



The 5 Minute Game Plan

A Catechesis Supplement for Youth Sports

8th Grade Edition

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

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

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 Year Outline

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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

Read aloud by coach or child

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

"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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Year Outline

Fall Seasons

- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Love **Scripture:** John 15:13, 17 **Saint:** None
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Mercy **Scripture:** Luke 6:35-36 **Saint:** St. Teresa of Avila
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Humility **Scripture:** Matthew 23:11-12 **Saint:** St. Ignatius of Loyola
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Anger **Scripture:** John 2:13-16 **Saint:** St. Jerome
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Agony **Scripture:** Luke 22:39-44 **Saint:** St. John of the Cross
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Forgiveness (Authority) **Scripture:** Mark 2:5-11 **Saint:** St. Maria Goretti
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Bread of Life **Scripture:** John 6:35-40 **Saint:** St. Justin Martyr
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Jesus as Shepherd **Scripture:** John 10:11-15 **Saint:** None (Jesus as the Good Shepherd)
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Jesus as Servant **Scripture:** Mark 10:43-45 **Saint:** None (Following Jesus' example of Service)
- Regular Season Week 8 - **Theme:** The Life of Jesus - Jesus as a Man of Prayer **Scripture:** Matthew 14:23 **Saint:** Intercessory Prayer and the Saints

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
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** Cardinal Virtues **Scripture:** Wisdom 8:7 **Saint:** St. Thomas Aquinas
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** Service **Scripture:** Matthew 5:14-16 **Saint:** Saint Martha
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** The Great Commission **Scripture:** Matthew 28:18-20 **Saint:** St. Peter
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** Nicene Creed **Scripture:** John 14:1 **Saint:** St. Athanasius
- Regular Season Week 5 - **Theme:** First Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2041-2042 **Saint:** St. John Chrysostom
- Regular Season Week 6 - **Theme:** Second Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2042 **Saint:** St. Pio of Pietrelcina
- Regular Season Week 7 - **Theme:** Third Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2042 **Saint:** St. Ignatius of Antioch
- Regular Season Week 8 - **Theme:** Fourth Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2043 **Saint:** St. Peter Chrysologus
- Regular Season Week 9 - **Theme:** Fifth Precept of the Church **Scripture:** CCC 2043 **Saint:** St. Joseph
- Regular Season Week 10 - **Theme:** Sanctity of Life **Scripture:** Romans 13:9-10 **Saint:** None (The Angel Gabriel)
- Regular Season Week 11 - **Theme:** Living Vocations in the World **Scripture:** Colossians 3:5-6 **Saint:** St. Agnes
- Regular Season Week 12 - **Theme:** Church Teachings on Major Issues **Scripture:** 1 Peter 2:15-17 **Saint:** St. Albert the Great

Spring Seasons

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- Preseason Week 1 - **Theme:** Church History - Pentecost & Persecutions **Scripture:** Acts 8:1-3 **Saint:** St. James
- Preseason Week 2 - **Theme:** Church History - Middle Ages **Scripture:** 1 Peter 1:6-9 **Saint:** St. Dominic
- Regular Season Week 1 - **Theme:** Church History - Reformation/Counter Reformation **Scripture:** Romans 8:31 **Saint:** St. Pius V
- Regular Season Week 2 - **Theme:** Church History - Pre-Vatican/Post Vatican **Scripture:** Hebrews 13:8 **Saint:** Blessed John Paul II
- Regular Season Week 3 - **Theme:** Local Church History **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 **Saint:** Edith Stein
- Regular Season Week 4 - **Theme:** The Church and New Media **Scripture:** Mark 16:15 **Saint:** Saint Francis de Sales

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Fall Sports Preseason Week 1

Theme: The Life of Jesus - Love

Scripture: John 15:13, 17

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. This I command you, to love one another.

God is Love: Jesus is the manifestation of God's love as he comes to us both God and man. In today's scripture verse, we hear Christ command us to love one another as He has loved us; that is, to love one another so much that we are willing to lay our life down for our brother or sister in Christ. This is just one of many examples Jesus gives of love in his ministry and life on earth. Many of His parables are lessons on loving one another. In his passion and death, He fulfills the words he utters in the scripture just read; by dying on the cross for the sins of all mankind, he loves us in a way that goes beyond any love we can comprehend, beyond the love we are even capable of ourselves. Yet he points out that we are called to imitate this love, to not only be willing to follow him to death like the great martyrs, but further to love one another here on earth with the same great love he demonstrates to us. It's certainly not always easy, but Christ gave us the greatest example of all to follow.

Discussion:

- How can we demonstrate love for one another on our team this year? What actions in practice and on the field might we take in order to follow our Lord's example?
- Consider in your hearts if there is someone you have not loved as Christ calls us to love. Remember the example of Jesus and His command to love one another. How can you do a better job of loving that person through your actions and words? (Though this doesn't require an answer unless the children want to offer, you can give the example that this could be a classmate, sibling, mother/father, or any other person.)

Practice Plan: Simply remind the children that the love we are commanded to show by Christ should be demonstrated during practice today. Whether that's through encouraging or helping a teammate or responding to a coach, we must show that love in all things.

Prayer: Lord, we rejoice in the love you showed us even unto death on a cross. May we follow your example of love and return that love to you through our prayer and the way we treat others in this world. Help us to overcome difficulties that we face in relationships so that we can demonstrate this love through our words and actions each day. Bless our team this year that we may know this love amongst our teammates and coaches. Grant us the graces we need to accept and offer this love. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team about the simple scripture today (reread if necessary) and encourage them to demonstrate this love for their fellow teammate and when they return to home tonight and school tomorrow. 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.

Fall Sports Preseason Week 2

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Theme: The Life of Jesus - Mercy

Scripture: Luke 6:35-36

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Saintly Example: St. Teresa of Avila

St. Teresa of Avila proves a fascinating saint. Once a troubled teenager who rebelled against her parents and caused trouble amongst friends, she was sent to a convent at about 16. Even in her early years at the convent she could fall victim to vanity and pride, not knowing whether she wanted to continue down the path of religious life or marry. She even fell away from prayer for long periods of time, thinking that sinner such as herself did not deserve to have that relationship with God. Yet through God's mercy and love, she persisted in the convent and as a result, she became not only a great saint, but is considered a "Doctor of the Church," a special distinction given to persons whose doctrine and writing gave great benefit to the Church. In her 40's Teresa finally found a consistent prayer life and what a gift it was: it is said that she found herself speaking directly to Jesus in prayer and she was even known to levitate while doing so. Teresa lived during the early days of the protestant reformation, and was charged in these prayers with helping to reform her own church and defend it against attacks. She founded her own convents and advocated a life of prayer amongst both her nuns and the communities she traveled to. No matter where she went, she found that people of that time simply did not want to hear anyone tell them how God said they should live. Yet she persevered and as a result won many souls for Christ and helped to reform and combat much of the sin surrounding the church and Europe during that time.

Discussion:

- Think about how you can imitate God's great mercy in your own way on this team. What are the concrete ways you can demonstrate forgiveness during games and practices, even in small ways?
- In combining last week's concept of "love" and this week's concept of "mercy" in the life of Jesus, how can we work on "loving our enemies" and being "merciful, even as (God) is merciful?"

Practice Plan: Continue to focus on love and mercy as key virtues for the boys/girls to learn during this season. Help them to understand that they are called to do good and love others at all times, even when that means forgiving them. Often in sports this comes in the way of frustrations with teammates or opponents during competition/practice. Remind them that everyone is here to have fun and glorify God, so they should focus on quickly forgiving any issues and demonstrating love to all in practice and competition.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you show us examples of great mercy throughout every generation. As Jesus demonstrated His mercy and love even unto death on a cross, may we too learn to show mercy and love to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Help us to follow the examples of great saints, who even though they were not perfect sought and received your mercy, allowing them to do great things through You. Bless our team that we might always remember to follow this example in our practice and competition, Glorifying God in all that we do. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Remind kids that God is a forgiving and merciful God who loves us and wants us always to turn to him in prayer. Then recite the following prayer in closing:

- 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. Teresa of Avila, Pray for Us! Amen.

Fall Sports Regular Season Week 1

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Theme: The Life of Jesus - Humility

Scripture: Matthew 23:11-12

He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Saintly Example: St. Ignatius of Loyola

Humility can have a lot of different definitions in the world. Through various teachings from saints and the church, the role of humility as a Catholic virtue involves not only submitting oneself to God and His will, but also to knowing oneself and recognizing the gifts and talents you have been given by God, knowing those come from Him. We often think of humility as the opposite of pride; so a humble person would give thanks to God for the gifts He has given him/her and seek to use those for the good of others, whereas the prideful person would submit that he/she is responsible for these gifts and that others should praise him/her.

St. Ignatius of Loyola is a great example of humility. A soldier in the Spanish Army during the early 1500's, he helped win many battles before a severe injury to his leg landed him in the hospital. While recovering he read many books and experienced a conversion, dedicating himself upon recovery to a life of humble service to the Catholic Church. He especially wanted to convert souls for Christ. He wrote his famed "Spiritual Exercises" and eventually founded a religious order called the Society of Jesus, commonly referred to today as Jesuits. In effect, St. Ignatius went from a life of service to the world, where he reveled in adoration and praise lavished upon him for his accomplishments as a soldier, to a life of service to God marked by a strong obedience to the pope and a remarkably humble approach to life.

Discussion:

- It can be easy sometimes in sports to be prideful rather than humble. However, we must strive to recognize our athletic gifts and the gifts of others as gifts from God. How can we guard against pride and assure our team demonstrates humility? What can you do individually to make sure you are humble at all times in practice and games?
- Is it hard to demonstrate humility in other parts of life? What places is it most difficult for an 8th grader to be humble and how can we work together to combat this?

Practice Plan: The key to promoting a team that is humble is focusing on an understanding that all gifts/ talents (and even a lack of athletic talent) come from God and that He is ultimately to be praised for our accomplishments. Focus in practice on creating an atmosphere that breeds humility in all things. When you see a child exhibiting humility, use this as an example for the team. Work to rid the team of pride.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we ask that you help our team to grow in the virtue of humility this season. Help each of us individually, as coaches and players, to glorify God for our talents and gifts while working hard to realize those God-given talents to the best of our ability. Help us always to seek God's will in how we should use our talents and gifts for the good of others and help us to submit to the authority of our coaches, parents, priests and bishops who truly want us to realize these gifts. Grant that we may become more humble through our practice and games this week. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

End of Practice: Remind children to focus on growing in humility in sports, school and at home. 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. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Pray for Us! Amen.

Fall Sports Regular Season Week 2

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Theme: The Life of Jesus - Anger

Scripture: John 2:13-16

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade."

Saintly Example: St. Jerome

St. Jerome is an early Doctor of the Church, who was born around the year 340 during a time when the Church was confronted with numerous heresies and attacks. A great scholar who is known in part for his translations and commentaries of the Bible, St. Jerome devoted himself to God and to the service to the early Church. Much as Jesus is described in the scripture today as being (justifiably) angry with those who setup "shop" in the temple for their own personal, worldly gain, St. Jerome too harshly rebuked those who advocated openly for sinful activity. He was a fearless champion for the faith who - though he was not always appreciated by opponents - did a great deal to defend the Church and convert souls away from the popular secularized societies of the European continent during his time.

Discussion:

- Though Jesus was justified in His anger during today's scripture, often our anger is unjustified and can lead us to sin. How can we avoid this inclination to anger in our lives? What happens when we pray for help?
- Sometimes we can become angry while participating in sports. How can we learn to avoid this anger as a team and focus our energy on having fun and improving as a person and athlete? (Hint: it starts with recognizing that sports are meant to be fun and building an environment that is authentically Catholic in how we participate and treat one another.)

Practice Plan: Focus on keeping anger out of the CYO experience. Given the climate, there really shouldn't be a good reason for anyone to be angry. Let the kids know that if someone makes a mistake, whether that's an official, coach, teammate or opponent, that they should not be angry but simply demonstrate respect and continue to give maximum effort. Anger might be justified in the case of defending our Church against sin and heresy, but it's almost always out of place in youth sports.

Prayer: Lord, help us to demonstrate love, mercy and humility in our actions, that we may be quick to love and slow to anger. Help us to understand youth sports as a fun and exciting experience where anger has little place, so that we can ultimately glorify you on this team. Even still, help us to be willing to stand-up for our Church and our belief in God when the world attacks us and tells us otherwise. Grant us the graces to follow the example of the saints, that like Christ and St. Jerome we may lead all those around us to God. Bless us with a fun and safe practice. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind kids that this game is about having fun and learning to become a better person and athlete. Praise them for their efforts and remind them to be quick to love rather than becoming angry. 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. St. Jerome, Pray for Us! Amen.

Fall Sports Regular Season Week 3

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Theme: The Life of Jesus - Agony

Scripture: Luke 22:39-44

And he came out, and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.

Saintly Example: St. John of the Cross

St. John of the Cross lived during the 16th century and during the same time as St. Teresa of Avila. In fact, when John joined the Carmelite order, it was St. Teresa of Avila who asked him to help her in her reform efforts. Through this reform effort and advocating of prayer, John had to endure much suffering. In fact, most of John's life can be characterized by poverty, hunger and suffering. Due to his reform efforts he was actually kidnapped and imprisoned by his own order, kept in a tiny cell with little light and beaten several times a week until he amazingly escaped. Yet through this and the rest of his life he demonstrated great compassion for mankind and preached finding joy in God rather than the world. So great was his focus on God that he was able to endure even the worst physical suffering and illness while writing great books and helping to reform the churches and communities during his time. Though his agony must have been great at times, he persevered and found joy through seeking God's will.

Discussion:

- Unfortunately, we all know suffering at some point in our lives, whether through our own sickness or injury, that of a loved one, or any number of difficulties we might experience in the world. How can turning to God help us through difficult times?
- As a team we sometimes experience suffering as well. When someone is injured or struggling in sports, how do we help them to overcome these difficulties and support them as a team?

Practice Plan: Encourage the team aspect of being there for one another despite whatever difficulties the team or individuals may encounter. Let the kids know that as their coach both you and their teammates are there for them. Focus on ways during practice where you can build this unique aspect of a team.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, though Jesus experience great agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and was made to suffer greatly in his passion and death, He never wavered in asking that "thy will be done" in all things. Help us to learn from this experience and turn to you when we suffer even in small ways. May your love comfort us and give us strength so that we may find joy in all things. Bless our team that we may be present for each other in the difficulties of this season. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind kids about the theme of today's lesson and the importance of building a team who loves each other and is there to support one another. Close with the following prayer:

- Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O merciful, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us Oh Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worth of the promises of Christ. St. John of the Cross, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Theme: The Life of Jesus - Forgiveness (Authority)

Scripture: Mark 2:5-11

And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home."

Saintly Example: St. Maria Goretti

Today's scripture reminds us that God has the unique ability to forgive our sins. Through His mercy and love, Christ handed on this gift through the priesthood He established in His Church. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are able to receive Christ's very real forgiveness and absolution through the priest who hears our confession. Christ demonstrates His authority over sin and death when he heals the paralytic (and many others throughout the gospels) by saying "your sins are forgiven."

Yet He also calls us to forgive each other. While not in the same way that he is able cleanse our souls and make us new through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Christ does call us to forgive one another even in the most difficult circumstances. St. Maria Goretti lived out this call in the early 20th century. When a neighbor named Alessandro made inappropriate advances on the 12 year old Maria and she refused, he stabbed her multiple times. Before dying in the hospital, Maria did what must have shocked those around her: she forgave Alexander. Further, after death she appeared in a dream to Alexander while he was in prison; upon awaking he repented his crime and changed his ways. Then after his release from prison he went directly to Maria's mother and begged forgiveness from her. Following her daughter's example, she also forgave Alessandro and it is said they also received communion together. Amazingly, both her mother and Alessandro were present when Maria was canonized in 1950 by Pope Pius XII, who noted Maria's purity and example of forgiveness as a model for youth.

Discussion:

- Consider in your heart how difficult it can be to forgive, then resolve to forgive someone you need to forgive. It's also always a good idea to attend Confession regularly so that we might all receive the graces offered by that Sacrament.

Practice Plan: Encourage the children to attend Confession sometime during the season. Note that it's also important to forgive one another if there are any issues on a team, since the team's success depends on the ability to work as a team, not fractured by the division that comes when there is no love or forgiveness.

Prayer: Father, you gave us the great Sacrament of Reconciliation so that we might receive your mercy and love in the forgiveness of our sins. Give us the courage to frequently receive this sacrament so that we may know this amazing gift. Help us also to follow the example of saints such as Maria Goretti, that in her model of purity and forgiveness we may find the strength to forgive those who sin against us. Bless our team that we may have a safe and fun practice, growing in virtue and skill. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team about the importance of forgiveness and again encourage them to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. 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. Maria Goretti, Pray for Us! Amen.

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Theme: The Life of Jesus - Bread of Life

Scripture: John 6:35-40

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. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Saintly Example: St. Justin Martyr

St. Justin Martyr was a Christian Apologist who lived around the year 100 A.D. in the very early church. An apologist is one who defends the faith through writings or other works. Justin converted after living his early life as a pagan, and not much is known about his life but three writings he left behind. In his work, he was known for his great ability to write and speak about the faith. While many in the world still struggled with the concepts surrounding Jesus and the Holy Trinity, St. Justin Martyr seemed to have a great understanding of these principles and he worked to teach others and convert them throughout his life. He clearly recognized that Christ was the incarnate Word and further validated the Eucharist through teaching that this "food" was the body and blood of Christ. Eventually, Justin was martyred in Rome for his ministry to the people there.

Discussion:

- Jesus declares that He is "the bread of life" in today's scripture verse. This is a difficult concept for many people to understand in today's world, not only the idea that Christ is fully present in the Eucharist, but that He provides us all that we need in life - spiritual nourishment, true happiness through the following of His will, and ultimately the joy of eternal life. How can we demonstrate this in our daily lives? In what ways can we proclaim that Jesus is God and man so that when the world sees our actions and words, they can better understand this mystery?

Practice Plan: Encourage team to seek always the will of God and to live and play with the knowledge that He is watching.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you humbled yourself to become man so that we might know even more clearly your great love for us and be given the gift of eternal life. In Jesus let us see the true "bread of life" and seek to follow your will as He did on earth. May we seek this bread in the Eucharist and this nourishment through a growth in our spiritual lives. Bless our team on this day and help us together to grow in our faith and skill. We ask these things through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

End of Practice: Encourage team to read the scripture verse from practice again and to think about what this means. Let them know that Eucharistic Adoration is available at most of our area parishes and that it's a great way to consider how we can do God's will while in His true presence. 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. Justin Martyr, Pray for Us! Amen.

Fall Sports Regular Season Week 6

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Theme: The Life of Jesus - Jesus as Shepherd

Scripture: John 10:11-15

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 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. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Christ as Example: Jesus is the Good Shepherd

Jesus gives us a great example in today's scripture by using a scenario common to the time when He lived. He uses the idea of a shepherd to help people understand that just like a shepherd cares for his sheep, protects them from harm and leads them in the fields, Christ came to demonstrate His love, keep us from sin, and lead us to eternal life. Yet it's also important the language Jesus uses here, as he does not refer to Himself simply as "a" shepherd, but rather "*the* good shepherd"; the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the ultimate leader and protector. Christ is not simply a caretaker, but rather knows us better than we know ourselves and sacrifices to the point where He is willing to lay down His life for us so that sin may be overcome.

In this way, Jesus is the ultimate "coach" and leader. A good coach cares about his/her team and gives the team instruction that will help them in practices and games. Like a shepherd, that coach gently leads the team in a direction that will be best for their development as a person and athlete. That coach is expected to lead by example so that others can follow him/her. Jesus is the ultimate example. He loves us more than we can know and is more than willing to provide instruction for living a happy life and receiving the ultimate reward. If we follow Him, he leads us gently in a direction that will be best for us. He even died on a cross for us. Like the example of a shepherd or a coach, Jesus is greatest leader we could ask for.

Discussion:

- If Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we seek to follow His lead and example, what about the hireling? Can you think of an example of the hireling, who cares little about the sheep and only seeks to save himself? Have you ever had a coach like that? How did that feel?

Practice Plan: Focus on leading by the example of the good shepherd and teaching the children to lead in this way as well.

Prayer: Lord, you are the Good Shepherd. Protect us and lead us so that we might have eternal life. Help us to learn to lead others as you do, with great love and care. Bless our team that we might continue to grow as faithful servants while learning new skills and giving our best effort. Grant that this practice will be safe and fun for all involved. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team about the example of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. 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.

Fall Sports Regular Season Week 7

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Theme: The Life of Jesus - Jesus as Servant

Scripture: Mark 10:43-45

But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Christ as Example: Jesus as a Servant

Christ teaches us another valuable lesson in His words about being a servant. It follows that if Jesus came not to be served but instead to serve, then we should strive to do the same. An example of this service is the last supper, when Christ washed the feet of His disciples. In doing so, He set a valuable example for all those who would follow Him, and He did so just before His greatest example of service in His death on the cross.

In modern culture this idea of leading by serving has been called "servant leadership." In any part of life, whether at home or work, as a student or athlete, great leaders have noted that following Christ's example of servant leadership provides unique benefits. By seeking first to serve others needs and to lead them their goals - and ultimately the goal of heaven - we practice a true humility rather than simply trying to get people to do what we want them to do. That is the root of Christ's service, for He didn't come so that He could receive praise and adoration (though He is worthy) but rather so that He could *serve* mankind; that He might redeem our sin through death on a cross and show us the way to heaven. He simply tells us to follow His lead in this regard and we too may know eternal life.

Discussion:

- How can you be servant leaders on your team? What examples can you think of where you can lead your teammates and others closer to their goals, and God, by your words and actions?
- What about outside of the team? How can you be a servant leader in the community and imitate Christ's example?

Practice Plan: Encourage all the members of the team to strive to be servant leaders, just as Christ commands. Help them to realize that by serving their teammates, classmates or family, they can lead those people closer to God and follow the example of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, you give us the example of service as the path by which we can love others and seek to follow you. Help us to learn from your example of service here on earth so that we may always seek to serve others in our teams, our families and our communities. May we never grow tired of putting others needs before our own, so that one day we may know the joy of eternal life. Bless our team and protect us during this week. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team about the words of Jesus and the example of service that He provides. Encourage each child to seek to serve in some way during the coming week, however big or small. Then 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.

Fall Sports Regular Season Week 8

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

Theme: The Life of Jesus - Jesus as a Man of Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 14:23

And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone...

Saintly Example: Intercessory Prayer with the Saints

Jesus was indeed a man of intense and fervent prayer. In nearly every part of the gospels, Christ can be found preaching about the relationship between God and His people, or separating Himself from the group to pray in silence. He not only gives us an example of how often we ought to pray, He also teaches us how to pray through the words of the Our Father.

We also have another example to follow in the lives of all the saints who have gone before us. Even better, because we know the saints rejoice in heaven with the most Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we can ask for the *intercession* of the saints in our prayers. Asking for the intercession of the saints can be confusing at first, but it's really very simple. We are simply asking for a particular saint, or perhaps several saints, to pray for us to God. We are asking them to lift up our prayer to their level of holiness in heaven and offer that to God. Much like we might ask a friend or relative to pray for us, we are doing the same with the saints. Yet if we know that its beneficial to have others on earth pray for us, how much greater must it be to have someone already in God's eternal presence take that prayer to Him? In addition, identifying a saint with whom we might have something in common, or whom we want to strive to be like, can be a very beneficial way to grow in faith. We can seek to follow that saint's example and ask them to pray for us to God.

Discussion:

- How can we follow Christ's example of prayer and that of the saints as a team? Are there any particular saints we would like to ask for intercession? (Example: St. Sebastian is the patron saint of athletes.)
- What are some simple ways we can pray even during practice or a game? (Ex. a simple prayer before a play such as "Lord help me to do my best" or "Jesus, I trust in you.")

Practice Plan: Encourage the children to pray frequently in their lives, modeling this behavior through the prayer before and after practice.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we come before you to humbly ask that you teach us how to pray. In our prayer at practice, at home and throughout our day, help us to pray in such a way that we can grow in a deeper relationship with you. May we follow the example of Christ and the saints in heaven, never ceasing to praise you and seek a more devout life of prayer. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

End of Practice: Remind the team that prayer need not be restricted to before and after practice, or before meals, but that we can pray at any time during the day or night. Close with the following prayer, noting that this is how Christ taught us to pray:

- 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.

5 Minute Game Plan - 8th Grade Year

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