:

- "Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Luke, Pray for us!"

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 2

Theme: Prayer

Scripture: Luke 11:5-8

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'? ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

Saintly Example: St. Benedict

St. Benedict is the founder of the Catholic Church's monastic system, meaning that he was the first person to create a monastery where monks live together and worship God. In fact, St. Benedict wrote the original rule book for religious life, called the *Rule of St. Benedict*. He was so holy that people came from all around Italy to join his monastery and learn from him. His Benedictine order of priests and monks spread worldwide and even settled in Atchison, Kansas where today students can go to Benedictine College and get a Catholic education. St. Benedict understood and taught that the most important teachings were the Word of God itself in the bible, so the prayers Benedictine monks still pray today are centered on scripture, especially the Psalms. He taught that studying scripture was very important for every person so they could come to know God more fully.

Discussion:

- St. Benedict focused on the importance of reading scripture. Do you read from the bible? Does anyone have a favorite part of the bible to read?
- How do you think reading the bible can help you when you play sports? Do you think you can learn things that help you to prepare for competition? Help you at school or at home? (Reference: 1 Cor 9:24 - "Run so as to win")

Practice Plan: Continue to focus on the importance of prayer and scripture in the lives of the children. Use the example of saints like St. Benedict to demonstrate how important this is. If you are familiar with scripture, use this as an opportunity to share some of your favorite verses that might apply to practice or competition (working hard, striving for virtue, etc).

Prayer

- Lord, you gave us your Word in scripture so that we might draw close to you. Help us to follow the example of great saints like St. Benedict, so that we might understand how we can get to know you better and learn about you. In our practice, help us to strive to do everything to the best of our ability and to praise God in all that we do. Teach us all that you want us to learn on this day and help us to grow. Bless our families, our friends and this team. Amen.

End of Practice: Reinforce the importance of reading scripture as St. Benedict taught. Encourage the kids to look up saints like Benedict or any others and learn from them. Close with the following prayer:

- "Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Benedict, Pray for us!"

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 3

Theme: Prayer

Scripture: Luke 11:9-13

And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

¹⁰ For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Saintly Example: St. Scholastica

St. Scholastica was the sister of St. Benedict and was a very holy woman herself. When St. Benedict founded his monastery at Monte Cassino, St. Scholastica founded a group of nuns about 5 miles away from St. Benedict. St. Scholastica had great faith in God and knew that He listened to prayers. The story goes that once a year she and St. Benedict would meet in the middle of their monasteries for a day of prayer and reflection - often discussing at great length serious spiritual matters. One year as they were getting old, St. Scholastica begged St. Benedict to stay overnight so they could continue talking and praying together the next day. When he said he must return to his monastery, St. Scholastica began to pray to God. Almost immediately, the sky darkened and a great storm blew in so that Benedict could not leave! He stayed there and they continued having great spiritual conversation through the night. He left the next day and returned home. Three days later, St. Scholastica died and St. Benedict saw her soul ascending to heaven in a vision.

Discussion:

- St. Scholastica had great faith that God would answer her prayers and he often did in wonderful ways! What can we learn from this example? Does God always answer our prayers the way we want Him to?
- What things should we pray for this year during practices and games? Do we have special intentions we want to pray for as a team? (Coaches can encourage kids to form a list of team intentions that are written down and prayed for each practice.)

Practice Plan: Encourage the formation of team intentions and prayer as mentioned above. Focus on the importance of not only praying, but having great faith in God's will, knowing that He will answer prayers in a way that is best for you.

Prayer

- Dear God, we thank you for the wonderful blessing of this team. Hear our prayers both now and always, helping us to understand that you know what is best for everyone and always hear us when we pray. Bless our team and each person here, that we may have a safe and fun practice and grow in our relationship with you. May we perform to the best of our ability and learn new skills. Hear our special intentions and bless our families, friends and teammates. Amen.

End of Practice: Continue to encourage prayer and remind the kids about their prayer intentions, telling them they can always pray for their teammates and the team intentions on their own. Reiterate the importance of forming this relationship with God, as it's the most important part of sports and every other part our lives! Close with the following prayer:

- All Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen. St. Scholastica, Pray for Us!

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 4

Theme: Spontaneous Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 18:20

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Saintly Example: St. Ignatius

St. Ignatius of Loyola was a proud and successful soldier in the Spanish army who fought against the French in the 1500's. When injuries from battle left him recovering and unable to fight, he began to read about the lives of the great saints. It is said he experienced a vision and he developed a great fervor for becoming a soldier of the Catholic faith. He began to spend a great deal of time in prayer and study. He also began writing. Soon he had become recognized for his great spiritual life and writings, some of which became called the Spiritual Exercises and are still famous today. He began a religious order called the Society of Jesus, known as the Jesuits, which became one of the most well known orders in the Catholic Church. St. Ignatius was known for having a very humble lifestyle after his conversion and also for his students who joined his order, many of whom became saints. Pope Francis became the first Jesuit Pope when he was elected Pope in 2013 and is an example of St. Ignatius founding principles, including humility, care for the poor, and a great devotion to prayer.

Discussion:

- Jesus said that where two or more are gathered in his name, He is there. Do we think about this when we're in a group of friends or family? If He is in our midst does this affect how we talk or what we do?
- Spontaneous prayer is simply prayer that is not memorized or in writing (such as the Our Father, or the Rosary). It is prayer that is spoken by a person or group in conversation with God, asking Him for something or praising Him from the heart in whatever words you like. Do you ever pray like this with family or in class? What about at practices?

Practice Plan: Focus on the theme of spontaneous prayer and the presence of Christ wherever a group is gathered in His name. Remind the kids throughout practice to play knowing that God is watching. Encourage the kids to pray as though they are having a conversation with God, speaking to Him from the heart.

Prayer

- Create your own prayer by praying as a team. Lead as coach or have a child lead, then take a couple of minutes to allow them to insert their own intentions or prayers before starting practice.

End of Practice: Remind the kids how important it is to pray and develop a relationship with God; just like they develop friendships and get to know people by talking to them, talking to God is how you form a relationship with Him. Close with another spontaneous prayer, leading as coach or having one of the kids lead whatever prayer they would like.

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 5

Theme: Morality

The Moral Teachings: According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, there are many principles that underscore the teaching of morality. The most basic principles include the understanding of the dignity of each human person as well as the formation of a conscience so that we do moral acts. Since God gave us all the ability to freely choose what we do, it's important that we understand how to be moral people. When we make a decision, we have to think about whether our words or action will be respectful of all other people, whether our intentions are good, and what the consequences are of our action. We should always try to follow God's will, as that will always lead us to good. We can help to form our conscience by praying, reading about holy people and virtues, and continuing to learn our faith throughout our life. Luckily, the Church is always here to guide us and help us make moral decisions!

Saintly Example: St. Dominic

St. Dominic was born in the year 1170 and started the Dominican religious order. Though there is some debate about the beginnings of the Rosary, tradition holds that St. Dominic popularized the praying of the Rosary as we know it when he preached on the prayer in his travels. He was especially devoted to Our Lady and to the idea of contemplative prayer - he worked to focus his order on constant study and training. He understood how important it was for the world to be full of moral people and he helped to convert many people during his travels who had begun to believe false things that led them away from God. The Dominican order is still very well known in the world today, nearly 800 years after St. Dominic founded it!

Discussion:

- How do we make good moral decisions? Do we pray before we make decisions? Do we always try to do "the right thing"?
- How can we practice being good moral people while playing sports? What about cheating? What do we think about cheating and do we think it is moral? What do our consciences tell us about this?

Practice Plan: Encourage the kids to form good morals by considering their conscience and how they should act during practice and games. Help to teach them simple moral principles as it relates to sports, such as why cheating is wrong, how to treat their teammates, coaches and opponents, and what behavior should look like while practicing or playing a sport. Make it a special point to praise actions of individuals on the team that represent good choices throughout practice and the rest of the year.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, you form in us a conscience that helps us to understand good and evil. Be with us and help us to understand how to make good, moral decisions so that we can always follow God's will and treat others with the dignity they deserve. Help us as we continue to learn how to pray and learn about you at home, in school and here with our team. May we always make good decisions in life and in sports. Bless our team and help us to have a fun practice while we learn and grow. Amen.

End of Practice: Continue the theme of Moral development by encouraging the kids to think about whether they are making good moral choices at home and school. Praise the kids for their work during practice and close with the following prayer:

- All Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen. St. Dominic, Pray for Us!

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 6

Theme: Beatitudes

Scripture: Matthew 5: 1-14, 21-26, 38-48

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you"

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

"You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny."

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; ⁴¹ and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you."

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Discussion & Practice Plan: Briefly discuss and consider the Beatitudes, what can we learn from them? What does this teach us about how we should act towards others? How does this apply to our team?

Prayer: Jesus, you gave us the Beatitudes and commandments so that we might understand how you call us to live, speak and act. Bless our team and help us all to consider these beatitudes in our hearts, that they might affect how we act in practices and games. May we always understand our true reward is not in winning games or earning trophies, but in the heavenly kingdom. Grant us a fun practice today and help us to perform to the best of our ability. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind them to think about the beatitudes and look at them on their own. Close with a prayer of the team's choosing (remember that spontaneous prayer is great as well!)

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 1

Theme: Beatitudes

Scripture: Matthew 6: 1-26

“Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ ¶ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

“And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; ²³ but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Discussion & Practice Plan: This section of scripture, which the children will have to know in school, teaches key points about placing our focus on God. It speaks of humility in prayer, the importance of making God our priority and reiterates that our reward is in heaven. Highlight these points after reading it aloud. Ask the kids what they learned from this scripture. Have them share what caught their attention.

Prayer: Lord, you teach us that our true reward is in heaven. Help us to see this always and to put you above all things on earth so that we may one day come to see you face to face in eternal splendor. In our lives here, grant that we may do everything according to your will and to the best of our abilities. May we use the talents you gave us on this team and glorify you through our play. Bless us with a safe and fun practice today. Amen.

End of Practice: Reiterate the importance of learning from the scripture passages we are blessed with. Close with a prayer of a child's choice.

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 2

Theme: Beatitudes

Scripture: Matthew 7: 1-5, 7-11, 15-27

“Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ ¶ You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. ¹⁸ A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will know them by their fruits.

“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’

24 “Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; ²⁵ and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; ²⁷ and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

Discussion & Practice Plan: Work on encouraging all the players in a very positive way during practice.

- Once again God tells us that if we ask in prayer, He will hear us and give us what is good. Have we ever had an experience where we felt like our prayer wasn't answered? Do we have faith that God knows best how to answer our prayers?
- It's important that we worry about our own lives but don't judge the holiness of others. In what ways can we lift up our teammates and help them to grow in holiness instead of judging someone or trying to be "holier" than them?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you teach us to love each other and build our lives upon the rock that is your Church. Teach us how to live according to your will and follow your teachings in our lives. We ask that you bless our practice today that we may commit our team to you, that we may offer our practice and play to you. That when practice is hard today that we may remember that you are watching over us and helping us to grow. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

End of Practice: Close by praising the team for their effort and character. Say the following prayer:

- All Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 3

Theme: Living a Moral Life

Scripture: Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Saintly Example: St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

St. Francis Xavier Cabrini longed to be a nun, but her application to the convent was turned down because of her poor health as a young woman. Still seeking God's will and having gone to school to be a teacher, she started teaching children until her bishop decided God had other plans for her. She was such a good teacher and so faithful to serving God and His people that she was not only allowed to become a nun, but was asked to start her own missionary order! It was called the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. By 1889, she had developed several schools and institutions in Italy and was asked to go on a special mission. She was sent to the United States to care for the Italian immigrants who moved here. Mother Cabrini took on this task with great love and soon developed many hospitals, schools and orphanages to provide for these people. Having become a United States citizen in 1909, she was eventually named the first ever saint from America! By the time she died, she had founded hospitals, schools and orphanages in England, France, Spain, the USA, and South America. Her order helped provide for thousands of people who were in need over three continents.

Discussion:

- St. Frances Xavier Cabrini certainly understood what it meant to live a moral life, devoting herself to serving thousands of children and immigrants through hospitals and schools where she taught them what this meant. What do you think it means to live a moral life? What does a moral person act like?
- How do we extend living a moral life to sports? Does this affect how we practice? Play? How we take care of ourselves and treat our teammates? Opponents?

Practice Plan: Encourage morality by focusing on doing small things within the team - encourage fair play, giving your best effort for God and your teammates, and putting others before yourself.

Prayer

- Father, you give us the example of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the first saint to be a citizen of America, so that we can learn from her selfless love and care for others. Help us to follow this example and to consider what it means to live moral lives. Bless our team and families today and always. May we have a fun practice and grow closer to you through our experience here. Amen.

End of Practice: Find the three best non-athletic things you saw at practice today (e.g. sportsmanship, moral, effort, etc) and praise the team for those things. Encourage them to always pray and develop their relationship with God. Close with the following prayer:

- "Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, Pray for us!"

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 4

Theme: Making Mistakes (Sin)

Scripture: 1 John 1: 8-9

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Saintly Example: St. Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene was living a very sinful life when she first met Jesus. She knew she was not being a very good person and doing many things wrong. Yet Jesus knew what was in her heart and he forgave her for her sins when he met her. From then on she followed Jesus and his disciples, serving them and learning everything she could from Jesus. It must not have been easy for her to turn away from a life of sin and begin to follow God, but she eventually became an example of one of our great saints. Not only did she follow Jesus, but she remained by his side even when most of his other friends left. In fact, Mary was blessed to be the very first person to find out that Jesus had risen from the dead on Easter morning! Upon arriving at the tomb to anoint his earthly body, she could not find it. When she asked the first person she could find where He was, the person spoke and she realized it was Jesus. What an amazing example for the Church that we can all be forgiven of our sins and follow God.

Discussion:

- Every one of us is a sinner, but Jesus teaches us that we can ask Him for forgiveness and follow him. We do this through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Think about what it feels like after you have gone to confession, do you feel good? What about when you forgive someone else for something they have said or done to you? How does it feel to forgive them?
- In sports, we make mistakes just like everyone does in real life. Though these may not be sins, we learn from these mistakes and they help us to get better at that particular activity. What does this teach us about how we can learn from our sins? Practice helps us correct mistakes in sports, what kind of things can we "practice" to get better at avoiding sin and following Jesus?

Practice Plan: This lesson is a great opportunity to talk about mistakes in the context of sports as they relate to the rest of the children's lives. Encourage everyone during practice to learn from their mistakes and practice getting better. Similarly, remind them that they can do the same thing in the rest of their lives - by practicing things like listening to their parents or treating siblings nicely, they can learn to avoid sin.

Prayer: Lord, you loved Mary Magdalene and forgave her sins. Knowing that we are sinners too, may we repent as she did and follow her example by always seeking to follow you. Give us the courage to attend confession so that we may receive the graces of that sacrament. Help us to avoid sin each day at our homes, at school and here at practice. May you help us to practice good habits and love others. Bless our team today, especially helping us to correct the small mistakes we make during practice so we can get better at this game. May we learn to love you more through our time with teammates and coaches. Keep us safe and bless our practice.. Amen.

End of Practice: Reiterate that just like the kids worked on correcting their mistakes during practice, it's even more important that they focus on avoiding sin, which is a much bigger deal. Encourage them to go to confession. Then close with the following prayer:

- "Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Mary Magdalene, Pray for us!"

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 5

Theme: Sacraments

Scripture: Ephesians 3: 8-12

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,⁹ and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things;¹⁰ that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,¹² in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him.

Saintly Example: St. Kateri Tekakwitha

St. Kateri Tekakwitha is one of our newest saints, canonized in 2012 by Pope Benedict XVI. St. Kateri was a Native American, born in what is now New York in 1656. She was the daughter of a Mohawk warrior and the tribe did like Christians. When she was a teenager she was converted. She was treated very poorly by her own people who were angry about her conversion and she went to live in a different colony. There she studied God and was particularly devoted to the Eucharist. She spent many hours in prayer and adoration, refusing to let any oppression by her fellow Native Americans keep her from worshipping God. She died at only 24, but she became a great inspiration for Native Americans, many whom credit her for their conversion. She is the first Native American to be canonized a saint.

Discussion:

- What are the seven sacraments? Can you list them? (Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Matrimony, Anointing of the Sick)
- How can the sacraments be a focus of our team? Do we have an opportunity to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist as a team at some time during the year? Do we encourage each other to go to confession?

Practice Plan: Simply encourage the sacraments, particularly Eucharist and Reconciliation, as being regular parts of the kids lives. Explain that just as we need food and water to give us energy to perform our best in sports, we need the Eucharist even more to nourish us and draw us into communion with God as often as possible. In fact, the Eucharist will allow us to perform better in everything, as it is God within us! This is the Bread of Life, the essential gift that nourishes us and gives us strength to lead holy lives. Point out that the saints received the Eucharist as frequently as possible.

Prayer:

- Lord, you gave us St. Kateri Tekakwitha as an example of faith and holiness, for she sought the sacraments even as her people tried to keep her away and convince her to turn away from you. Help us to desire your sacraments and to receive them frequently, so that we might grow in holiness by receiving you in these great gifts. May we be strong in our faith as the saints were, may we stand firm even when others criticize us, turning to the sacraments for strength. Bless our team and help us to turn toward you and to the sacraments in the remainder of our season. Amen.

End of Practice: Encourage the children to receive the sacraments often and praise their efforts during practice. Close with the following, asking for Mary's intercession in our week ahead:

- Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Pray for Us!

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 6

Theme: The Eucharist

Scripture: John 6:35

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."

Saintly Example: St. Andrew Kim Taegon

St. Andrew Kim Taegon was the first ever Korean-born priest. Unfortunately, he lived during a time when it was a criminal offense to practice Catholicism in Korea and Catholics who were found were punished and killed. He had to leave Korea to study to become a priest and then he courageously returned to spread the faith and so that Catholics living in Korea could receive the sacraments. St. Andrew Kim could have chosen to save himself and hide or leave, but he was called to evangelize to the people of Korea and fulfilled his mission as a priest. Though he was killed in 1846 as a result of practicing his faith, his ministry and example still inspires people and leads to conversions today. St. Andrew Kim Taegon was one of over 100 Catholics who were martyred during the 1800's in Korea, yet there are thousands of Korean Catholics today as a result of their heroism and courageous defense of the sacraments.

Discussion:

- What do we think of the saints who loved the Eucharist so much that they risked their lives to give or receive this sacrament? Though we live in a country where we do not have to risk our lives to attend Mass, what might we learn from their example? How should this influence our understanding of the importance of the sacraments?
- Have you ever been to Eucharistic Adoration? Do you know what this is? Does your church have this? (If your parish does not, explain that many parishes do have this and they can ask their parents to take them).

Practice Plan: Continue to encourage a focus on the Eucharist. Talk about the importance of Mass and Adoration as elements of spiritual growth. Emphasize that spending time with God is even more important than getting better at sports. Explain that the Eucharist can help us to lead holy lives so that we can use our talents as God wants us to, in sports or at home or school.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, you gave us the gift of your very body and blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist, so that in your death on the cross, you might remain forever within us. May the knowledge of this sacrament strengthen us and may we receive it as often as possible so that we may be in communion with you. Bless this team and our families this week, we ask that you may be with us and help us to do our very best in the practices that remain this year. We thank you for the amazing blessing of this team and the opportunity to practice and play this sport. Amen.

End of Practice: Reiterate the importance of the Eucharist and close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Andrew Kim Taegon, Pray for us!"

5 Minute Game Plan

4th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 7

Theme: Heaven

Scripture: Revelation 22: 4-5

They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Saintly Example: St. Charles Lwanga

St. Charles Lwanga was one of many Catholics in Uganda who were punished and killed for their faith in the late 1800's. Charles helped to protect many of the young men in Uganda from the evil demands of the king, who eventually came to the people and demanded that they be separated into Christians and non-Christians. St. Charles Lwanga and several of his companions joyfully accepted their punishment, praying for the king and working to convert others to Catholicism even as they were led to death. Because they understood that a much greater treasure in heaven awaited them, they would rather die than deny their love of God on earth. As one of his companions was said to have joyfully told the captures, "Goodbye then. I am going to Heaven and I will pray to God for you!" These men were an amazing example of faith that live on even today.

Discussion:

- Scripture tells us and the saints affirm that heaven is even greater than we could possibly imagine. What do you think heaven will be like?
- If heaven is the ultimate reward, how does that affect how we view trophies here on earth? Do we focus more on being good people so that we can spend eternity in heaven? Or do we focus on earthly rewards? (There's obviously nothing wrong with striving for a trophy in sports, the point here is simply to make them aware how much greater the reward of heaven is).

Practice Plan: This is a great opportunity to pray for loved ones who have gone before us. Before the prayer at the beginning of practice, ask the children if there is anyone they want to pray for who has died. Have them verbally list these people and then pray the following prayer...

Prayer

- Lord, we pray especially for these loved ones we have lost. Grant that they may know the eternal glory of heaven. We also ask that those in heaven amongst the angels and saints pray for us, so that one day we may join them in your presence. For our team and our families we pray that you will protect us and lead us here on earth, so that we may use all the gifts you have given us to the best of our abilities in sports, at home and at school. Bless our teammates and help us to have great fun during practice today. Thank you for the gift of our friends and coaches here and for this season. Amen.

End of Practice: Tell the children that as much fun as winning a game is, we know that God wants even more for us! Encourage them to pray and read scripture, then close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Charles Lwanga, Pray for us!"

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Winter Seasons

- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** Sacraments - Baptism **Scripture:** Matthew 3:1-6, 13-17 **Saint:** St. John the Baptist
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** Sacraments - Reconciliation **Scripture:** Luke 15:4-10 **Saint:** St. Pio of Pietrelcina
- Preseason Week 3 - **Theme:** Sacraments - Eucharist **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 **Saint:** St. Teresa of Avila
- Preseason Week 4 - **Theme:** Sacraments - Confirmation **Scripture:** Ephesians 1:13-14 **Saint:** St. Catherine Labouré
- Preseason Week 5 - **Theme:** Sacraments - Marriage & Family **Scripture:** Matthew 19:4-6 **Saint:** Holy Family
- Preseason Week 6 - **Theme:** Sacraments - Holy Orders **Scripture:** John 10:1-21 **Saint:** St. Mathew
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** The Priesthood **Scripture:** Matthew 28:18-20 **Saint:** St. John Vianney
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** Religious Orders - Benedictines **Scripture:** Luke 14:11 **Saint:** Sts. Benedict and Scholastica
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** Religious Orders - Ursulines **Scripture:** 1 Peter 5:6-7 **Saint:** St. Angela de Merici
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** Religious Orders - Vincent de Paul & Sisters of Charity **Scripture:** Luke 10:29-37 **Saint:** St. Vincent de Paul
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** Religious Orders - Missionaries of Charity **Scripture:** Philippians 2:4-7 **Saint:** Blessed Mother Theresa
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** Religious Orders - Sisters Servants of Mary **Scripture:** John 13:34-35 **Saint:** Blessed Mary Catherine Irigoyen Echegaray
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** Sacraments - Anointing of the Sick **Scripture:** Luke 7:1-10 **Saint:** St. Peregrine
- Regular Season Week 8 - **Theme:** Miracles **Scripture:** John 6:1-15 **Saint:** St. Anthony of Padua
- Regular Season Week 9 - **Theme:** The Sanctity of Life **Scripture:** Jeremiah 1:5 **Saint:** Blessed John Paul II

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: Sacrament of Baptism

Scripture: Matthew 3: 1-6, 13-17

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair, and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Saintly Example: St. John the Baptist

From the very beginning of his life, St. John the Baptist had an important mission. He was called to help prepare the world for the coming of Jesus by preaching and baptizing people in the name of The Lord. When he was preaching one day by the Jordan river, Jesus came to him to be baptized. The gospel you read today shows that John recognized Christ right away and did not feel worthy to baptize him. However, Jesus asked him to and he did so. After this wonderful event, John continued to preach in the Jordan river valley where he told people about Jesus and led many people to follow The Lord. When we are baptized (most of us as babies), we are cleansed of original sin and sent into the world to proclaim the Word of God and lead people to Jesus too!

Discussion:

- John the Baptist played an important role, preaching to people and telling them to live holy lives, for The Lord was near. How are we called to live like John today? Do you think we're called to share the gospel with people and let them know who Jesus is?
- How can we do this on our team this year? How can we make sure that when we practice and play, we are proclaiming The Lord and helping lead people to Him?

Practice Plan: Develop some plans for the season on how your team can be sure they are sharing the gospel through their words and actions. These can be simple things, such as committing to treating your teammates and opponents in a way that is consistent with Christ's teaching. It could be in a special prayer that your team prays at practices or even something as great as planning a service project for the team that helps share the gospel in the world.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you sent John the Baptist to preach and baptize so that the world could be prepared for the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to do our part in the world today to teach people about Jesus and help us to share the message of the gospel by how we talk, act and even play on our team in this season. May we always put God first in our lives and work to lead all people to Him. Bless our team with a safe and fun practice, that we may learn and grow in our skill as well as our faith. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team they are called to share their love of Jesus always, just like John the Baptist did. Then close with the following prayer: *Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen. St. John the Baptist, Pray for Us!*

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 2

Theme: Sacrament of Reconciliation

Scripture: Luke 15: 4-10

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.'⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?"⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.'¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Saintly Example: St. Pio of Pietrelcina

St. Pio is more popularly known as Padre Pio. He is a fairly recent saint, born in 1887 in Italy. Even as a very young boy, Padre Pio was very devout and holy in his focus on God. He seemed to always know he was called to be a priest. When he became a priest, he was so beloved that people flocked from all around to meet him and particularly to go to confession with him. Padre Pio had a special gift in that he had the ability to read into the hearts of those who went to confession with him; this allowed him to understand all the things that troubled them even before they said it and he was able to lead many people closer to God as a result. Sometimes he would say confession for 10-12 hours per day and hundreds of people would wait in line! Padre Pio is also famous for having a phenomenon known as the stigmata: one day when kneeling in front of the cross he found that his hands had formed wounds where Jesus was nailed to the cross. This was very painful as he lived for 50 years with fresh wounds in his hand and he had to keep his hands bandaged. Many doctors studied the wounds but could find no earthly reason for them! Many people were amazed to find that these wounds actually created an odor of flowers and perfumes. When Padre Pio died in 1968, his hands miraculously healed and doctors could find no trace of the wounds. St. Pio was truly a very holy and gifted priest!

Discussion:

- Padre Pio was known for being a great confessor. God wants us to go to confession so we can be healed of our sins. Do we understand the importance of confession? How do we feel after we go to confession?
- Padre Pio had many special talents. What special talents do we have that can help this team? What talents do we have that can help us lead other people closer to God?

Practice Plan: Encourage all the kids to attend confession. You could even ask your priest and schedule a practice where kids could go to confession during practice just outside the gym. What an amazing blessing this would be and a great example for the kids of what this is all about!

Prayer: Lord, you teach us in your gospel that you rejoice in finding even the one lost sheep and returning them home. As sinners, help us to understand that we are the lost sheep in need of returning to you so that you can heal us. Help us to follow the example of St. Pio of Pietrelcina and to seek always to confess our sins, come to you and worship you each day. May our actions on this team glorify you, for we know you are always present when we gather to pray, practice and play. Bless us today with a great practice and bring us closer to you through it. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children about the importance of confession and find one special talent in each child to praise by the end of practice. Close with the following prayer: *Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen. St. Pio of Pietrelcina, Pray for Us!*

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 3

Theme: Sacrament of the Eucharist

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11: 17-34

But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For, in the first place, when you assemble as a Church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it, ¹⁹ for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰ When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the Church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.*

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also the chalice, after supper, saying, "This chalice is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— if any one is hungry, let him eat at home—lest you come together to be condemned. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Saintly Example: St. Teresa of Avila

St. Teresa lived at a time of great turmoil and trouble throughout the world. Early in her life she found it very difficult to pray and even though she became a Carmelite nun, she still struggled with believing she was not worthy to pray to God because she was a sinner. Yet as she grew older, she learned that God was really calling everyone to Him even though we're all sinners, and she began to pray often. Out of these prayers and her experience came great writings and teachings for the Church. She taught that prayer is really just a wonderful conversation with God and she encouraged everyone to engage in mental (internal) prayer. Even though for parts of her life people tried to stop all her good works and teachings, she managed to begin several new convents and spread the Word of God around Europe. She was named a Doctor of the Church, a special title for saints whose writing and teaching helps lead many to God. Her teachings on prayer are still read and inspire many people today.

Discussion & Practice Plan: Receiving the Eucharist and praying to God are the two most central parts of our Catholic faith. Remind the children of the importance of the Eucharist and explain that they can speak to God whenever they want through even short mental prayers. Ask if they have any questions or things to discuss about the Eucharist or prayer.

Prayer: God, you give us the Eucharist as your very flesh and blood, our very source of life and strength. Help us to follow the example of St. Teresa of Avila, who was devoted to the Eucharist and taught the Church about the beauty of prayer. May we develop prayer in our own lives so that we can have conversations with you frequently through the day. In our prayer at practice, prepare us not only for this sport we play, but strengthen us to always do your will and proclaim your glory. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids about the importance of the Eucharist and Prayer, then close with the following prayer: *Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen. St. Teresa of Avila, Pray for Us!*

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 4

Theme: Sacrament of Confirmation

Scripture: Ephesians 1: 13-14

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Saintly Example: St. Catherine Laboure

St. Catherine Laboure lived in France in the 1800's and was blessed with many visions of the Virgin Mary. In these visions, Catherine received many blessings and her mission by which she was to spread the Word of God and convert people, many of whom were living in great sin during that time. Perhaps most famously, in 1830 she was praying when Mary appeared and showed her a vision she wished put on medals that people could wear so they could receive great blessings - this vision became the miraculous medal, which became a very popular symbol of devotion.

Discussion:

- The Sacrament of Confirmation is one of the three sacraments considered by the church to be the "sacraments of initiation" - Baptism and the Eucharist are the other two. Most children will receive this sacrament in the 8th grade and it is marked by the gift of the Holy Spirit. How can we prepare to receive this sacrament over the next four years? How are we called to act as a result of these sacraments?
- St. Catherine Laboure saw a vision that led to the creation of the miraculous medal. Do you have any medals or symbols you wear or have at home that are reminders of your faith or show your devotion to God? (Share)

Practice Plan: Encourage the kids to share any medals or special devotions they may have and coaches may do the same. Focus on being positive with all the kids today and pointing out at least one special talent in each child during practice.

Prayer

- Lord, we thank you for the sacraments we have received and the examples of your saints who help teach us about you and lead us to you. We pray today for all those who will be receiving a sacrament this year. We pray also for our families. We thank you for their love and for their bringing us to practices and games. Bless them and keep them safe and happy. We ask that you bless our team and our practice today, so that we may grow not only in our athletic skill but more importantly in our love of God and our faith. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children of the importance of the sacraments and remember to point out that special talent in each child. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Catherine Laboure, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 5

Theme: Sacrament of Marriage

Scripture: Matthew 19: 4-6

He answered, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one'? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

Saintly Example: Holy Family

The Holy Family is made up of Mary, St. Joseph and the child Jesus. Together, they are the perfect example of a family. They share a great love of each other and their lives are focused on God. Mary and Joseph are also a wonderful example of marriage. Though they might be a little different than many families - Mary was called in a special way to have the child Jesus from God, and St. Joseph was his "foster father" here on earth - they represent a couple who showed great love for each other and their child, centering their entire relationship on God and seeking to do His will in all things. Today, we can call upon the intercession of the Holy Family in our own families and ask them to pray for us so that we can be like them and more perfectly follow God.

Discussion:

(*Note: we understand kids may come from many different family situations, so you'll want to use your discretion in how you address this so that all the kids can learn about the Sacrament of Marriage while not feeling excluded should they come from a single parent home, etc)

- Have you ever been to a Catholic wedding? What was it like? How was it like Sunday Mass? How was it different?
- Part of our role as children in families is to listen to our parents when they talk to us or tell us to do something. We can work on that by also listening to our coaches at practice. How can we do a better job of listening to our parents and coaches? Do we stop and do what they ask us at home and practice?

Practice Plan: Focus on the importance of children listening to the coach and use this as an example of how they are supposed to listen to their parents at home. This is probably something you are working on constantly, but make it a point to emphasize listening both at here and at home today.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, you give us the example of your Holy Family to help us learn how we should act and to help us follow you. We ask for the prayers of St. Joseph, Mary and Jesus for our own families; please keep them safe and answer the prayers that they have in their hearts. Help us to be good children. Help us to listen to our parents, our teachers and our coaches so that we can learn what they have to teach us. May we always try our best to follow you and do what you ask us to, Lord. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids to be good listeners when they return home. Encourage them to thank their parents (or those who care for them) for their love and encourage them to ask their parents about the Sacrament of Marriage. Close with the following prayer:

- Hail Mary, full of Grace. The Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and Blessed is the Fruit of Thy Womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Holy Family, Pray for Us!

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 6

Theme: Sacrament of Holy Orders

Scripture: John 10: 7-21

So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. ⁹ I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father." There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them said, "He has a demon, and he is mad; why listen to him?" ²¹ Others said, "These are not the sayings of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"*

Saintly Example: St. Matthew

St. Matthew was one of the twelve apostles and wrote the first gospel. As a result, we owe a great deal of the knowledge we have from the life of Jesus to him and his writing. As an apostle, Matthew was also one of the first to go forth after Jesus' death and resurrection, preaching about God and converting souls. As a result of the work of the apostles, who built the Church as Christ instructed and spread Christianity far and wide, we have today the role of our priests. Our priests are dependents of these first apostles. They preach the gospels they wrote and spread the faith around the world so that we might know God more fully. We are blessed to have our priests and owe much of the Church today to the work of St. Matthew and the apostles who witnessed the life of Jesus and spread His message around the world.

Discussion & Practice Plan: Take some time to discuss our priests and religious, pointing out all the wonderful work they do in our parishes and community.

- While some people are called by God to the Sacrament of Marriage, which we discussed last week, others are called to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. These are the vows our priests take. What special gifts to priests have that ordinary people don't have? (Steer the conversation here toward the power to offer the Mass and to forgive sins in confession).
- Have you ever considered the possibility that you are called to the priesthood (boys) or religious life (boys and girls)? Do you pray that God will help you to understand where He is calling you?

Prayer:

- Lord, you give us the gift of our priests and religious who are called to live a special life devoted to you and providing for us the sacraments. We thank you for all their work and the blessing they are for us. Please bless them in a special way and strengthen them in their ministry. May we continue to pray for them. Help us to discern your call for each of us as we grow older, trusting that wherever you call us will make us the most happy in life. Bless today's practice and our team as well. Amen.

End of Practice: Consider asking your priest or religious at your parish (or have the children ask them) to attend one of your games. You will find they most often are grateful for this invitation. Then close with a prayer of your team's choice.

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 1

Theme: The Priesthood

Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Saintly Example: St. John Vianney

John Vianney is considered the Patron Saint of Priests because of his amazing life and the many gifts he was given by God as a priest. He is also often called the Cure of Ars. Among his many gifts was in confession, where he often spent as many as 16 hours each day hearing confessions. He also worked to change the world around him and lead people back to God through his church. During his life, many people had stopped going to Mass on Sunday, so he worked tirelessly to teach that Sundays were reserved for God. He was patient and kind with all those who came to see him. By the end of his life, people were coming to him from all over the world because they had heard of this amazing priest!

Discussion:

- What is (are) the name(s) of the priest(s) at your parish? Do you know them? Do you pray for them?
- How can we honor our priests on our team and during the season? Have we asked them to attend one of our practices or games and bless our team? Can we pray for them and their ministry in a special way at our practices?

Practice Plan: Work with the children to determine a special way in which you can honor your parish priest(s) through your team. This can be as simple as making it a point to pray for them at practice each week. If possible, ask them to come to a practice or game to see the kids participate and bless the team.

Prayer

- Lord, we pray especially this day for our parish priest(s) Fr. (names). We thank you for his/their service to our parish and our school. We ask that you bless him/them each day and give them the graces they need to do their work as priests. May you grant them times of relaxation and rest as well as give them the strength they need each day. We ask for the prayers and intercession of St. John Vianney on their behalf. May you also bless our team with a safe and fun practice today. Amen.

End of Practice: Follow through on your team's special way of honoring your priest and close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. John Vianney, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 2

Theme: Religious Orders - Benedictines

Scripture: Luke 14: 11

“For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Saintly Example: Sts. Benedict and Scholastica

Saints Benedict and Scholastica were brother and sister who both created monasteries near each other and dedicated their lives to God and their brothers and sisters in religious life. St. Benedict founded the Benedictine order, which includes both male (monks) and female (nuns) religious. In fact, though they are all over the world, this order established a prominent abbey in nearby Atchison, KS. Benedictines are known for their commitment to the Rule of St. Benedict, the way of life that St. Benedict wrote and lives on today. They live mostly in monasteries where they carry out their life of prayer, reading and service. Each community has an Abbot who is considered the leader of their community and the monks/nuns carry out a variety of special tasks to care for their monastery and often the people of the surrounding community.

Discussion:

- Has anyone met a Benedictine monk or nun? What color habit do they generally wear? (Black, though some orders wear white.) Is anyone familiar with the special prayers they pray during the day? (Called the Liturgy of the Hours, they pray a combination of psalms and scripture in the morning, at mid-day, in the evening and before bed at night.)
- Religious orders are communities of holy men and women who have devoted their lives to Christ. Though we are not taking the same as a religious community in many ways, our CYO team is a community of people who pray, practice, and play together (we even wear uniforms). How do we want to be known as a team? Do we want to set an example by our prayer? What about in the way we practice hard and treat each other and our opponents?

Practice Plan: Consider the identity of your team. This can be a fun and simple exercise with the kids, but is an important element of this experience. Help steer them to a focus on prayer, the development of friendships among teammates and a way of playing that glorifies God and treats their opponents with respect. Think of ways you can solidify the identity of your team through reminders of "who we are" even outside of just the uniform. Some coaches have create prayer cards or used special prayers at practice based on what the kids determine they want their identity to be.

Prayer

- Lord, you give us the gift of men and women religious so that we have examples of holiness and prayer. Bless the Benedictines in our local community and at the Benedictine Abbey in Atchison. May their work and prayer be fruitful and may you protect them and guide them in their ministry. We ask also that you bless our community within our team. May we grow together in a love for you as we pray together and practice. Bless our coaches and our families today and always. Amen.

End of Practice: Reiterate the identity of the team and consider how you will implement this going forward. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. Saints Benedict and Scholastica, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 3

Theme: Religious Orders - Ursulines

Scripture: 1 Peter 5: 6-7

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. ⁷ Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you.

Saintly Example: St. Angela de Merici

St. Angela de Merici founded a group of religious women that was known as the "Company of St. Ursula" and later became known simply as the Ursulines. The group was not formally considered a religious order during her life, but upon becoming officially recognized it was the first order of women religious dedicated to teaching. These nuns were unique in their beginnings in that they did not live in cloister (in a convent) like all other nuns did at the time, but rather remained living within their communities and neighborhoods with the purpose of educating those around them and founding schools that had an emphasis on Christ. The success of St. Angela de Merici's small group of women can be attributed to a large group of schools and religious sisters working all over the world today.

Discussion:

- The Ursulines are a teaching order, which means their sisters place a special emphasis on educating children through the world. Do you have any nuns that come to your school? Do you know what order they come from? (There are several, you just have to ask!)
- Do we make schoolwork a priority each day? What are our favorite subjects in school? Do we understand how important it is that we learn and strive for good grades? Do we listen to our teachers in school?

Practice Plan: Focus on the importance of working hard in school and making that a priority ahead of sports. Explain that if they don't get good grades, they won't have the opportunity to play on teams as they get older. Make it a point to encourage them to listen to their teachers and focus on schoolwork.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of our teachers and our schools. We thank you for the opportunity to learn about the world arounds us and most importantly to learn about you. We pray especially for all those in religious life who are committed to teaching, especially those in the Ursuline order of nuns. Look with favor upon our team and help each of us to learn at home, in school and in practice to the best of our ability. We ask that you watch over us today and protect us from harm. Bless us with a fun practice and help us to come to know you better through our participation on this team. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children of the importance of focusing on their schoolwork and trying their absolute best in school. Encourage them to listen to their teachers and to pray for their teachers. Close with the following prayer:

- Hail Mary, full of Grace. The Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and Blessed is the Fruit of Thy Womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. St. Angela de Merici, Pray for Us!

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 4

Theme: Religious Orders - Vincent de Paul & Sisters of Charity

Scripture: Luke 10: 29-37

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion,³⁴ and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"³⁷ He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Saintly Example: St. Vincent de Paul

Charity has been considered the primary virtue of St. Vincent de Paul, who was most well known for the amazing love he displayed for those in need - from children to the elderly. His work as a priest focused on this service and he is also responsible for the creation of the original order of the Sisters of Charity, though there are now many different communities that have formed. These Sisters, as St. Vincent de Paul did, focus on the care of the poor, sick and elderly, showing them great love and providing for their spiritual and physical needs. They also pledge to live simply by taking a vow of poverty so that they might focus completely on the needs of others. St. Vincent de Paul remains today a great inspiration and example for all of us, including those religious who carry on his mission.

Discussion:

- We are all called to the virtue of Charity, to love others and care for them. How can we follow the example of St. Vincent de Paul by caring for those in need? Even in our own simple ways, how can we provide for the poor? The sick? The elderly? Do we do things within our families to care for these people? What about at school?

Practice Plan: This is an excellent time to consider a service project for the team. Encourage the kids to work together and think of a way they can help someone in need. This could be as simple as having all the kids bring canned food items or clothing to practice that coaches can collect and donate (you can probably do this at the parish or give directly to Catholic Charities). Or if the team and coaches are able, create and plan a bigger service project, taking time from practice one day to go somewhere and serve others. Ask the parish office for help. What an amazing opportunity for the team to learn valuable lessons!

Prayer

- Lord, we pray today especially for those in most need of your prayers. We pray for the sick, the homeless, the hungry and the poor. We thank you for the efforts of our priests and religious men and women who make it their mission to help care for these people. We ask that you may give us the graces to see how we too might help in our own way. We also thank you for all the blessings you have given to each of us. May we never forget how blessed we are and never cease to help those around us who are less fortunate or in need. May we pray for them and may they know your love and kindness. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children about the importance of Charity and move forward with your plan to put this into action. Close with a prayer of the team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 5

Theme: Religious Orders - Missionaries of Charity

Scripture: Philippians 2: 4-7

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Saintly Example: Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Most people today will have heard of Mother Teresa, as she lived until 1997 and became famous worldwide for her service and great example of love. Mother Teresa started the Missionaries of Charity religious community which officially began in 1950 and set out to work in service to the poorest of the poor. Her work began in Calcutta, India, where she went out into the "slums" to find the most needy, those left uncared for and seemingly unloved by the world around them. There she showed an amazing love to these people, praying for them and providing for their spiritual and physical needs. She worked to care for them and show them the love of God so that they know Him and see their reward not only through love here, but ultimately in heaven. What began in India soon spread around the world, as Mother Teresa worked to open homes for her Missionaries of Charity in countries all over the world. A woman of great wisdom, she is known for the following quotes:

- "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."
- "Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing."
- "Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts."

Discussion:

- Consider the quotes above. Which one sticks out to you? What do you think it means? How can you put that into action today?
- How do the lessons of Blessed Mother Teresa affect us? What can we do in our homes, schools, teams and community to share the love of Christ and care for those in need?
- How can we show this love within our team? How does it affect how we treat each other?

Practice Plan: Focus on making sure the environment of the team is one that facilitates the love that Mother Teresa worked so hard to share. Do teammates help each other when in need (on the court and off)? Emphasize those parts of the sport where the children need their teammates to help them in order to succeed. Perhaps do an activity in practice this week to promote team bonding.

Prayer

- Dear God, you call us to love each other just as you love us. Help us to follow the example of Mother Teresa by showing each person we meet great love, whether they are our friends, family or perhaps someone we don't know. Help us to treat our teammates and opponents with love. Even though we compete, help us to do so charitably and knowing that the other person is also a child of God. Bless us today that we might compete to the best of our ability so that we may glorify you. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids that they are called to treat everyone with great love as they go forward. Encourage them to follow the example of Mother Teresa in their homes, schools and teams. Close with the following prayer: *Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen. Blessed Mother Teresa, Pray for Us!*

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 6

Theme: Religious Orders - Sisters Servants of Mary

Scripture: John 13: 34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Saintly Example: Blessed Mary Catherine Irigoyen Echegaray

Mary Catherine lived from 1848 - 1918 in Spain. She lived a difficult early life, with both her parents dying of illness by the time she was 23. It became clear early on that she had great charity, not only caring for her parents and siblings but also showing a great compassion for others outside her home. At the age of 33 she entered the Sisters Servants of Mary and began what was to be the rest of her life's work, primarily caring for the sick. With amazing love and kindness, she devoted herself to people with any kind of disease, not worrying that she might contract that disease. She lived this holy life of service for over 35 years, always giving herself completely over to God and service to others.

Discussion:

- The Sisters Servants of Mary are an order that is dedicated to the service of the sick. In doing so, they fulfill God's call to "love one another" and the Lord's teaching on serving the sick. How do we fulfill this call in our own lives? How do we help if one of our family members is sick? What about our friends?
- How do we show this commandment to "love one another" on our team? What does this mean and how does it influence how we play sports?

Practice Plan: Focus on the commandment to "love one another" and create opportunities for the team to "bond" during practice. Any drill or activity where they get to help each other while having fun could be used to this end. Emphasize the importance of being a "team" and caring for one another - it's not only what The Lord asks, it will also help the team competitively.

Prayer

- Father in Heaven, you command us to love one another. Help us to show each other the love and dignity you call us to. Even when it is difficult, when we are upset or angry, help us to rely on you for help and to treat others as we want to be treated. May we work on this within our team but also at home and school. Bless our team today and help us to grow closer together during this practice, that we may care for each other and help each other to get better. Protect us today and always. Amen.

End of Practice: Reiterate God's commandment to "love one another, even as I have loved you." Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. Blessed Mary Catherine Irigoyen Echegaray, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 7

Theme: Sacraments - Anointing of the Sick

Scripture: Luke 7: 1-10

After he had ended all his sayings in the hearing of the people he entered Capernaum. ² Now a centurion had a slave who was dear to him, who was sick and at the point of death. ³ When he heard of Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they begged him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue." ⁶ And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷ therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸ For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹ When Jesus heard this he marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." ¹⁰ And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well.

Saintly Example: St. Peregrine

The story of St. Peregrine is one of conversion and miracles. As a boy, Peregrine was a part of the anti-papal movement and took part in very anti-Church activities. At one such activity, he was said to have struck St. Philip Benizi on the cheek. When the future saint reportedly turned and offered him the other cheek, praying for his persecutor, the young Peregrine was shocked and began to repent. He soon experienced a full conversion of heart and not only lived faithfully, but became a monk. Perhaps more famously, later in life St. Peregrine was diagnosed with cancer in his leg and foot. The day before his leg was to be amputated, Peregrine prayed fervently to God before a crucifix. There he was miraculously cured. With this in mind and after others reported being healed by his intercession after his death, St. Peregrine is considered the Patron Saint of Cancer Patients.

Discussion:

- The Anointing of the Sick is a sacrament intended to "strengthen those who are being tried by illness" (CCC 1511). It is not only for those who are about to die, but for anyone who is in "danger of death from sickness or old age" (CCC 1514). Has anyone seen the Anointing of the Sick at your parish? What occurs? (The priest blesses the sick individually with blessed oil).
- Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament during his life on earth, where he cured many sick during his ministry. Yet it's not only physical illness which The Lord seeks to heal, but also spiritual failing. Just like we strengthen our bodies to overcome illness, we must also strengthen our faith to overcome spiritual attacks. How can we work to strengthen our faith on this team? Does it help to have a team working together to strengthen faith? Is this easier than trying to do things alone?

Practice Plan: Consider the above questions and emphasize ways to strengthen your faith as a team through prayer or activities during practice. Perhaps you could also find a way to attend Mass together as a team at least once before the end of the season.

Prayer: Lord, we ask on this day that you bless and heal all those who are sick in our families and parish community. May they know your comfort and love. Help us to do whatever we can in our families to care for the sick. We pray that you will not only strengthen us against illness but also strengthen our faith. Bless our team this week and help us to have fun and do the best we can in all things. Amen.

End of Practice: Close practice by telling the kids three positive things from the practice. Close with a prayer of your team's choice.

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 8

Theme: Miracles

Scripture: John 6: 1-15

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberi-as. ² And a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased. ³ Jesus went up into the hills, and there sat down with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. ⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" ⁶ This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?" ¹⁰ Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost." ¹³ So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!" Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the hills by himself.

Saintly Example: St. Anthony of Padua

St. Anthony was from Portugal but spent most of his adult life in Italy, living in the early 1200's. He was named a Doctor of the Church because his teachings are considered to be so beautiful and easily understood that they have become known around the world. When St. Francis of Assisi learned of Anthony's gift he made it the young man's mission to preach all over Italy. He earned the nickname in tradition "The Hammer of the Heretics" because his teaching helped to disprove the many who attempted to speak falsely of the church and lead people astray. Several miracles are attributed to St. Anthony during his life, including his ability to make harmless the poison he was fed by enemies of the church. Though he lived to be only 36 years old, his remarkable teachings in life and his intercessions in death make him popular even today.

Discussion:

- Jesus performed many great miracles during his ministry. Do you have a favorite bible miracle?
- People often associate miracles with sports, whether improbable comebacks or amazing finishes to games. When players are asked afterwards what allowed them to come back, they often talk about "never losing hope" or "knowing" that the team could do it. What do you think gives teams the ability to have hope and believe in their abilities when it seems like they have lost the game? Does coming back and winning when it looks impossible require a special skill or virtue?

Practice Plan: Though it's important to emphasize that the real miracles are those performed by Jesus and the saints in the name of God, this is a fun opportunity to talk about so-called "miracles" in sports. Encourage the kids to continue to have hope and belief in the team even when losing. Inspire them to never give up and tell stories about famous (or your own) triumphs. Always relate back to having hope in Christ and belief in His love and care for us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, you performed great miracles both in your life and through the lives of your saints. Increase our hope and trust in you, so that we too can do great things in our lives. Bless our team as well, that we may always perform to the best of our ability and never give up. Protect us today and help us to grow in our faith and the talents you have given each of us. Amen.

End of Practice: Simply close practice with a positive attitude and with a prayer of the team's choice.

5 Minute Game Plan

5th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 9

Theme: The Sanctity of Life

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:5

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Saintly Example: Blessed John Paul II

Blessed John Paul II spent 27 years as Pope, during which one of his most prominent and constant teachings was on the dignity of human life in all its forms. In writings and homilies, in interviews and conversation, the Pope could be found teaching about the "incomparable worth of the human person" (Evangelium Vitae) and our responsibility to protect the gift of life from the time a child is formed in the womb until the day God calls them home to heaven. At a time when many fought against him, John Paul II courageously stood for the teachings of the Catholic Church and the importance of every human life, calling upon all the church to defend life with him. Pope John Paul II will be canonized a Saint on April 27, 2014.

Discussion:

- The Catholic Church teaches that we are to respect the dignity of all human life from the time a child is formed by God to the end of their life. How can we help defend the sanctity of life in our daily lives? Are there activities in our schools and parishes that we can be involved in?
- How can we treat each other with dignity and respect in school and on our team? Does the way we treat each other demonstrate our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as our respect for each person?

Practice Plan: This is an important teaching of the Catholic Church and supplements the teachings the children will receive in their schools and religious education. Consider ways to help promote the Sanctity of Life on your team, as well as simply emphasizing the importance of each child treating each other with love and respect. If we are to respect the dignity of all life, this must also begin with how we treat each other.

Prayer:

- Dear God, you gave us the example of Blessed John Paul II and his courageous defense of all human life. Help us to always defend the dignity of each other and every human person, so that we might share with all the love that Christ shared with us on the cross. In our own simple ways, help us to be champions of life. Bless each of our teammates and teach us to better love each other as we learn and grow in our athletic skill. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Reiterate the importance of treating everyone you meet with dignity and respect. Ask the children to consider ways they can pray and work to defend human life. Close with the following prayer, asking Mary's intercession in the world today:

- Hail Mary, full of Grace. The Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and Blessed is the Fruit of Thy Womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Blessed John Paul II, Pray for Us! Acknowledgments and Sources

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade Winter Season

- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** False Gods **Scripture:** Exodus 20:1-6 **Saint:** St. Boniface
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** Prayer **Scripture:** Matthew 7:7-8 **Saint:** St. Therese of Lisieux
- Preseason Week 3 - **Theme:** Methods of Prayer **Scripture:** Philippians 4:6-7 **Saint:** St. Theresa of Avila
- Preseason Week 4 - **Theme:** Praying with the Psalms & the Liturgy of the Hours **Scripture:** Psalm 95:2 **Saint:** St. Benedict
- Preseason Week 5 - **Theme:** Made in the Image of God **Scripture:** Ephesians 4:22-24 **Saint:** St. Rose of Lima
- Preseason Week 6 - **Theme:** Morality **Scripture:** Matthew 7:12 **Saint:** St. Thomas Aquinas
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** Following the Commandments **Scripture:** John 14:15 **Saint:** St. Paul
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** Living the Beatitudes **Scripture:** Matthew 5:3-12 **Saint:** St. John Bosco
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** Jesus and the Poor **Scripture:** Luke 6:20 **Saint:** St. Vincent de Paul
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** Catholic Social Teaching **Scripture:** Quote Benedict XVI Quote **Saint:** St. Louise de Marillac
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** Life and the Dignity of the Human Person **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 3:16 **Saint:** St. Maria Soledad
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** Call to Family and Community **Scripture:** 1 John 4:19-21 **Saint:** St. Juan Diego
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** Rights and Responsibilities **Scripture:** Matthew 25:40 **Saint:** St. Katherine Drexel
- Regular Season Week 8 - **Theme:** The Dignity of Work **Scripture:** Deuteronomy 14:29 **Saint:** St. Isaac Jogues
- Regular Season Week 9 - **Theme:** Solidarity **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:12, 22-26 **Saint:** St. Kateri Tekakwitha

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: False Gods

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-6

And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing mercy to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Saintly Example: St. Boniface

St. Boniface was a Benedictine priest born in the 7th century. He was a great defender of the faith during a time when many in Europe were worshipping false pagan gods. He was such a great teacher that he was eventually named a Bishop and was sent to teach all over Europe, to convert souls and teach them the truth. Perhaps the most popular legend involves his chopping down the tree that pagans considered the sacred oak tree of their god Thor. Arriving at the place where people were worshipping the tree, he reportedly struck down the tree with an axe. The people watching thought Boniface would immediately be struck down by their gods for such an act, yet when nothing happened many realized their false ways and converted, worshipping the one true God. Boniface reportedly built a chapel on the spot.

Discussion:

- Today's world contains many "false gods": things that we devote our time and focus to instead of our God. What kinds of things do you see that too easily take the place of God in our lives? What things do people focus on instead of God? (Could be work, technology/television/media, sports, famous people, etc)
- How can we work to put our focus on the real God and avoid the trap of "worshipping" or focusing on material things of the world? How can we commit to God as a team?

Practice Plan: Make God a priority at practice and at games. This is a good time to set the tone for the season and create an environment that places God first above all things. Emphasize prayer and developing a relationship with God even above the skills kids will develop in practice.

Prayer

- Dear God, we thank you for the gift of this season and our teammates. You teach us that you are the one true God, help us to follow you and grow in our relationship with you through our team this year. May we learn from the example of St. Boniface and be always willing to defend our God and place Him first in all things. Bless our teammates and help us to grow also in skill during practices, giving our absolute best effort and using the talents God has given us. Bless our coaches and our families as well. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids about the importance of putting God first at home, in school and within sports. Make it clear that God is the center of what you will do this year as a CYO team. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. St. Boniface, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 2

Theme: Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 7:7-8

"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Saintly Example: St. Therese of Lisieux

St. Therese of Lisieux is known by many names, as she was also called "The Little Flower" and "St. Theresa of the Child Jesus." Though she died when she was only 24, she was a remarkable saint who lived in the late 1800's. A difficult childhood that included the loss of her mother at just four years old sent Therese into years of sadness. She was prone to tantrums and outbursts of tears at the slightest issue. Yet as she became a teenager, she experienced a great joy as the result of her habits of prayer. She felt God calling her to the religious life and convinced church authorities to let her enter the Carmelite convent at the age of 15, before most women were permitted to enter convents. There she developed what she called "The Little Way", a life of deep prayer and willingness to do the little things each day to provide for her sisters and glorify God. She did much cleaning and hard work in the convent, realizing that all these things were the way God had called her to serve Him. She prayed through all these "little" things and developed a close relationship with God so that she could find joy even in sacrifice. Even when she became gravely ill, she wrote down many of her thoughts and prayers, with her autobiography *The Story of a Soul* still available today as a look into her saintly life and a lesson for all of us.

Discussion:

- "The Little Way" is a way of prayer, working hard and sacrificing, doing all the small things in life with great joy to serve God and those around us. Therese did much of the chores and hard work in the convent. What kind of sacrifices can we make at home or school to glorify God and serve those around us?
- What kind of sacrifices can we make on this team to glorify God and serve our teammates? How are we called to use our talents for the benefit of the team, rather than just ourselves?

Practice Plan: Much like St. Therese focused on "The Little Way", emphasize the many small things in practice today that can help each player benefit the entire team. Focus on praising the simple tasks, roles and fundamentals that team members do in order to make each play possible.

Prayer

- Lord, you gave us St. Therese as an example of living a holy life and making many sacrifices in order to glorify and serve you. Bless our team and give us all the graces to perform the little tasks, the small sacrifices each day at home, school and in sports that serve you and those around us. May we be willing to do small things with great prayer in order to serve you. We ask that you bless our team and draw us all near to you during this practice. Keep us safe and help us to have fun. Amen.

End of Practice: Chose a handful of the "little" things that individuals did at practice today and praise them for those things, pointing out how they help the team and serve what the team is trying to accomplish. Remind the kids that prayer is important all throughout the day. Close with the following prayer, asking for Mary's intercession as we seek to follow the example of the saints:

- Hail Mary, full of Grace. The Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and Blessed is the Fruit of Thy Womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. St. Therese of Lisieux, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 3

Theme: Methods of Prayer

Scripture: Philippians 4: 6-7

Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Saintly Example: St. Teresa of Avila

Theresa of Avila is considered a Doctor of the Church, which is a title given to those saints whose writings and teachings are so profound that they teach us a great deal about our faith and how to follow God. In particular, St. Theresa of Avila gave us great teachings about prayer. As someone who struggled with prayer, believing she was unworthy of speaking to God until a priest convinced her to return to prayer at age 41, Theresa provides a great example of prayer for us when we struggle to pray. One of her great teachings was on mental prayer, which she described as an "intimate sharing between friends" and provided many lessons on how to have this conversation with God. She also provided lessons on mediation and other methods of praying that bring the faithful closer to God. The following prayer is famously attributed to St. Teresa of Avila:

Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.

Discussion:

- St. Teresa of Avila is called a Doctor of the Church for her teachings on prayer. What different kinds of prayer are you aware of? (Ex. mental prayer, liturgy of the hours, meditation, wrote and spontaneous prayers, novenas, intercessory, Mass, singing, etc)
- How can our prayer on this team draw us closer to God? How can our example of prayer in sports help teach others the importance of prayer and putting God at the center of our lives?

Practice Plan: Emphasize prayer. Remind kids the importance of developing their relationship with God by praying often. Emphasize the prayer at the beginning and end of practice and games this week.

Prayer

- Father, you give us St. Teresa of Avila as a beautiful example of prayer and holiness. Help us to follow her example by praying always and developing an intimate relationship with you. Let nothing disturb or frighten us, knowing that while all things in the world pass away, you never change. Help us to be patient and put you at the center of our lives. Bless us with a safe and fun practice today and help us to glorify you by doing all things to the best of our ability. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children about a focus on prayer and make that an important theme this year during practices and games. Close with the following:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Teresa of Avila, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 4

Theme: Praying with the Psalms & the Liturgy of the Hours

Scripture: Psalm 95:2

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

Saintly Example: St. Benedict

St. Benedict is the founder of the Benedictine order and famously wrote *The Rule of St. Benedict* as a the "rules" for living in monastic life. His sister St. Scholastica also founded her own monastic community just miles from St. Benedict and followed his council and rule. As a result of St. Benedict's direction and *Rule*, Benedictine monks pray a set of prayers called the Liturgy of the Hours at several times throughout the day. These prayers are focused on song (or chant), the Psalms, and readings, as well as intentions and times of silent reflection. They were created as a way for the monks - who consider prayer their life's work - to glorify God and pray as a community, though many people today still pray these prayers at home. St. Benedict is considered the father of monastic life and has provided a method of prayer that is a blessing for all.

Discussion:

- Have you ever prayed the Liturgy of the Hours? Are you familiar with the psalms?
- As today's psalm demonstrates, one of the most important parts of prayer is praising and thanking God for all he has blessed us with. What are you thankful for that God has provided? What are we thankful for as a team?

Practice Plan and Prayer: As an example of the liturgy of the hours, today's opening prayer will be a very short sample of praying with the psalms. Explain to the kids that we can read the psalms and reflect on them as a way of prayer. Recite the following, together if possible (Psalm 42):

*As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so longs my soul
for you, O God.*

*My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?*

*My tears have been my food
day and night,*

*while men say to me continually,
"Where is your God."*

*These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.*

Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids about what was learned at the beginning of practice with the Liturgy of the Hours and the psalms. Encourage the kids to read more psalms and look into the Liturgy of the Hours at home or in school. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Benedict, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 5

Theme: Made in the Image of God

Scripture: Ephesians 4: 22-24

Put off the old man that belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Saintly Example: St. Rose of Lima

St. Rose was born with the name Isabel, but she was always considered such a beautiful baby that people called her "Rose" and that name stuck with her through her life. Through her life she was so beautiful that everyone admired her. Yet Rose was uncomfortable with this attention, as she wanted people to see her as a woman of God and not simply for her beauty. She was also concerned that her beauty might lead men into temptation, so she tried to dress in such a way as to not be beautiful and even rubbed herbs and pepper on her face to create blisters and make herself less beautiful. Despite all this, it is said that when she prayed her joy was so great that she "glowed" with great love for God. She joined the Third Order of St. Dominic and lived happily as a nun. She may have never realized in life the true extent of devotion to her in her community, but as a saint she has been responsible for many miracles and great devotion to this day.

Discussion:

- We are all made in the "image and likeness of God" and called to live accordingly. This means honoring our body and souls and recognizing that all others are also made in the image of God. How does this affect how we treat others? What about ourselves?
- If we are made in the image of God, then this team is also created in the image of God. How can we as a team reflect this image in the appropriate way? How should we act at practice? During games?

Practice Plan: Focus on the team being made in the image of God and remind the children of this during practice. This should impact the way we behave and the things we emphasize. Make this a point of emphasis for the team, that for everyone watching them participate in this sport, they are images of God on the court.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, when you created man and woman you did so in your likeness. Help us to see and understand that we are truly created as a reflection of you, then help us to live lives that honor this. May the way we treat our own bodies and each other reflect your presence and image in each one of us. May the way we act and the example we set on our team remind others that we are made in the image of God. Bless us on this day so that we can use the talents you have given us to glorify you. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind everyone that they are made in the image and likeness of God. Ask them to consider what this means and how they should treat others and themselves at home, school and practice. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. St. Boniface, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Sports Preseason Week 6

Theme: Morality

Scripture: Matthew 7:12

So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Saintly Example: St. Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas was a great scholar and teacher of all things, including the topic of morality. In his many teachings on living a moral life, he taught that we come from God and that all decisions must be rooted in God's will. We must always seek to consider and do what God is calling us to do, which will always be good. He taught that "good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided." He reminded people that you are always supposed to do good to others, as God calls us to love Him and our neighbor. St. Thomas Aquinas is a Doctor of the Church and his teachings and writings are still taught all over the world today nearly 800 years after his death. He is considered one of the most important theologians (a person who studies God) in history and many schools are named after him.

Discussion:

- St. Thomas Aquinas had many teachings on morality. What do you think it means to be a moral person? What kinds of characteristics does a moral person have? How do you make a moral decision?
- How can we practice having good morals on this team? (i.e. play fair, work hard, treat others well, make good decisions at home and in school, etc.)
- How does sports teach morality? What things do you learn from playing sports that can help you make good decisions in other parts of life?

Practice Plan: Focus on morality whenever possible today. Remind the kids that they are called to treat everyone well and do good in all things. This extends beyond the practices and games in sports, where they should always seek to "do good" and avoid evil.

Prayer

- Lord, we thank you for bringing us here today to practice and for our ability to participate in this sport. Help us to learn from the example of St. Thomas Aquinas and to practice being good moral people at home, at school, at practice and in our community. May we follow the examples of the saints and strive to live lives of holiness. We pray that our practice today will glorify you Lord and draw us closer to you as we strive to use our God-given talents to the best of our ability. Protect us and keep us safe during this week. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids about the importance of making good moral decisions. Focus on the golden rule, asking them to remember to treat others as they want to be treated. Also remind them that if we pray and follow God, he will lead us to do good. Close with the following prayer, asking for Mary's intercession in our lives as we strive for holiness:

- Hail Mary, full of Grace. The Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and Blessed is the Fruit of Thy Womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. St. Thomas Aquinas, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Sports Regular Season Week 1

Theme: Following the Commandments

Scripture: John 14:15

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Saintly Example: St. Paul

We know a great deal about St. Paul from the New Testament of the bible, as the books there tell his story and many were in-fact written by him. St. Paul grew up Jewish and became a Pharisee, likely a very respected and powerful man in this society. He was known to actively persecute Christians after Jesus death and resurrection, famously taking part in the stoning of the Church's first martyr, Stephen. Yet tradition holds that on his travels (to Damascus) one day, he experienced a great conversion. Paul saw a vision of Jesus who asked him, "Why are you persecuting me?" and he was made blind for three days. From this experience, Paul turned to The Lord and began to follow him, becoming a great defender of the faith and one of the most important figures in the early Church. He wrote many of the early "letters" that find themselves in the bible today and traveled near and far preaching the gospel of The Lord and leading others to Christ.

Discussion:

- Do you know the commandments? What does Paul teach us about God's forgiveness and the opportunity He gives us to renew our commitment to the commandments? Do we need to follow these commandments all the time, or just some of the time?
- What "commandments" (rules) do we have as a team that help us to follow our coaches and more importantly God? How can we work on these as a team?

Practice Plan: Focus on living out God's commandments within your team, particularly the ones that call us to love God above all things and to love each other. Make sure you have your own set of "commandments" as a team and explain to the kids how these help us to follow God and serve our coaches and teammates. If you don't have a set of rules already in place that serve this end, take some time today to involve the team in creating a set of commandments. If you let them give suggestions, you might be surprised at the great set of rules they come up with!

Prayer

- Almighty God, you gave us the commandments so that we might all now how to live in a way that glorifies you and shares your love with our neighbor. Help us to live out the commandments so that we can truly love you. When we struggle to keep them, forgive us our sin and help us to be led down the right path through the sacraments of confession and Eucharist. At home, help us to follow the rules of our parents; at school help us to follow the direction of our teachers, and at practice help us to follow the leadership of our coaches, so that we may grow as children of God and also in our athletic skill today. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Provide a reminder of the "commandments" you have as a team or the new one's you have created in this practice. Encourage the kids to focus this week on following not only God's commandments, but those of their parents and teachers as well. Close with the following prayer.

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. St. Paul, Pray for Us! Amen

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 2

Theme: Living the Beatitudes

Scripture: Matthew 5:3-12

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Saintly Example: St. John Bosco

St. John Bosco was a tremendous example of living out the beatitudes, as his work involved ministering to poor and neglected youth (particularly boys) in Italy. John Bosco lived in the late 1800's and experienced many dreams that led him down the path to priesthood, his work with young men, and eventually the creation of the Salesian order. At first he ignored these dreams and visions, but with the help of others (including the Pope) he found that God was calling him down a unique path. He began to serve others, first on his own and then with the help of the monks, priests and lay persons in the Salesian order. In the young men he served, he provided mercy, comfort, peace and a path to the kingdom of heaven. Just as we are all called to do in the Beatitudes.

Discussion:

- How do we practice living out the beatitudes in our daily lives? What ways can we follow this teaching at home? At School? In our community?
- How do we live out the beatitudes on our team? What ways can we follow this teaching at practice? In Games?

Practice Plan: Place an emphasis on the beatitudes and how we treat others today during practice. Encourage the kids to focus on treating each other and all those they meet with love and respect.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for bringing us here to practice this week and for the blessing of all our families and teammates. Help us to understand your beatitudes and treat all your people with love and respect. May we follow the example of St. John Bosco in our care for others and devotion to God and His will. Bless our team this week, that we may learn about you and grow in our relationship with you as well as the skills we need to get better in school and sports. Help us to understand how we can best use the gifts you have given us to help our team. Keep us safe and may we have fun today at practice. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children to practice treating everyone this week with love and respect. Praise any characteristics of good sportsmanship or teamwork you noted during practice. Close with a prayer of the team's choice.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 3

Theme: Jesus and the Poor

Scripture: Luke 6:20

And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

Saintly Example: St. Vincent de Paul

When we think of examples of service to the poor, we often think of St. Vincent de Paul. Perhaps this is due to the organizations he founded and his religious orders that are still known around the world today for their love and care of the poor. In our parishes and schools we often give donations to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which demonstrates God's love through service to the poor and those in need. St. Vincent de Paul himself was known for his dedication to charity and justice, preaching missions throughout the world and developing many ways to provide for people young and old in need. Both the Daughters of Charity and his Congregation of Priests of the Mission were formed to help support ministry to those in most need.

Discussion:

- We are all called to the virtue of Charity, to love others and care for them. How can we follow the example of St. Vincent de Paul by caring for those in need? Even in our own simple ways, how can we provide for the poor? The sick? The elderly? Do we do things within our families to care for these people? What about at school?

Practice Plan: This is an excellent time to consider a service project for the team. Encourage the kids to work together and think of a way they can help someone in need. This could be as simple as having all the kids bring canned food items or clothing to practice that coaches can collect and donate (you can probably do this at the parish or give directly to Catholic Charities). Or if the team and coaches are able, create and plan a bigger service project, taking time from practice one day to go somewhere and serve others. Ask the parish office for help. What an amazing opportunity for the team to learn valuable lessons!

Prayer

- Lord, you give us the example of St. Vincent de Paul and others as a way to live our lives in service to those in most need. May we always show love and care for these people, following Christ's call for us. Bless all those in need on this day and help us to see the ways in which we can help provide for them through our families, our school and in our community. Bless our team and help us to follow you this week. Bless our coaches and help us to follow their direction. Bless our teammates and their families. Help us to do everything to the best of our ability this week. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children of Jesus' call to care for the poor. Discuss the service project you created as a team and remind the children to do whatever their part is in this experience. Close with asking Mary to pray for this team and the project:

- Hail Mary, full of Grace. The Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women and Blessed is the Fruit of Thy Womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. St. Vincent de Paul, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 4

Theme: Catholic Social Teaching

Papal Teaching: A Quote from Pope Benedict XVI

"Charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36- 40). It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbour...everything has its origin in God's love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it. Love is God's greatest gift to humanity, it is his promise and our hope." (*Caritas in Veritate*, Paragraph 2, 2009).

Saintly Example: St. Louise de Marillac

As someone who worked with St. Vincent de Paul for much of her life, we would expect St. Louise de Marillac to be devoted to the care of the poor in society. Like her mentor St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise was committed to charity and justice in the world. She helped create the Daughters of Charity and became Superior, leading that community in its devotion to those in need. Both St. Louise de Marillac and St. Vincent de Paul did a great deal to promote the church's important teachings on social justice, with many of their organizations still living out this mission today.

Discussion:

- Pope Benedict XVI taught that charity (love) is at the center of everything the Catholic Church teaches. How should this affect the way we treat others in society - including our homes, schools, teams and communities?
- At the heart of church teaching we learn that all of us and everything around us exist because of God's love. If this is true, then sports are a gift from God and certainly something He loves. How does God's love impact our team? How does it impact how we play sports?

Practice Plan: As a coach, focus on the relationships of the players and coaches on the team this week. If there are situations where the kids aren't treating each other as they should, make it a special focus to mend these relationships and teach the important value of "loving thy neighbor" within the team.

Prayer

- Lord, you came down from heaven and took on flesh so that you could teach us about God's love. In your life, your teaching and your death on the cross, you demonstrated this love and taught us to love God and to love each other. Your church continues today to teach us how to share this love and justice. May we always listen to the church's teachings and strive to love one another in our homes, our schools, our teams and communities. Send down your love upon us and help make us more like you so that we can one day spend eternity with you. This week help us to treat all our teammates with love and respect, so that we may grow closer to you and closer to each other as a team. Bless this practice and our team. Amen.

End of Practice: Reiterate for the children the importance of following the Church's teaching and loving each other as God loves us. Praise any great examples of teamwork from practice. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. St. Louise de Marillac, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 5

Theme: Life and the Dignity of the Human Person

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

Saintly Example: St. Maria Soledad

When the Sisters Servants of Mary were formed in 1851, Sister Maria Soledad was one of the 7 original sisters who took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The sisters were created to perform a much needed ministry for the sick. Through early trouble from outside the order, Sister Maria persevered and helped lead the group, eventually becoming their superior. In all this, she placed herself at the service of the poor and the sick, seeing Christ in all of them. She gave special credit to the Eucharist in allowing her to be strengthened for the often difficult tasks of caring for both the order of sisters and those they ministered to. Her love and appreciation for the dignity of every person in society is a great example for all in the world today. She became known as Saint Maria Soledad when she was canonized in 1970.

Discussion:

- Jesus taught us that we are all children of God and that all our bodies are in-fact temples holding God within us. With God truly present in each of us, how does this affect how we view ourselves? How does it affect our view of others? How does it affect our appreciation of the dignity of each human life?
- If our bodies are dwelling places for God, how do sports help us to care for these bodies? How do sports help us to uphold the dignity of human persons? Can you think of examples where sports have helped society to appreciate the dignity of human persons?

Practice Plan: Emphasize that we are all created in the image of God and meant to see Christ in everyone we meet. Just like St. Maria Soledad saw the face of Christ in all the sick to which she ministered, we too should strive to help others see Christ in all that we do. Sports is no different. Help your team this week to recognize Christ in their teammates, their opponents and their coaches. Encourage them to look for Christ at home and in school as well.

Prayer

- Father in Heaven, you teach us that all human life is precious and help us to understand the dignity of all human people. In fact, you loved the world so much that you sent your Son, Our Lord, who took on our flesh and gave Himself for us so that we might learn to see the face of Christ in humanity and share in your eternal glory in a special way. Teach us today to see your face in our family and our friends, our opponents and those we don't get along with, so that we may learn to love them as you have loved us. Bless our team this week and help us to realize in all that we do that we are created in the image of God. Help us to use the talents you have given us to glorify you. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children of the lessons at the beginning of practice and encourage them to consider what it means that we are meant to see Christ in each person we meet. Ask them to remember this as they go throughout the rest of their week. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Benedict, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 6

Theme: Call to Family and Community

Scripture: 1 John 4: 19-21

We love, because he first loved us. ²⁰ If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

Saintly Example: St. Juan Diego

St. Juan Diego lived in Mexico during the 16th century. He was a great example of holiness even before the most famous event of his life: so great was his devotion to the Eucharist that he traveled to Mass every day by walking 15 miles each direction. Then one day on this journey he saw a vision and the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him. She asked him to speak to the bishop and have a church built on that site. When Juan Diego did as he was asked, this bishop asked him to provide proof that this was a request from the Blessed Mother. Shortly thereafter she appeared to Juan Diego again and directed him to the top of a large hill, asking him to pick the flowers he would find there to take to the bishop as a sign. He did as he was asked, and found flowers growing amid the frost where no other flowers were present. He placed them in his cloak and took them to the bishop. When he arrived he relayed what the Blessed Mother had told him and opened his cloak. What happened was a miracle: the flowers that came out were roses that do not grow in Mexico and when they fell they revealed a glowing image on Juan Diego's cloak of the Blessed Mother, now known in this image as Our Lady of Guadalupe. The bishop immediately had a church built on that spot and the original image of Our Lady of Guadalupe remains in this place to this day, miraculously undamaged after nearly 500 years on display. Millions have made pilgrimage to this spot and it is considered responsible for many conversions. St. Juan Diego gave us a beautiful example of going to great lengths to follow God's will and serve his people. As a result of his simple obedience, the people of Mexico and Latin America have seen numerous blessings and miracles attributed to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Discussion:

- St. Juan Diego's faithful obedience and service made him witness to a great miracle that has led many to Christ. How can we serve the will of God in our parish or school community in order to bring God to others? How can we spread the gospel so that more people might learn of Him?
- God tells us that if we love Him, we must also "love our brother." How can we demonstrate this love by serving the other members of this team during practices and games?

Practice Plan: Take the discussion of how the children can serve their teammates and demonstrate love and make that an emphasis of practice. Point out any selfless decision (pass, play, etc) and show how that served the child's teammates and the team as a whole. Place a special emphasis and praise on any individuals who serve their team especially well through actions such as this.

Prayer

- Dear Lord, you give us a beautiful example of answering "yes" to God's will in the story of St. Juan Diego. Just as his decision to follow the request of the Blessed Virgin Mary led to countless conversions and the sharing of your gospel message, so may our small actions and answering "yes" to God's will result in blessings upon our family, friends and teammates. Give us the graces and willingness to serve by doing the little things and help us to love you and our brother. Bless our teammates and help us to glorify you through all that we learn and do this week. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind children of any particular individuals or examples from practice that drives home the point of service or love for their teammates. Close with a prayer of the team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 7

Theme: Rights and Responsibilities

Scripture: Mathew 25:40

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

Saintly Example: St. Katharine Drexel

Another example of a very modern saint, St. Katharine Drexel lived nearly 100 years across the 19th and 20th centuries, dying in 1955. She was born into a very wealthy family in Philadelphia, yet her heart seemed to always be with those who were poor and disadvantaged in society. For much of her life, this was focused in particular on those of black or Native American heritage. In founding the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in 1891, she set out to build schools all over the country and provide education, health care, social services and spiritual guidance for these people. It's believed she spent over \$20 million dollars of her own money (from family wealth) to build schools for oppressed Native Americans and black Americans across the country. She did so during a time when these people were particularly looked down upon and her work was met with disapproval from many. Yet her love for all of God's children was a beautiful example to all and reflects a key part of our responsibilities to care for those in need.

Discussion:

- St. Katharine Drexel took to heart what Jesus teaches in scripture, namely that it is our responsibility to provide for those in most need. What is your responsibility to the poor and needy? What can you do, even as a student, to care for those in need?
- Reflect upon any service opportunities you have had, perhaps within your parish, school or team. How did that service make you feel? Did it help you grow closer to God? How do you think it impacted those you served?

Practice Plan: Today's lesson is an important one that brings together many previous lessons. Your team has discussed being made in the image of God and the need to care for the sick and poor; it is now important to tie those things together and help them to see the face of God in those in need. Perhaps this is a good time to remind them that not all kids have the opportunity to play sports as they do, that through disability, poverty or a number of other family situations, some kids simply don't get this chance. Encourage them to consider that and you may even want to discuss how this impacts their play, which should reflect their being joyful, grateful and willing to give great effort.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, in St. Katharine Drexel you show us a wonderful example of someone dedicated to those oppressed and neglected in society. May we never consent to such oppression and neglect, but rather strive like St. Katharine and many other saints to seek out and care for these people in most need. We pray especially for all minorities in this country, including those individuals served by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, that they may always be treated with the same dignity and respect as everyone else, realizing that we are all one in Christ. Bless our team with a safe and fun practice and may we glorify you through our work this day. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids of their responsibility for the sick and poor, then close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Katharine Drexel, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 8

Theme: The Dignity of Work

Scripture: Deuteronomy 14:29

"...and the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do."

Saintly Example: St. Isaac Jogues

St. Isaac Jogues was a Jesuit priest living in the 1600's and along with his companions he ministered to the Huron tribe of Native Americans living in the northeastern part of what is now the United States and Canada. His work with the tribe won converts to Christianity and helped provide for both their physical and spiritual needs. Their physical needs were great, with a scarcity of many goods leaving tribes poor and suffering. On return from a trip north to bring supplies back to the Huron people, Isaac Jogues' group was ambushed by Iroquois warriors. They were held captive, tortured and eventually killed as a result of their faith and relationship with the Huron. Though their lives were cut short, their heroic example of love for God, hard work, and care for their fellow person has lived on and led many to grow closer to Christ.

Discussion:

- Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, the bible and church have made known the particular dignity of work and it's role in society. We must all understand that everyone has the right to provide for their family through honest work, to be treated fairly and respected for their contribution to family and society. Think of your family members, what jobs do they have that you are thankful for? Can you think of any jobs in society that may go unnoticed or don't get the respect they deserve? How can we show people who work that we are grateful for their work and work to promote the dignity of all who work?
- Think of what you want to do when you grow up. What role do you think playing sports as a child will play in preparing you for high school, college and work? What benefits do you get from sports that can help you in work later in life? (Ex. hard work, discipline, creativity, teamwork, etc).

Practice Plan: As a way to help show them the importance and dignity of hard work, be especially quick to praise them today for their efforts during practice. Drive home the importance of working hard, whether it's sports, school, or doing chores at home, etc. Share with them your appreciation for their hard work. Feel free to share with them the role youth sports played in preparing you for your job now as an adult, including any lessons learned or virtues developed.

Prayer: Almighty God, we thank you today especially for the work of our parents, family members and all those who work in our communities. We thank you for their hard work and pray that you will bless them with fair wages, good conditions, and a healthy appreciation for time at rest. We pray also for all those unemployed, that they may find work so that they can provide for themselves and their families. May all who work grow closer to you and learn to glorify you through their labor. Bless also our team and our own kind of work we do at practice today. Help us to glorify you by working hard and putting forth our full effort, so that we may use the gifts you have given us to the best of our ability. We thank you for the efforts of our coaches who help us to grow and pray that you will bless them and their families. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children of the conversation/content from the beginning of practice and close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Isaac Jogues, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

6th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 9

Theme: Solidarity

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12: 12, 22-26

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable,²³ and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part,²⁵ that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Saintly Example: St. Kateri Tekakwitha

St. Kateri Tekakwitha is the first Native American saint and one of the most recent saints canonized, as she became a saint in 2012. She lived for just 24 short years in the 1600's, but her example of holiness and prayer has inspired many after her. A part of the Mohawk tribe, Kateri's mother died when she was only 4 of smallpox, a disease that left Kateri alive but with scars on her face. Those scars would miraculously disappear and her face transform upon her death. During her life, Kateri lived in a society that was unkind and oppressive to Christians. When she began to experience a conversion in her teenage years, many were cruel to her and tried to sway her away from God. Though she committed herself to a life of chastity and did not wish to marry, her family tried to force marriage upon her. She was baptized at age 20 and eventually escaped to a Christian village where she could more freely practice prayer and devotion to God. She had a particular devotion to the Eucharist, praying in front of Our Lord nearly all day. She cared for the poor and sick as well, with everyone she met struck by her beautiful love of God and compassion for other persons.

Discussion:

- Put simply, Solidarity is the teaching that we are all one as a human family, no matter our differences. The church teaches that "at the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace" (USCCB.org). How does this teaching impact our view of the world around us? How does it affect how we treat our friends? Those who look different than us? Those from different family situations?
- One of the great blessings of sports is that it brings people from all over the world together as participants or spectators in the name of a team. No matter who a person is or where they are from, all teammates must work together "as one" in order for the team to succeed. Can you think of a time when you found acceptance as part of a team? How can members of a team reflect solidarity and lead others to Christ? (Ex. by welcoming in new team members and including them.)

Practice Plan: Focus on the importance of teamwork as your season comes to a close. Work to drive home the importance of performing as a team and how this affects your performance. Impart the importance of solidarity and understanding that just as we are all one human family under God, the team must also act as one, with different parts performing different roles in order to be successful. The concept of solidarity can be a great concept to consider on the team level for youth athletes.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of our parishes, schools and teams. We rejoice that so many people become one family under God. Help us to always love and respect each other and the different roles we play in the one, universal church. We thank you for the gift of our teammates, coaches and families. May we work to perform as one team, so that we can use all our individual talents to the best of our ability to glorify you and grow in our faith and athletic skill. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team about the importance of teamwork and solidarity. Close with a prayer of your team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade Winter Season

- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Beatitudes **Scripture:** Matthew 5:1-12 **Saint:** Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Prayer **Scripture:** Matthew 6:1-6 **Saint:** St. Benedict
- Preseason Week 3 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - The Will of God **Scripture:** Matthew 7:7-8, 21 **Saint:** St. Elizabeth Seton
- Preseason Week 4 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Parables **Scripture:** Matthew 13:10-13 **Saint:** None
- Preseason Week 5 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Miracles **Scripture:** Luke 5:4-9 **Saint:** St. Philip (Apostle)
- Preseason Week 6 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Service **Scripture:** John 13:12-17 **Saint:** St. Angela Merici
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Mission **Scripture:** Luke 9:21-22 **Saint:** St. Philippine Duchesne
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Discrimination **Scripture:** Galatians 3:28 **Saint:** St. Maximilian Kolbe
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Eucharist **Scripture:** John 6:35 **Saint:** St. Thomas Aquinas
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Respect for Life **Scripture:** Psalm 139:13-16 **Saint:** St. Peter Claver
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** Applying Jesus' Teachings - Modesty **Scripture:** Matthew 5:27-30 **Saint:** St. Therese of Lisieux
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** The Holy Spirit - Unifying the Church **Scripture:** Acts 2:1-4 **Saint:** St. Catherine of Siena
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** The Holy Spirit - Vocational Discernment **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 **Saint:** St. John Neumann
- Regular Season Week 8 - **Theme:** Mary as Mother - The Memorare **Scripture:** Luke 1:41-44 **Saint:** None
- Regular Season Week 9 - **Theme:** Hail Holy Queen - Mary as Queen of Heaven **Scripture:** Revelation 12:1-6 **Saint:** Mary, Queen of Heaven

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Beatitudes

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Saintly Example: Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

Pope John Paul II once called Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati a "man of the beatitudes," and this seems a fitting description of this modern example of holiness. Though Pier was born into a very wealthy family, he very early on took a particular interest in those who were most in need. From the beginning it seems that he was a boy of exceptional holiness, always praying; praying the rosary, asking for the intercession of his favorite saints, or spending time in Eucharistic adoration as much as possible. He was known by family and friends for being exceptionally joyful, always quick with a smile or joke and full of love. When he contracted polio and died at the age of 24, his parents were shocked to find that the city's poor and sick came to their home to pay respects, for it seems that young Pier had quietly spent much of his life providing for these people's needs. He would go into the slums to provide food, clothing or simply care and support for those in need of assistance, never boasting of his work but merely living out the gospel message as best he could. He remains an example for all of us in living the beatitudes.

Discussion:

- Even as a boy, Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati lived out the beatitudes by showing special care for those in most need. How can we live out the beatitudes in our own community? What can our team do this year to provide a ministry to those in need so that we might live out the beatitudes as Christ taught?

Practice Plan: Now is an excellent time to consider a service project for your team this year. This could be as simple as collecting food or clothes to donate, or it could include finding a ministry and devoting time as a team to a service. Talk to the team and find out what they are interested in doing, then help facilitate this service, providing guidance but allowing the team to take ownership of the service. Your parish likely has plenty of resources if you are looking for ideas or ministries that might facilitate this.

Prayer: Lord, you give us the example of holy men and women like Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati so that we might learn from them and come to know your call for us more deeply. Grant that we might be filled with the joy and compassion of Bl. Pier Giorgio and that we too might find ways to live out the beatitudes in our lives. Bless our team this year that we may be focused on you and use our talents to glorify you in all that we do. Draw us near to you during this practice and as we seek ways to serve those in most need in our community. We pray that you will watch over us this day and always. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team of the service project you developed and close with a prayer of your team's choice.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 2

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 6: 1-6

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2 "Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Concerning Prayer 5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Saintly Example: St. Benedict

St. Benedict is considered the father of modern monasticism, as his *Rule of St. Benedict* laid out the guidelines for living in a community focused on God and the methods of prayer he used are still in practice all over the world today. When St. Benedict created his famous community at Monte Cassino in Italy, he was developing a concept that nobody had ever used before, but impact the history of the Church in a phenomenal way. In particular, his devotion to prayer that focuses on the psalms, hymns, scripture and silent reflection became a source of great blessings for the church. Known popularly as the Liturgy of the Hours, methods of this prayer are used by monastic communities and lay faithful worldwide. In this method of prayer, the community joins together for prayer at key times through the day, including Morning Prayer, Mid-Day Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer. St. Benedict's holy example and his simple rule serve as powerful guidelines for all of us in today's world.

Discussion:

- What can today's scripture and St. Benedict's example teach us about prayer? In today's busy world, how can we find time to pray each day and focus ourselves on The Lord?

Practice Plan & Prayer: As an introduction to a very simple example of the Liturgy of the Hours prayers, begin practice by praying the prayer on the following page. If possible, make a few copies of this and divide your team into two groups.

*See Following Page for Prayer

End of Practice: Remind children about the importance of prayer and close with the team's choice of prayer.

5 Minute Game Plan

Evening Prayer (Example for Practice Week 2)

Leader (L): God come to my assistance

All (A): Lord make haste to help me

L: Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

A: As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever.
Amen.

Psalm 10 (11)

All: The Lord cares for the weak and oppressed.

Group 1: In the Lord I have taken my refuge.

How can you say to my soul:

'Fly like a bird to its mountain.

Group 2: See the wicked bracing their bow;
they are fixing their arrows on the string
to shoot upright men in the dark.

Foundations once destroyed, what can the just
do?'

1: The Lord is in his holy temple,
the Lord, whose throne is in heaven.
His eyes look down on the world;
his gaze tests mortal men.

2: The Lord tests the just and the wicked;
the lover of violence he hates.
He sends fire and brimstone on the wicked;
he sends a scorching wind as their lot.

1: The Lord is just and loves justice;
the upright shall see his face.

2: Glory to the Father and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be for ever. Amen.

All: The Lord cares for the weak and oppressed.

Short Reading: Colossians 1:9-11 (Choose Reader)

Through perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding,
may you reach the fullest knowledge of God's will. So
you will be able to lead the kind of life which the Lord
expects of you, a life acceptable to him in all its
aspects; showing the results in all the good actions you
do and increasing your knowledge of God. You will
have in you the strength, based on his own glorious
power, never to give in, but to bear anything joyfully.

Short Responsory

L: Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

A: Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

L: I have said, 'Lord, take pity on me.'

A: Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

L: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the
Holy Spirit.

A: Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

Intentions (Optional for Team Use)

All: Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be
Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be
done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this
day our daily bread, and forgive us our
trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass
against us. And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Leader: Let our worship give you glory, Lord,
who for our salvation
looked upon the lowliness of Mary, your
handmaid: raise us up to share with her
the fullness of redemption.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy
Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.
(Sign of the Cross)

*Adapted from Evening Prayer, *Universalis* (Nov. 11,
2013)

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 3

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - The Will of God

Scripture: Matthew 7: 7-8, 21

"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Saintly Example: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Elizabeth Ann Seton was born into wealth and married into more wealth in New York City around the end of the 18th century. She had little to trouble her for the first part of her life and found herself happily married with her life seeming to go as planned. Then, in 1801 things began to take a turn from the way she expected them to go. First, her father-in-law passed away, leaving her and her husband to care for his 7 siblings. Then her husband became ill and required a trip to Italy in an attempt to heal him. He died in 1803. Among their 5 children, 3 died over the next 20 years. This was a trying time for Elizabeth and she began to rely more and more on God to get by. In fact, it was during this time that she began to see the beauty of the Catholic Church and she eventually entered into the church in 1805. She frequently made reference to God's will in her life and relied upon faith in His will and a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary to get through difficult times. God indeed had great plans for Elizabeth and following His will made for another significant set of events in her life that led to her professing vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in 1809 and becoming the foundress of the American version of the Sisters of Charity (originally begun by St. Vincent de Paul). Henceforth known as Mother Seton, the order she helped create founded orphanages and schools across the United States. By her death in 1821 at only 46 years old, her life had crossed many paths and she had gone from wealthy heiress to taking vows of poverty and caring for the very poor and sick as a Catholic nun, all thanks to following God's will. When this remarkable woman was canonized in 1975, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton was the first native born citizen of the United States to receive the title Saint in the Catholic Church.

Discussion:

- The word *discernment* means to "judge well" and with a particular interest in obtaining spiritual guidance through prayer. How does a person go about discerning God's will in his/her life? Have you had the experience of praying to God about something and having Him reveal to you His will?

Practice Plan: One of the keys to discernment is having the tools to make decisions. This includes both prayer and the experience of learning to make decisions big and small. Do your part in this process by both encouraging prayer this week and making it a point to allow the children on the team to make more decisions on the floor. Whereas practice is the time to coach, give them more opportunities to read the floor and call the plays during this week's game, instead of feeling the need to do this as coach. Studies have shown this will help make them better basketball players for you as well as improve their ability to make decisions as they grow and develop.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for our own free will and the many blessings you have bestowed upon us. We ask you for the graces to understand your will in our lives and to follow that will regardless of how difficult it may be, for we know it will truly make us the most happy. We ask for the intercession of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, who focused on always following your will and became a great saint. Be with us in the decisions we make this week and bless our team with a safe and fun practice. Amen.

End of Practice: Encourage kids to pray always and seek God's will. Close with the following prayer.

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Pray for Us!

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 4

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Parables

Scripture: Matthew 13: 10-13

Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 11 And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Lessons on the Parables:

Parables have been called a distinctly Jewish style of storytelling, so it makes sense that Jesus would have taught so frequently by using parables during His ministry. The basic idea is that by using a parable, the teacher can draw particular attention to a lesson or teaching from God. As He seems to indicate in today's scripture passage, there were many during this time that did not believe in God; these people were not likely to hear someone simply tell them that He exists and believe. Rather, Jesus could grab their attention with a parable about something they would understand from their own life, then use that story to illustrate His point. For example, the story told in the gospel of Matthew directly before his disciples asked him (above) why he speaks in parables is called the Parable of the Sower. In that popular parable, Jesus teaches a large crowd by telling the tale of a man who sowed (planted) seeds. He scattered some along the path, where the birds could eat them. Others fell on rocky ground and died immediately, still others fell into thorny brush and could never grow amidst the thorns. Yet some fell on good soil and those grew and produced great grain. Jesus then continues beginning in Matthew 13:18-23 to explain this parable. In this case, he tells what he means by each place the seed fell: the seeds are really people and the places they fall represent their state in life and willingness to hear the Word of God. *As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit* (Mt. 13:23). In this way, Christ is using our own earthly experiences to reach those who were closed to hearing the message He came to share.

Discussion:

- Do you have a favorite parable story from the bible? How does this help you to draw closer to God?
- Often times stories from sports are used in society as a sort of metaphor or parable. Consider how the role of sports in your life helps draw you closer to God. Does participating in sports help you to understand God better? To follow His will better? Do sports help build virtues (holy characteristics) that will help you get to heaven?

Practice Plan: Emphasize this week the reading of scripture as the "greatest story ever told." Just as an athlete reads from his or her playbook to learn the way, we as Christians must read from scripture to learn the true way. As a coach, lead the children toward the true teacher, God himself, who became man and taught us how to follow Him.

Prayer

- Dear Lord, we thank you for this day and for the gift of our team and this practice. We thank you for the blessing of our coaches who help us to understand this game and grow in our abilities. Help us also to learn and understand the greatest teacher, Jesus Christ, who teaches us through the gospels. Give us the graces to read and understand scripture, to enter into prayer with you and grow in our knowledge of you. We pray that you will bless and protect us this week and we commit to do our absolute best so that we can use the talents you have given us. Amen.

End of Practice: Emphasize scripture and prayer. Then close with a prayer of your team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 5

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Miracles

Scripture: Luke 5: 4-9

And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking,⁷ they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."⁹ For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken;

Saintly Example: St. Philip (Apostle)

What we know about the apostle Philip comes primarily from the gospels in the New Testament. In John 1:43 we hear of Jesus call to Philip, whom not only follows Jesus right away, but also finds Nathaniel and convinces him to come along telling him that he has found him of whom "the prophets wrote" (Jn 1:45). We also know that Philip remained one of the original apostles through Jesus life and that he was present in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles. His name comes up from time to time with other events, but perhaps his most famous interactions takes place during one of Christ's great miracles in the feeding of the five thousand. When Jesus asks Philip how they will feed the masses coming to hear Him speak, Philip replies that "Two hundred denariil would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little" (Jn 6:7). This sets the stage of course, for Christ to turn the 5 barley loaves and 2 fish they do have into enough food for all to eat.

Discussion:

- One of the key points of Christ's miracles is that through a deep faith in God, anything is possible. Do you have any examples of times when something seemed impossible but through prayer and faith you were able to accomplish your goal?
- People often speak of "miracles" in sports. Though not the same as Christ's miracles, the theme of faith and belief is still present. Are there times when playing sports where you were part of a team that believed in itself and was able to accomplish more than seemed possible?

Practice Plan: One of the simple but beautiful virtues of the apostles was their steadfast faith in Our Lord. They were among the few who left their worldly possessions behind and followed Jesus from the beginning. Help your team to follow Christ by encouraging them in prayer and faith. This can be as simple as working to instill in them a faith in the athletic abilities God has given them, affirming each child's areas of mental and physical skill. Remind them that God has a plan for each of them and each of them has unique talents and skills whether in school, sports or life that will manifest if they have great faith.

Prayer

- Father, we praise your holy name and thank you for the example of your miracles and the apostles. Through their witness and faith in you, we come to know more deeply your love and mercy. We ask for the prayer of St. Philip that we may gain faith and resolve even when our lives are difficult. Bless our team and our coaches. May we seek to understand the talents you have given each of us and use them to the best of our ability so that we can glorify you and grow as a team. Increase our faith in you and in our abilities. Amen.

End of Practice: Affirm the abilities and talents in each child and encourage them to have faith as the apostles had faith. Close with the following prayer:

- Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art though among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. St. Philip, Pray for us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 6

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Service

Scripture: John 13: 12-17

When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Saintly Example: St. St. Angela Merici

St. Angela de Merici founded a group of religious women that was known as the "Company of St. Ursula" and later became known simply as the Ursulines. The group was not formally considered a religious order during her life, but upon becoming officially recognized it was the first order of women religious dedicated to service through teaching. These nuns were unique in their beginnings in that they did not live in cloister (in a convent) like all other nuns did at the time, but rather remained living within their communities and neighborhoods with the purpose of educating those around them and founding schools that had an emphasis on Christ. The success of St. Angela de Merici's small group of women can be attributed to a large group of schools and religious sisters working all over the world today.

Discussion:

- Christ's teachings on service to others can be lived in many ways. The Ursulines demonstrate that service through teaching while other orders through care of the sick or other ministries. Your coaches serve by donating their time to lead your team and help you grow closer to God and maximize your abilities. What other roles of service can you think of? Is there someone who has made a great impact on your life through service?
- How can we individually serve others in our own lives? How can we serve our family and friends?

Practice Plan: Earlier in the season you created a plan for a team service project. Reference that and explain to the kids that they can perform all kinds of service on their own. Encourage them to discuss with their parents how they can serve their family, their school, or those in need.

Prayer

- Lord, you give us the gift of service so that we might demonstrate our love for our brothers, sisters and neighbors in Christ. May we always be willing to serve our family, our friends, our teammates and others with great joy, remembering that you called us to serve others in the gospel. Help us to overcome our fear or hesitation in service so that we can serve others through acts great and small. Bless our team that we may be models of your love through the way we practice and play, glorifying you and trying our hardest always. We pray for a fun and safe practice. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the kids of Christ's message of service. Then close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Saint Angela de Merici, Pray for us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 1

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Mission

Scripture: Luke 9: 21-22

But he charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, ²² saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

Saintly Example: St. Rose Philippine Duchesne

It seems that from baptism this saint was given her mission in the church, as she was named after St. Philip the Apostle and St. Rose of Lima, who was the first saint of the new world. Like her namesakes, St. Rose Philippine Duchesne would go on to spread the Word of God and do so in the new world. After joining the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in her native France, it is said she continued to feel a call toward missionary work that she had felt her entire life. She was sent to America in 1818 and arrived in St. Louis when much of the midwest was very much frontier country. After establishing her order in St. Louis, she went on to build schools in Missouri, Louisiana, and Kansas. In particular these schools were for young women and native americans. At the same time, she also worked hard to have a deep life of prayer and contemplation on her own. Through this prayer she gained the strength she needed to perform her ministry, even as she grew older. She died in St. Charles, MO at the age of 83.

Discussion:

- Jesus talks in the gospels about His own mission (see scripture above). Consider your personal mission. Do you ever think about where God is calling you? Do you think about what he's calling you to do now? In the future? Have you considered praying for your vocation?
- Create a team mission statement. What is the mission of your team? What goals do you have? What do believe God is calling you to accomplish this season through your team? What do you hope others gain from your mission?

Practice Plan: Pay particular attention to the second discussion exercise and create a mission statement for your team the remainder of the season. Consider that it's not truly a "mission" to try to win games (everyone tries to do that) but rather determine what your mission is beyond this. Is your goal as a team to draw closer to Christ? To lead others to Christ through the way you pray, practice and play? To help make your sport look fun so that other kids will want to join your team? There are many options!

Prayer

- Dear God, you sent your only son to take on the flesh of man so that He might live out His mission and overcome our sins on the cross. As we learn of your deep love, help us to consider our own mission. Develop in our hearts a desire to do your will and accept whatever mission you call us to in our lives. May we consider our vocation and the ways in which we can serve you. Bless our coaches as they help us to grow as a team this year and bless our families as they support us now and always. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team of the mission statement you created and encourage them to consider their own mission while praying and reflecting on Christ's mission and death on the cross. Close with the following prayer:

- Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, Pray for us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 2

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Discrimination

Scripture: Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Saintly Example: St. Maximillian Kolbe

Even before he became a priest, St. Maximillian Kolbe displayed a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother when he founded the Immaculata Movement. This movement was designed to seek a deeper understanding and love of Christ through a consecration to His mother Mary. Though this became a worldwide movement leading people toward Christ through Mary, it was ultimately Kolbe's martyrdom that became a symbol of hope in the midst of perhaps the greatest evil of the 21st century. A Polish priest during the reign of Hitler and the Nazi regime, Kolbe was eventually arrested for practicing his faith and led along with thousands of others to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. When a prisoner escaped the camp one day, 10 people were chosen to die as punishment. Among them was a father and husband who pleaded for his life. Moved by his plea, Fr. Kolbe stepped forward and offered to take that man's place. He was led to a chamber where he and the others were to starve to death. Ordinarily this didn't take long, yet each day when the soldiers came to check on the group, the future saint Kolbe was celebrating Mass and joyfully leading them in songs and prayers. Kolbe remained the last one alive after nearly 14 days when they killed him. His amazing witness of love and faith in the face of evil remains one of the great blessings to come from the Holocaust and he was canonized a saint in 1982.

Discussion:

- St. Maximillian Kolbe was the victim of extreme discrimination when he was arrested and sent to the concentration camp along with thousands of others for being Catholic, Jewish or of any group not deemed by Hitler to be among the chosen. What discrimination do you see around you today? At school? In sports? In your community?
- What can you do on your team to eliminate discrimination and treat everyone with love and respect? How can your team set an example that impacts others?

Practice Plan: Discrimination of any kind remains a great problem in the world today, as we are all called to love each and every individual as Christ loves us. Regardless of who they are or whether we (or the church) agree with them on important matters, we must still treat them with love. Share this simple message of love with your team by making it a point to affirm each of them as individuals during practice today. Pick out something they do well or something that makes them unique and make a positive comment about that. If you can do this about a characteristic or personality trait rather than just athletic skill, all the better!

Prayer

- Dear Lord, we thank you for the freedom to freely practice our religion that we enjoy today. Yet we realize that some are still discriminated against and not treated with the love and dignity they deserve as persons. We pray for those people around the world and ask that you help us to love and serve them according to your will. Bless all victims of discrimination and we pray that they may know your love. Strengthen our faith individually and help us to grow as a team today. Bless our families at home and our coaches. Amen.

End of Practice: Remember those positive comments (see above) and close with a prayer of the team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 3

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Eucharist

Scripture: John 6:35

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."

Saintly Example: St. Thomas Aquinas

When Pope Benedict XVI spent three successive general audiences in 2010 speaking about the legacy of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the most important things he noted was the saint's particular devotion to the Eucharist. Aquinas noted the Blessed Sacrament as that of "the Passion of our Lord, (which) contains in it Jesus Christ who suffered for us" (Benedict XVI, 6/23/10). Indeed it is Christ Himself present in the Eucharist, a point which Thomas Aquinas reiterated eloquently in many of his works. Living in the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas is considered one of the great theologians in the history of the Catholic Church. His initial entry into a Dominican order was met with great opposition by his family, but he held firm in his vocation and eventually became a priest. He also continued his education and received a doctorate. Though his writing may be most well known, including the very large work *Summa Theologica*, his ability to speak and preach was responsible for earning him many prestigious invitations to dine with everyone from kings to the Pope. He is considered the patron saint of universities, academics and theologians, among other things.

Discussion:

- St. Thomas Aquinas was a brilliant priest, speaker and writer who taught us many beautiful things about the Eucharist. What impact has the Eucharist had on your life?
- Jesus tells us that He is "the bread of life" and that we are to come to him. How can our team find strength and draw closer to God through the Eucharist?

Practice Plan: Consider going to Mass together as a team. As there is no better way to draw close to God as a community, find a time that would work to invite the team and families to a parish Mass. This could be a weekday Mass (perhaps Saturday morning before the week's game), or a Saturday Vigil/ Sunday Mass. Simply extend the invitation and sit together with families as a team. Teams who have done this even once through the year have found great benefit from the graces they receive in the Eucharist as a team.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, you give us our daily bread, the very flesh of your son Jesus Christ made real in the Eucharist. We thank you for this gift that we can receive and the many graces you pour out upon us through this sacrament. Thank you also for the gift of St. Thomas Aquinas and the many lessons he taught that still help us to know you today. Bless our team that we may continue to learn of you and grow in our athletic skill through the teaching of our coaches. Help us to have a thirst for knowledge of you and receive you in the Eucharist whenever possible. Protect and guide our team as we seek to do our very best in today's practice and always. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Make a plan to attend Mass as a team, extending the invitation to the boys or girls and reminding them that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Saint Thomas Aquinas, Pray for us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 4

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Respect for Life

Scripture: Psalm 139: 13-16

For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am wondrously made. Wonderful are your works! You know me right well; 15 my frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Saintly Example: St. Peter Claver

St. Peter Claver was born and educated in Catalonia (present day Spain) where he became a priest. He was sent on mission to the northern edge of what is now South America and at that time was a hub of the slave trade. European merchants would gather slaves from Africa and ship them across the ocean to the new world, where they would arrive and be readied to be bought and sold by the merchants there. It was a brutal, inhumane environment and the place where St. Peter Claver worked for most of his life. There he would care for the slaves, providing for the sick or injured and catechizing them in the Catholic faith. It's believed that through his work over 300,000 slaves entered into the church (catholic.org)! Through his lifelong fight for those with no voice in society, he met opposition from the merchants, locals and even some within the churches where he gathered the slaves for worship. Yet he persevered and today is known as the patron saint of slaves.

Discussion:

- The Catholic Church stands firm in teaching that each and every individual, from conception until natural death, was created by God and as such has a certain dignity and worth. St. Peter Claver worked for over 30 years to provide for the slaves of his time. In what ways can you help stand up for the innocent and mistreated in today's world? How can you affirm the dignity of all human life through your work at home, school or in the community?
- In what ways can your team be a witness to the dignity of all human life? How can you affirm the dignity of each other, your coaches, and families? How can you work as a team to promote this dignity and respect for life?

Practice Plan: Work to affirm the dignity of each individual on the team through being positive and affirming their qualities and unique contributions to the team as a person. You might also consider looking into parish opportunities for witnessing to the dignity of life and inviting everyone on the team to participate at an event, whether that be through prayer or action.

Prayer

- Lord, we thank you for giving us the gift of life and for the opportunity to participate on this team. We thank you for our parents who love us, our teachers and coaches who teach us, and our friends. We pray together for those who have no voice, especially the unborn children and people today whom society does not treat with dignity and affirm as God's creation. We pray for the conversion of souls and the protection of all those in danger. May we be a witness to the dignity of life each day. Bless this practice and protect us, that we may grow in our athletic skill and come to know you more each day this week. Amen.

End of Practice: Affirm the dignity of all human life and try to leave each child with a positive comment that speaks to their character and contributions to the team as a person. Close with a prayer of the team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 5

Theme: Applying Jesus' Teachings - Modesty

Scripture: Matthew 5: 27-30

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Saintly Example: St. Therese of Lisieux

St. Therese of Lisieux is known by many names, as she was also called "The Little Flower" and "St. Theresa of the Child Jesus." Though she died when she was only 24, she was a remarkable saint who lived in the late 1800's. A difficult childhood led to years of sadness, including outbursts of tears at the slightest issue. Yet as she became a teenager, she experienced a great joy as the result of her habits of prayer. She had what she called her "conversion" on Christmas as a 14 year old girl. She felt God calling her to the religious life and eventually convinced church authorities to let her enter the Carmelite convent at the age of 15, before most women were permitted to enter convents. There she developed what she called "The Little Way", a life of deep prayer and willingness to do the little things each day to provide for her sisters and glorify God. She did much cleaning and hard work in the convent, realizing that all these things were the way God had called her to serve Him. She prayed through all these "little" things and developed a close relationship with God so that she could find joy even in sacrifice. Even when she became gravely ill, she wrote down many of her thoughts and prayers, with her autobiography *The Story of a Soul* still available today as a look into her saintly life and a lesson for all of us.

Discussion:

- According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden" (CCC 2521). For both boys and girls alike, it should affect everything from actions to appropriate dress. Frankly, this becomes increasingly difficult in a world that champions a lack of modesty in young men and women. How can you and others work to be modest in today's world? At school? At home? Is this difficult to do?
- Sports may not be considered a threat to modesty, but many actions or styles of clothing/uniforms are just that. How can your team practice and promote modesty for athletes in today's world? Do you think this is difficult?

Practice Plan: Encourage modesty within your team by making sure that uniforms and practice clothes are appropriate and modest (this includes both boys and girls). Encourage modest actions amongst the kids in the way they speak and present themselves around the team. ****Important note:** while it seems society wants to attribute modesty as a female characteristic, it's certainly as important for young boys to learn. Young men should be taught to keep their clothes on (including shirts) in all situations around the parish and school, particularly where women or girls might be present. It may seem harmless, but this is part of teaching our young men about the dignity of the person and a healthy respect for the body.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for the example of St. Therese of Lisieux and her model of doing all the little things each day to glorify You. We pray in a special way for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, that they may all feel the love and respect they deserve, knowing that they are your creation. May our actions and words serve to affirm their dignity at all times. We thank you for our team and pray that we may work hard to use the gifts you have given us, so that we may reach the very best of our ability in life and in sports. Bless us with a safe and fun practice. Amen.

End of Practice: Continue to encourage modesty and close with a prayer of the team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 6

Theme: The Holy Spirit - Unifying the Church

Scripture: Acts 2: 1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Saintly Example: St. Catherine of Siena

Catherine was born in 1347 in Italy and lived only 33 short years. Yet during that time she became one of the great doctors of the church and was a brilliant theological mind. An uneducated daughter who was the 25th (!) child of her parents, it's said Catherine had her first vision of Christ as a 6 year old. From that time forward she committed herself totally to Christ and eventually entered the Third Order of St. Dominic. In her ministry she served people affected by the plague, those in prison, and many other sick and suffering. Her visions of Christ and the Blessed Mother continued and she also became known as a worker of miracles; she was even called upon by Popes to help end feuds and heal church schisms. Her writings during her short life are still considered among the most important and beautiful among the many saints. She died in 1380, though her body was found over 50 years after death to be in-corrputed, which means it was still in the pure condition of her death and had not deteriorated as is normal.

Discussion:

- One of St. Catherine's great gifts on earth was the ability to heal divisions and move souls to repentance and conversion. For her and for us, it is the Holy Spirit that is constantly with us to help guide our church and create unity. How can we promote unity and seek to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Are there divisions in our schools or communities where we can help be a part of creating unity? (These could be general or specific.)
- How do we promote unity on our team? In what ways do we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit within our team?

Practice Plan: Promote unity within the team by working to heal any divisions that might be affecting the team. Often these are small things between boys or girls that may need to be addressed in order to fix issues. Promote forgiveness among teammates and encourage the kids to work together and treat each other with dignity and respect both on and off the court.

Prayer

- Lord, we thank you for the example of St. Catherine of Siena and of all the saints who followed the guidance of your Holy Spirit through the ages. We pray that we too may be guided by the Spirit and come to know you more each day. Heal our wounds and divisions on earth so that we might love our brothers and sisters as you call us to. May our team find unity and work together to glorify you in all that we do. Protect us and guide us. May the Holy Spirit come upon us and lead us in this practice and the week ahead. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in prayer. Work to build unity as a team and close practice with the following prayer:

- Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth. O God, Who didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise, and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. St. Catherine of Siena, Pray for us

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 7

Theme: The Holy Spirit - Vocational Discernment

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 ¶ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Saintly Example: St. John Neumann

Amazingly, when the young John Neumann was ready to be ordained a priest in the early 1800's, there was declared a stop to ordinations on account of too many priests across Europe. Feeling certain he was called to the vocation of the priesthood, he wrote to bishops in America and was eventually welcomed and ordained in New York. What a blessing he became for our country. After eventually becoming bishop of Philadelphia, he created the first diocesan Catholic school system in America (catholic.org). He further promoted growth in Catholic schools and saw a great increase in the number of schools in his diocese, which helped lead to an increase in schools across the region. His model for schools in Philadelphia was copied elsewhere and helped our Catholic schools become what they are today. By his death in 1860, it was beyond clear he was called to his role as a priest that was once withheld from him, and today he is considered the father of Catholic education in America as we know it.

Discussion:

- Everyone is called to discern their vocation by listening to God's call for him or her. You could be called to marriage, the priesthood or religious life, or even a single vocation. How can you go about discerning your vocation? Do you know what resources you have available? Are you discerning your vocation? (Though simply being open to God's call and praying for your vocation is a great place to start, the Archdiocesan Vocations Office is a great place for resources and can be accessed online).
- How can you support the discernment of vocations as a team? How can you support all vocations?

Practice Plan: Sports provide a great blessing in discernment and there are some great stories of athletes who chose to end their careers to follow the path to the priesthood. Consider looking up the stories of former baseball prospect Grant Desme or soccer pro Chase Hilgenbrinck and sharing those with your team as inspiration that even the best athletes need to discern their vocation to be sure where God is calling them.

Prayer

- Dear God, we thank you for the example of the saints and the gifts of the religious and priests who model your love in our parishes, schools and communities each day. We thank you also for our parents and for all those who model the vocation of marriage and family life. May you simply send the Holy Spirit to guide us as we grow older and discern our vocation, giving us the graces to hear your call so that we may be truly happy. Bless our team today and the remainder of this year that we may work together to help each other use our skills and talents to the best of our abilities. Bless our coaches as they teach us and grant us a safe and fun practice. Amen.

End of Practice: Encourage your team members to pray for their own vocation and each other's. Then close practice by praying for all our priests, religious and the grace to know our own vocation call.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 8

Theme: Mary as Mother - The Memorare

Scripture: Luke 1: 41-44

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the child leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy.

Learning the Memorare: As Catholics we understand that Mary is indeed our Mother who intercedes for us from heaven. We are called to honor her and go to her so that we may learn more about her son. There are many beautiful Marian prayers that have become popular over the centuries, but the Memorare in particular has stuck as a plea for her intercession and protection. Practice the following prayer, which the children are required to know in school as well.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Discussion:

- How has Mary been a source of protection in your life? How has her intercession helped you? If you have not invoked Mary's intercession in your daily life, how do you think the Mother of our Lord can help us to grow closer to Him?
- Mary certainly plays a role in sports, with even famous plays named after her. If someone throws up a last second pass in football or shot in basketball from a long distance, it's usually called a "Hail Mary." A famous football play that took place just before Christmas decades ago was nicknamed the "Immaculate Reception" by a Pittsburgh sportscaster as a nod to the Immaculate Conception (Mary's conception). Many teams pray for her intercession during games. How can Mary be an integral part of our team? In what ways can we invoke her protection and care in our lives and on our team?

Practice Plan: Think of a unique way to ask for Mary's intercession and protection during the remainder of the season. This could be as simple as a prayer before each practice and game (consider the Memorare) or another devotion. Use this to encourage the children to draw close to Mary and go through her to her son, our Lord.

Prayer: Recite again the Memorare prior to beginning practice:

- *Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.*

End of Practice: Affirm and encourage a devotion to Mary as a way to grow closer to her son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Close with the following prayer, asking for her intercession and protection this week:

- Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

7th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 9

Theme: Hail Holy Queen - Mary as Queen of Heaven

Scripture: Revelation 12: 1-6

And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; 5 she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Saintly Example: Mary, Queen of Heaven

When a young virgin named Mary received a visit from the angel Gabriel, a mission was revealed to her that would define salvation history. While her "yes" remains a model for following the will of God, her journey began much earlier. From the beginning of her life which we celebrate as the Immaculate Conception, Mary was without sin. She was a part of God's plan as the most pure vessel from which could be born our God as man in Jesus. Thus, her entire creation and life is worthy of honor and devotion, for she is the perfect model of a human. It follows then that given her special mission Mary would have a special place in heaven reserved for her. Indeed, in her Assumption into heaven she takes her place by the Son's side, there to pray for us and love us as our own mother. Through the years she has not been distant either, appearing in many places to offer guidance and draw converts. These visions of Mary are often called "apparitions" and you've heard of them when we refer to Mary by names such as Our Lady of Lourdes or Our Lady of Guadalupe. We must remember that she is always there for us, as the Queen of Heaven, praising our Lord and welcoming us to come to her so that she might show us the way to Him. May we make Mary a special part of our lives as well.

Discussion:

- In what ways is Mary like our own mother? In what ways can we call upon her to protect us and guide us in our daily lives?
- Think of the role our mothers play in our activities and school. How do they help provide for us and help us to succeed in life? What role do you think Mary can play in our activities, such as sports? How can her presence help give us confidence and encourage us to strive for our best?

Practice Plan: Continue encouraging a devotion to Mary among the team, for her powerful intercession can lead them to Christ. Whether through Marian prayers or examples, invoke the name of our Blessed Mother whenever practical in practice or games.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Blessed Mother as our protector and guide. May we call upon her to lead us always to you, for she is our model of faithfulness and perfect love for Christ. Let us invoke her protection for our team and ask for her intercession in our lives, that through this athletic experience we may come to know The Lord more fully and prepare ourselves for a life in His service, no matter our vocation. We ask for Mary's prayers for our families, our coaches and our teammates. May you look with favor upon our team and help us to use our abilities to always glorify you. Amen.

End of Practice: Encourage a devotion to the Blessed Mother, Queen of Heaven and close with a Marian prayer of your team's choice. Mary, Queen of Heaven, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade Winter Seasons

- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** The Sacrament of Confirmation **Scripture:** Ephesians 1:13 **Saint:** Confirmation Names and the Saints
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** Gifts of the Holy Spirit **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 **Saint:** St. Ambrose
- Preseason Week 3 - **Theme:** Fruits of the Holy Spirit **Scripture:** Galatians 5:22-24 **Saint:** St. Jude
- Preseason Week 4 - **Theme:** Cardinal Virtues **Scripture:** Wisdom 8:7 **Saint:** St. Thomas Aquinas
- Preseason Week 5 - **Theme:** Service **Scripture:** Matthew 5:14-16 **Saint:** Saint Martha
- Preseason Week 6 - **Theme:** The Great Commission **Scripture:** Matthew 28:18-20 **Saint:** St. Peter
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** Nicene Creed **Scripture:** John 14:1 **Saint:** St. Athanasius
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** First Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2041-2042 **Saint:** St. John Crysostom
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** Second Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2042 **Saint:** St. Pio of Pietrelcina
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** Third Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2042 **Saint:** St. Ignatius of Antioch
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** Fourth Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2043 **Saint:** St. Peter Crysologus
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** Fifth Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2043 **Saint:** St. Joseph
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** Sanctity of Life **Scripture:** Romans 13:9-10 **Saint:** None (The Angel Gabriel)
- Regular Season Week 8 - **Theme:** Living Vocations in the World **Scripture:** Colossians 3:5-6 **Saint:** St. Agnes
- Regular Season Week 9 - **Theme:** Church Teachings on Major Issues **Scripture:** 1 Peter 2:15-17 **Saint:** St. Albert the Great

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: The Sacrament of Confirmation

Scripture: Ephesians 1:13

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit

Confirmation Names and the Saints: As you prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation in this 8th grade year, you may have already chosen a confirmation name or considered which name to choose. Traditionally as a part of the Sacrament, each candidate chooses a Christian name to identify them. This can be your own name or another, with the most popular process being to use the name of a saint with special meaning to the individual or their family. There are thousands of options here, but the most important thing is that the candidate takes the time to learn of this name/saint and use that information to draw closer to Christ. For example, if your confirmation name is Catherine after St. Catherine of Siena, you should take this opportunity to learn about her life and what characteristics and miracles made her a saint. This will deepen your understanding of Christ and help you to draw closer to Him, as well as be able to call upon the intercession of this saint in times of need and in preparation for the sacrament.

Discussion:

- Have you chosen a Confirmation name yet? What name have you chosen or are you considering choosing and why? What special role does that name have and what do you know about the saint or biblical namesake?

Practice Plan: Encourage a devotion to the saints on your team. Early in the season, consider selecting a "patron saint" of your team, invoking that saint's name and praying to the saint for intercession as your team seeks to grow closer to God and have a fun experience this year. Take some time and have the children choose this saint together, then include him or her in prayer during the year at practices and games.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for the example of your saints, who model for us the way to lead holy lives and witness to your love. May we strive to follow their example and imitate their love for you and our brothers and sisters in Christ. As we prepare for this season and for the Sacrament of Confirmation, we ask that you watch over our team and give us the graces we need to grow in our knowledge and relationship so that we might be a full member of your Church on earth and seek our own sainthood. Bless our families, our coaches and our teammates who are with us through this process. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team about the saint they have chosen or will choose (perhaps have them do a little research before the next practice) and encourage them to develop their own devotion to saints as a way to grow closer to God and seek intercession when they face difficulties on earth. Close with the following prayer:

- Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 2

Theme: Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12: 4-7

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Saintly Example: St. Ambrose

St. Ambrose likely never intended to be a saint before a series of events led to his unlikely entrance into the very middle of church life. A governor in the Roman Empire, Ambrose lived during a time when the Arian heresy threatened to tear apart the foundations of the Church. The Arian heresy, which questioned the divinity of Christ Himself, was the cause of great conflict. For his part, Ambrose was merely doing his duty to keep order in his region when he stood amidst the Arian and Catholic sides at their election of a new bishop. Yet the crowd unexpectedly turned to Ambrose, with both sides seeming to believe he would be a tolerable bishop for their agendas. Though he had no interest in this position (he even fled for a time) he ultimately took the position. God clearly had a plan though, as Ambrose was already well spoken and well read, a great student of theology and well respected voice by many, including the emperor. The future saint became just what the church at that time needed, a firm voice of support in the truth and one who was so skilled in matters of diplomacy that he not only helped further Church teaching and fight against the heresy, but also helped avoid revolt and military conflict when called upon by Roman power. Ultimately, through his great faith and gifts no-doubt given to him by God and the Holy Spirit, Saint Ambrose became a key figure in the early church and was named a church doctor as a result of his writings left behind.

Discussion:

- The Catholic Church names 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of The Lord. You receive these gifts upon the Sacrament of Confirmation, for in "confirming" what was originally professed at your baptism and being sealed by the Holy Spirit, you enter fully as a disciple in Christ's church. Have you learned about these gifts in classes? How might the Holy Spirit transform you in these ways so as to be a more perfect follower of Christ?
- How might these gifts and an increase in virtue benefit your team as individuals and a whole? How might growing in wisdom or fortitude in reference to God prepare you to meet physical goals and strive for success?

Practice Plan: Continue to encourage the children in their preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is a big year for them in their relationship with the Church and the growth of their relationship with God. Let them know you support their preparation and efforts as a coach, affirming the importance of this Sacrament.

Prayer

- Lord, you send down upon us your Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation and bestow upon us the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We pray that we might prepare so as to faithfully receive the fullness of graces in this Sacrament so that we can have knowledge of these gifts and live out virtue in our lives. As you prepare us, look with favor upon our team and help us together to grow through our trials at practice and competition in games. Bless our coaches and teammates in all their efforts. Amen.

End of Practice: Continue to encourage the children in preparation for Confirmation and close with a prayer of your team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 3

Theme: Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Scripture: Galatians 5: 22-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Saintly Example: St. Jude

St. Jude is perhaps best known for his role as the Patron Saint of desperate causes, invoked by many in cases of illness or when seemingly all is lost. However, we should also understand that St. Jude, also called Thaddeus, is one of Christ's initial 12 apostles and served an important role in this holy group of men. In fact, The Letter of Jude can be found as the second to last book in the New Testament (right before Revelation) and encourages the faithful to "build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jud. 1:20). He also speaks of working to win over souls and convert them to Christ. It is believed Jude preached for several years before becoming a martyr for the faith.

Discussion:

- The fruits of the Holy Spirit in church tradition are charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity (CCC 1832). How might these bear fruit in your life? At home? At School?
- How might a growth these fruits of the Holy Spirit within us impact your team? Are there any of these particular virtues/fruits that you believe would help your team to pray for and focus on in an effort to grow closer to each other and to God this season?

Practice Plan: The fruits of the Holy Spirit are indicated in the Catechism as "perfections the Holy Spirit forms in us" (CCC 1832). As a coach, how can you help to promote a growth in virtue within your team this year? Are there particular virtues that relate to sports which might help them also to grow personally? Consider how you can help your team by encouraging and speaking about these virtues and the fruits of the Holy Spirit throughout the season.

Prayer

- Dear God, we thank you for the many blessings of this day and for our team. Help us to grow in virtue and be open to the Holy Spirit so that in our Confirmation we may be more perfectly formed in the fruits of the Spirit and be drawn closer to you. We pray that in this practice we might use the talents you have given us to the best of our abilities so that in doing so we might glorify you and serve our teammates. Bless our efforts on this day and always. Amen.

End of Practice: Affirm the gifts and talents given to each individual on the team and work to make a positive comment to each about his or her work during practice. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Jude, Pray for us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 4

Theme: Cardinal Virtues

Scripture: Wisdom 8:7

And if any one loves righteousness, her labors are virtues; for she teaches self-control and prudence, justice and courage; nothing in life is more profitable for men than these.

Saintly Example: St. Thomas Aquinas

In his amazing *Summa Theologica*, a large volume of writing on nearly all of Catholic theology, the great St. Thomas Aquinas had much to say about the Cardinal Virtues. These virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude have long been held by Christians to be the core virtues of which all others are grouped around (CCC 1805). The *Summa*, which is broken into a series of sections with questions posed and then answered by Aquinas, is the basis for much of this teaching. Aquinas lists prudence as the first of these. Prudence is the ability to determine the right or good action in a situation and determine how to go about that action. Aquinas notes that this is the most critical because how we reason and act informs all other virtues. He further lists Justice (giving proper due to God and to neighbor), Temperance (balance in the use of goods) and Fortitude (constant pursuit of the good). He contends that all other virtues are "reducible to the above four." Thanks to his considerable amount of work and writing on subject such as the virtues, we have a great deal better understanding of how to live a holy life from this incredible saint.

*Materials from *Summa Theologica*, Question 61 (First Part of the Second Part). Adopted from translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province.

Discussion:

- How might growth in the Cardinal Virtues help you each day to live a holy life? What examples of situations at school or home can you think of where these virtues would help make better decisions and seek God's will? (Can be general or specific).
- How might growth in these virtues help this team and our performance? Do any of these virtues apply to sports? (Hint: See training in Play Like a Champion program on practical application of Cardinal Virtues in youth sports).

Practice Plan: Refresh your understanding of how the Cardinal Virtues can be used as a model for coaches via the Play Like a Champion workshop and the *GROW* approach. Resolve to take a specific virtue and work on building that as a coach through action at practice. Don't forget to practice all of them through the season.

Prayer

- Lord, thank you for the example of St. Thomas Aquinas and for his teachings on the faith, as well as the teachings of all the saints which help us to know you better. May we seek to understand and practice the Cardinal Virtues so we might grow in all the virtues which flow from these. May we practice these virtues through our action on this team and strive always to be the person you created us to be. Bless and protect us during this practice and in the week to come. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the children of the Cardinal Virtues and encourage them to consider these virtues as they seek to grow as persons and athletes. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, a world without end. St. Jude, Pray for us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 5

Theme: Service

Scripture: Matthew 5: 14-16

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Saintly Example: St. Martha

St. Martha is considered the Patron Saint of servants, for it is her to whom Jesus Himself teaches a valuable lesson in scripture. Though she is referenced multiple times in the gospels, perhaps her most famous reference comes in Luke 10:38. The story goes as follows:

Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

Though Martha is not explicitly wrong to be serving her guests, Christ redirects her purpose by demonstrating that it is better she be focused on Christ and in particular His immediate presence. For her part, Martha clearly listens, as we read of her remaining by Christ's side at various other points in the gospels and she becomes known as a saint. We must remember this as we go about our busy lives, that our goal is to love and serve Christ. While we certainly do this in many ways through serving others, we must always do so with Christ at the heart of this service. May we never pass by prayer or the tabernacle in an effort to keep up with worldly things.

Discussion and Practice Plan:

- Many of you are involved in service projects through your school or other parish activities. What is a way that we as a team can make an act of service this year in order to bring Christ's love to others in our church or community? Is there something we can do during practice or a church ministry we can support through a donation of time or goods? (*Coaches, help drive this conversation with the kids and work with them to find some service the team can do together.)

Prayer

- Almighty God, we praise your holy name and rejoice in the gift of this day, our families, teammates and coaches. We thank you for the gift of participating in this sport, that our bodies are able and our minds challenged by the exercise before us. We thank you for the example of St. Martha and all the saints, as we pray that like them we may one day know the eternal glory of heaven. Bless us on this day with safety in our practice and the will to grow in virtue and follow you always. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Put a plan in place for the service you plan to do as a team and remind the children of the importance of stopping to take time and focus on The Lord each day. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Martha, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Preseason Week 6

Theme: The Great Commission

Scripture: Matthew 28: 18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Saintly Example: St. Peter

St. Peter plays a large and important role in Christ's ministry and His foundation of the Church. He is among the first disciples chosen by Christ. It is then Peter who calls out to Jesus on the stormy sea and is permitted, for just a moment, to walk toward Christ on the water. It is Peter who speaks out amongst the great commotion of who Jesus is and proclaims that Jesus is the Christ. Then it is Peter to whom Christ refers to as the "rock" on whom He will build His Church (Mt. 16:18), foretelling his role as our first Pope. As Christ enters into His passion it is Peter who denies Him three times and must later be forgiven by Jesus after the Resurrection. Finally it is certainly Peter along with the other apostles to whom Christ speaks the Great Commission (above) and leaves the authority that ultimately forms the Church. We may hear as much about St. Peter as we do any person in the New Testament other than Jesus, and perhaps he is such a beloved saint because we can certainly identify with him. Peter's response isn't always perfect, for he is (lovingly) rebuked at times by Jesus and seems in need of forgiveness more than once. Yet it is precisely his humility in sin, his continual determination to follow our Lord's will, and his courageous acceptance and profession of Jesus as God Made Man that allows him to become a great saint and the rock on which our Catholic Church was built on earth.

Discussion:

- Christ's Great Commission, which we read in scripture today, does not solely apply to the early apostles. It also applies to all of us today, who are called to take the gospel out into the world and win souls for Christ. What are some of the ways you can share Christ's message with others in your life? In what ways can you evangelize to others in your family? Your school? Your teams and activities?
- How can we share this message and proclaim God as a team? How can we witness to Him through our actions and the way we carry ourselves?

Practice Plan: Pay special attention to how your team can be source of leading others to Christ simply by how they speak and act during practices and games. Perhaps you have participants on your team who are students at the school but not Catholic, how can you and the other team members share your faith with them? Consider the ways in which you can help your team to live out God's call for evangelizing and drawing others to Him.

Prayer

- Lord, you give us the example of St. Peter as a great disciple and champion of your Word in the early church. May we imitate his zeal for sharing the gospel with the world and have the courage to win souls for you through our own actions and words. We ask for his intercession and pray that we too may one day become saints. Bless our team on this day and help us to build a foundation this season that is rooted in you. May our efforts in this practice be rewarded and may you protect us against injury. Amen.

End of Practice: Encourage the team to "go forth" and win disciples for Christ in their daily lives at home and school. Close with a prayer of the team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 1

Theme: Nicene Creed

Scripture: John 14:1

"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me."

Saintly Example: St. Athanasius

St. Athanasius was a bishop in the early church, living until the year 373 AD. During that time he played a key role in the Church's fight against the Arian heresy, which questioned the divinity of Christ (that He came from God) and thus attempted to shake the very foundation of the Church. Athanasius was present at the First Council of Nicea in 325, where he assisted his bishop in the council that developed the first forms of what we now recite in the Nicene Creed (though that was not fully developed and adopted until at least the year 381). Later he was named bishop and over the next 46 years until his death he fought diligently for the truth and helped lead the church through a difficult period. He was actually exiled several times as a result of his position and teachings, with many his writings leading to his being called a doctor of the church.

Discussion and Practice Plan:

- Do we understand what we profess in the Nicene Creed? Ask the children about their experience or knowledge of the Creed. The Creed that we recite today was an incredibly important profession of the truth during a time when many in the world were being led down the wrong path. It remains a central part of our Church today, as we profess the very things we believe to all in the world. Encourage the team to consider each line they profess when saying the creed. If they aren't learning about its origins and history in school, encourage them to look it up themselves and learn more about it. As they prepare for Confirmation, it's important to understand the Church to which they belong and the faith which they profess.

Prayer: Recite the Nicene Creed as today's prayer. Do so slowly, considering each phrase as spoken.

- 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.

End of Practice: Encourage the team members to research the Nicene Creed and to consider its origin as they profess their faith each Sunday at Mass. Close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Athanasius, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 2

Theme: First Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2041-2042

2041 The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor:

2042 The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor") requires the faithful to sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord as well as the principle liturgical feasts honoring the mysteries of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints; in the first place, by participating in the Eucharistic celebration, in which the Christian community is gathered, and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days.

Saintly Example: St. John Chrysostom

The word "Chrysostomos" is a term that translates to "golden-mouth" and was traditionally used to refer to great speakers. Thus St. John Chrysostom is called so because he is most well known for his amazing ability to speak, whether in homilies or otherwise. Alive during a tumultuous period in the early church (as referenced in notes on St. Athanasius and St. Ambrose), St. John Chrysostom was a man not afraid to defend the faith and his homilies often angered those opposed to his clear teachings from the bible and early church tradition. Like St. Athanasius, he was exiled multiple times as Archbishop of Constantinople as a result of his teachings and denouncing the actions of the Emperor's wife. Many of his homilies still exist today, including his Easter Homily, which can be found easily by searching online by his name. Overall, his eloquence and great faith helped him to become a great leader of the early church and a saint known for his ability to win souls through his speech.

Discussion:

- St. John Chrysostom was known for his ability to speak on the faith, to be clear and precise in his teachings while remaining a beautiful speaker. How do we speak of God? Does our daily speech convey our faith and do Him honor? Do we use His name in vain or avoid speaking of him at all? Do we strive to use clean language or do we defile our speech through the use of vulgar language?
- How we communicate is an important part of our team, yet sometimes sports is seen as an excuse to use foul language. Does our speech on the team convey our love of God and our neighbor? Does our speech to teammates, opponents, coaches and officials convey this love? Do our words in competition lead others to Christ or away from Him?

Practice Plan: If you aren't already working on this, make a special effort to "clean up" the language on your team and remind the team members that simply how they speak and what they speak about can lead others closer to God. Work as well on communication within the team from an athletic standpoint, a team that communicates well has a clear advantage in competition. Use St. John Chrysostom as an example of the power of words matching your actions and witnessing your faith.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, may the words we speak always profess our love for you and the praise you so rightly deserve. May our words make known our faith in you and draw others close to you as well. Bless our team in this week as we practice and play, that we may come to grow in our relationship with you and our athletic skill. May we always place you at the center of our efforts and glorify you in all that we do. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team that how they speak is a powerful thing. Close with a prayer of the team's choice.

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 3

Theme: Second Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2042

The second precept ("You shall confess your sins at least once a year.") ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness.

Saintly Example: St. Pio of Pietrelcina

St. Pio of Pietrelcina, more popularly known by the name Padre Pio, is a modern saint who lived from 1887-1968. As with all saints, he was a remarkable individual with great faith. Yet what is perhaps most quickly identified about Padre Pio were two distinguishing characteristics: his supernatural gift in the confessional and the stigmata (though it is also said he could bi-locate, a truly unique gift). In confession, it was said St. Pio had the gift of being able to read souls, such that he could tell them their sins even before they confessed and would know if they were holding back a particular sin. He was such a popular confessor that people came from all over to wait in line, where he often heard confessions 10-12 hours a day. Many stories of great healing and conversion came from these hours in the confessional. Still, it is likely the stigmata that elicited even more curiosity, a phenomena that reportedly occurred the first time while hearing confessions in 1918. The stigmata, as it is known, is the visible wounds of Christ's crucifixion on the hands - wounds where Christ was nailed to the cross. Padre Pio received the stigmata after a mystical experience and had the marks along with great pain until his death. The wounds were investigated multiple times and the source of great skepticism, yet no medical professional could find a cause for them, or why they remained fresh wounds for 50 years of his life. As a further sign, the wounds emitted an odor that was said to be sweet and beautiful. When he died in 1968, however, the wounds mysteriously disappeared just as quickly as they came, with no trace of any injury history. This remains a phenomena that few completely understand, but one that has been effectively verified along with other miracles associated with St. Pio in his canonization.

Discussion:

- The second precept of the church above involves the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Do you regularly receive this sacrament? How can receiving this sacrament regularly help you draw closer to God? What graces might come from this great sacrament?

Practice Plan: Find a time when the team can commit to attending confession together. Or better yet, bring confession to the team. Speak with a priest at your parish and ask if he would be willing to come to a practice during the season and hear confessions from team members outside the gym. What an amazing opportunity to receive a sacrament during practice time! Though your priests are busy, you may be surprised at their willingness to do this and their joy in offering this sacrament for the children.

Prayer

- Dear God, we thank you for the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the example of great saints like St. Pio of Pietrelcina. May we have the courage to receive this sacrament regularly so that we can be healed of our sins and increase our virtue as we draw closer to you. Help us to strive always to become saints ourselves. In this practice, help each of us to give our absolute best effort to use the gifts and talents which you have blessed us with. May we glorify you through our practice and play, with our actions and words professing our love for you. We ask this through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Work with the team (and priests!) to setup an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. What a beautiful gift from God! Close with a prayer of your team's choosing.

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 4

Theme: Third Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2042

The third precept ("You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season") guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy.

Saintly Example: St. Ignatius of Antioch

St. Ignatius of Antioch was a very early bishop in the church, early enough that he was appointed to the position by St. Peter, our first Pope. It is believed he lived until the year 107, when he was martyred in brutal fashion for professing his Christian faith. Yet his life, and the letters he left behind, are a beautiful testament to his steadfast love of Christ and his important role in spreading the gospel in the early church. In fact, we still have the seven letters he wrote on his journey to death, which proudly profess his willingness to die for Christ. In one of his letters, written to the Romans, he wrote: "*Grant me just this privilege of being poured out as an offering to God, while the altar is now prepared; and do you as a choir of love sing praises to the Father in Christ Jesus that he has counted the bishop of Syria worthy to be brought from the land of the sunrise to the sunset. It is good to be setting to the world for God, that I may rise to him*" (courtesy EWTN.com). This beautiful example of faith in God and a willingness to die for him helped Ignatius to convert many souls, even after his death.

Discussion:

- So in love with Christ was St. Ignatius of Antioch that he was willing to go joyfully to a terrible death for refusing to denounce Christianity. What sacrifices are we willing to make for our faith? What worldly possessions are we willing to give up in order to follow Christ?
- How can we work to make sure we place the Eucharist at the center of our lives? Though the church precepts refer only to the minimum, we have the opportunity to receive Christ even daily. Do we seek the Eucharist as often as our lives will allow us to?

Practice Plan: If you haven't already, consider inviting the team to gather and go to Mass together. This could be a weekday Mass (perhaps Saturday morning before a game) or a Saturday Vigil/Sunday Mass. Invite all the families to simply come together and sit together so that you can attend as a team. This is a wonderful way to make the Eucharist a priority and has been a great blessing for teams who have done this before.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for the great sacrament of the Eucharist. You humbled yourself to become man and gave yourself for us on the cross; may we seek always to receive you in the most holy gift of the Eucharist so that we might be in communion with you. We thank you also for the great witness of the martyrs, especially St. Ignatius of Antioch, who through their love of you gave their lives. May we strive to be saints and to love you more perfectly each day. Amen.

End of Practice: Work to coordinate a date that will work for the team to attend Mass and close with the following prayer:

- Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. St. Ignatius of Antioch, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 5

Theme: Fourth Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2043

The fourth precept ("You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church") ensures the times of asceticism and penance which prepare us for the liturgical feasts and help us acquire mastery over our instincts and freedom of heart.

Saintly Example: St. Peter Chrysologus

Like St. John Chrysostom, the term Chrysologus attributed to St. Peter comes from the meaning "golden-worded." This signals his great speaking ability, which also led to his being named a doctor of the church; he is called the "doctor of homilies" (multiple sources). St. Peter lived and was a bishop in Italy during the 5th century. His surviving homilies number 176 and "offer eloquent testimony to the Church's traditional beliefs about Mary's perpetual virginity, the penitential value of Lent, Christ's Eucharistic presence, and the primacy of St. Peter and his successors in the Church" (CNA 7/30/2013). These homilies were helpful in being clear, concise and to-the-point.

Discussion:

- St. Peter Chrysologus is known for his homilies. You have likely heard many homilies at Mass and been exposed to many writings and teachings from saints. What is your favorite? Do you have a homily that you recall at your parish that was particularly memorable?
- The fourth precept of the church involves fasting and abstinence (refraining from eating meat). How can this help us prepare our hearts and minds to receive The Lord on certain feasts or during Easter (after the season of Lent)?

Practice Plan: If this lesson occurs just before or during Lent, remind the kids about the church's rules on fasting and abstinence (primarily no meat on Fridays) and the importance of this teaching from the church. Also, encourage the kids to pay special attention to the priest's homily at their next Mass and consider his teaching about the readings and gospel that day.

Prayer

- Lord, we thank you for the gift of St. Peter Chrysologus and his teachings, as well as those teachings and homilies from our own priests which help us to draw closer to you. We pray in a special way for our priests, that you may always inspire and guide them in their ministry. We thank you for the gift of our practices and game this week, as we ask that we may have the fortitude to give our best effort and to grow in our skill. Bless our coaches and may you inspire them in their teaching us about you and this game. May we glorify you in all things. Amen.

End of Practice: Close with the following prayer:

- Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 6

Theme: Fifth Precept of the Church

Catechism: CCC 2043

The fifth precept (“You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church”) means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability.

Saintly Example: St. Joseph

St. Joseph was a faithful man, but he was probably a bit surprised at the turns his life took that placed him as the foster father of our Lord. Betrothed to be married to a young woman named Mary, he suddenly finds out that she is pregnant. Then an angel appears to him and gives him direction to continue with the marriage, assuring him that this child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and is the Son of God. Further, Joseph is called to take care of God's son and His mother by saving them from at least one plot to kill this child. That's probably enough to make anyone confused and fearful. Yet Joseph was not just any man. His unflinching ability to follow this call and care for the two most important individuals in salvation history made him a great saint and the patron of the universal church. We don't know much about St. Joseph outside of these few facts and his occupation as a carpenter, but we do know that God trusted him with this mission and that he remained faithful to God's call. That alone should be enough for us to understand the type of character and virtue Joseph must have had.

Discussion:

- The fifth precept declares that we are to help provide for the material needs of the church (usually through tithing) but we are also called to do much more than that. We are each called to use the talents and gifts that God has given us to provide for our church and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. In what ways have we done this? How can each of us provide for the church through our time, talent and treasure?
- Look at your teammates. In what ways do each of them use their talents to serve this team? Can you pick-out specific gifts each of your teammate has and thank them for sharing that with the team?

Practice Plan: Focus the team on the latter discussion question. This is an excellent opportunity to create really positive feedback and have the children tell each other what they appreciate their teammates bringing to the team. These could be personal characteristics, individual athletic skills, or any trait that they come up with. Facilitate this opportunity and add your own comments so that each child hears at least one positive thing about their talent and gifts from a coach or player.

Prayer

- Dear God, we thank you for the example of St. Joseph and ask for his prayers for us, that we may follow his example of love and faithfulness in our devotion to you and our church on earth. We thank you especially on this day for the gift of our teammates and each of their individual gifts which they have contributed to this team. Thank you for their role in this team and for the unique way in which they draw us all closer to you. We thank you for our coaches and for their time and talent as well. May we all use these gifts to glorify you and serve our team today and in the days to come. Amen.

End of Practice: Close by trying to make sure you leave each child with a positive comment about their performance or attitude during practice. Leave practice on a positive note, no matter the success of any particular drills. Close with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen. St. Joseph, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 7

Theme: Sanctity of Life

Scripture: Romans 13: 9-10

The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The Angel Gabriel

The Angel Gabriel appears in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. We probably most frequently remember Gabriel for the angel's appearance to Mary, for it is here he appears to Mary and tells her that she is with child. His simple greeting "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28) are some of the most powerful words in all of scripture, not just proclaiming the special role of Mary but announcing the very salvation of mankind in the coming of our Lord. The Angel Gabriel continues to clarify that she will conceive by the Holy Spirit and that the child "will be called Holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Gabriel is considered in the tradition of the Church to be one of the Archangels (it never identifies him as this in the Bible). The name Gabriel actually translates to "Man of God."

Discussion:

- When the Angel Gabriel appears to Mary, his very message serves to affirm the dignity of life. For God did not simply come down as a vague or powerful force, but humbled Himself to become man like us. If God thought His creation of Man great enough that He chose to come down and take on our flesh, who are we to treat our fellow man with anything less than complete dignity and love? Yet the world today does not see this truth. What ways can you help protect the sanctity and dignity of all human life? What things are you doing in our parishes and schools to protect life?

Practice Plan: Upholding the dignity of all human life is a core teaching in our Catholic Church and one that is of utmost importance today. Consider ways in which you or members of your team can support the various ministries of your parish and affirm the dignity of life. This is as simple as looking into the options available at the parish (you likely have someone who organizes pro-life events and prayers) and sharing those opportunities with the children on your team. Encourage prayer for this cause as well.

Prayer

- God, you so loved the world that you sent the Son to take on flesh and become man. That as one of us He would die for our sins and rise from the dead so that we might have life eternal. We pray especially today in thanksgiving for the gift of life. We pray in thanksgiving for our own lives, for those of our teammates and coaches, and for all those who uphold the dignity of life each day in our world. Through our prayers, words and actions may we uphold this teaching and help others to understand the sanctity of life. Bless and protect us in this practice and help us to grow closer to you through our experience here. Amen.

End of Practice: Continue to affirm the dignity of human life and consider extending opportunities from the parish to your team members. Pray for an openness to life on your own and close with the following prayer:

- Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 8

Theme: Living Vocations in the World

Scripture: Colossians 3: 5-6

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

Saintly Example: St. Agnes

St. Agnes lived in Rome around the year 300 AD, in the very early stages of the church. Much of the government in the Roman Empire at that time was not friendly to Christians, so she was already in danger by her willingness to profess her love for God. As a young woman, St. Agnes had already made a promise to God to remain a virgin and devote her life to Him. At only 13 years old, the governor's son tried to win her over to be his wife. She refused, insisting to him that she had promised herself to God. The governor's son became angry and had her brought to his father on charges of being Christian. The governor tried to win her over for his son, promising her great things if she would deny God and wed his son. Yet Agnes still refused. At this he sentenced her to death, a martyrdom she joyfully accepted. To the end this 13 year old girl remained steadfast in her commitment to God enduring a short life in this world for the glory of eternity with The Lord.

Discussion:

- Recall what it means to discern your vocation in life. How can you go about discerning your vocation as a young man or woman so that you might hear God's call to the married, single or religious life? In what ways can you prepare yourself now for your future spouse - be that God, man or woman?
- Our role at this point in our life is likely to be a student, son/daughter and brother/sister. How can we best live out this role in our lives? What can we do to be even better at each of these roles?

Practice Plan: Encourage the kids to begin discerning their vocation. Simply acknowledging that each child has a special call from God is important. Encourage them to consider where God is calling them and let them know their parish and Archdiocese have more information about religious vocations if they are interested in learning more about those.

Prayer

- Lord, we thank you for the example of your martyr St. Agnes and her witness to her faith and the vocation to which she was called. We pray that we too might have the courage to listen for your call and to stand firm in our faith, knowing that by listening for your call we might be truly happy. Pour out your blessings upon our team this week and protect us in our practice and play. May we use the gifts you have given us to the best of our ability so that we may glorify you. Amen.

End of Practice: Make it a point to affirm each member of the team before the end of practice, praising them for at least one thing they did during practice or for their contribution to the team. Remember to encourage them to discern their vocation and live life according to God's will. Close with the following prayer, entrusting the team to the care of our Blessed Mother Mary:

- Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen. St. Agnes, Pray for us!

5 Minute Game Plan

8th Grade - Winter Sports Regular Season Week 9

Theme: Church Teachings on Major Issues

Scripture: 1 Peter 2: 15-17

For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Saintly Example: St. Albert the Great

Such a great mind was St. Albert the Great that he was actually the teacher and mentor for St. Thomas Aquinas, an amazing man in his own right. Considered the Patron Saint of Scientists, St. Albert was effectively a scientist before the study was known as science. His writings covered a wealth of topics and along with his student St. Thomas Aquinas he is responsible for a great wealth of our modern understanding of theology and church teaching. His study of sciences and even his creation of a laboratory were ahead of his time and contributed to our understanding of the world God created around us. In fact, his many writings were said to be an "encyclopedia" of knowledge by themselves. He was no stranger to debate and defending the teaching of the church, which he did eloquently in his role as a Dominican friar and later a bishop in modern day Germany. He remains a great saint to whom we owe a great deal of our knowledge even centuries after his death in the year 1280.

Discussion:

- Today's scripture implores us to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" and to "live as servants of God." How can we put this advice to use today, when some of the world stands in opposition to long-held church teaching? How can we stand firm in our beliefs while still showing compassion for all our brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we pray for those who do not yet see the beauty of church teaching?

Practice Plan: Encourage your team to always seek truth and to work to understand the fullness of the church's teachings on today's major issues. While it's not your role to educate the team at-large on issues such as abortion, homosexuality or the family issues, you can certainly help point them in the right direction should they wish to learn more. The Archdiocese, CYO Office and your parishes have a wealth of age appropriate materials should you find yourself asked questions by curious teenagers.

Prayer

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of our church: of the first apostles, the great saints, and all the holy men and women who have supported and furthered the Church over the centuries. We thank you for the great wisdom and teachings of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and pray for him in his leadership of the Church. Help us to better understand the fullness of church teachings so that we might be able to defend and honor the great blessing the Church is in our lives. We thank you for the opportunity to participate on this team, for the teaching of our coaches, the support of our families and the contribution of each of our teammates. May you bless each of them, protect them and guide them always. Amen.

End of Practice: Leave each child with a positive comment about his or her contribution to the team. Close practice with the following prayer:

- Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, a world without end. Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan

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The following are sources used for the materials in this publication. With the exception of scripture or where noted otherwise, no materials were quoted nor was content used directly from these materials. Sources were used for themes, ideas or general content regarding lives of the saints. All content herein remains the property of the CYO of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties through creator Peter Piscitello.

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