Art Print 1 shows three angels that symbolize the Holy Trinity. How can the Trinity be a model for our relationships with others?

The Community of the Holy Trinity

In addition to being a central mystery of the Catholic faith, the Trinity is a model of a loving community. Each of us is a member of a community, connected through our family, friends, neighbors, classmates, parish, and through the Church. We recognize that love unites us with one another, just as the Trinity unites us in God’s love. We are called to live in unity through love, just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in unity as the Trinity.

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.

Hebrews 13:1–2

This Scripture passage refers to Abraham’s visitors (Genesis 18:1–15). When three visitors came to Abraham, he offered them hospitality by welcoming them into his home. He showed kindness by sharing his food. He offered them fellowship, treating them like close friends even though they were strangers. Only later did he realize that the visitors were angels. These angels represent the Persons of the Trinity. Through his hospitality, kindness, and fellowship, Abraham was a reflection of God’s love and demonstrated the importance of building a loving community.

Building a Loving Community

Write specific ways you can demonstrate the following qualities to help build a loving community and reflect God’s love in the world.

Hospitality:

Kindness:

Fellowship:
Art Print 2 shows Jesus’ baptism, the event at which John the Baptist revealed Jesus’ true identity. How do you show who you really are?

**John Reveals Jesus’ Identity to the World**

John the Baptist knew his mission was to prepare the way for Jesus’ coming. Because of his talents as a spiritual leader, some people mistook John for the promised Savior, but John knew his true identity.

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

*John 1:6–9*

Because John accepted God’s mission, he prepared the world for Jesus. John baptized Jesus, which revealed Jesus’ true identity to the world.

After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

*Matthew 3:16–17*

Just as Jesus’ baptism revealed his true self, our Baptism can help reveal our true self at the start of our relationship with God. This relationship helps us find our true identity, whether that is through the skills and talents he gives us or through our mission to spread his love.

**Find Your True Identity**

God has given us gifts that are part of our true identity. These might be a particular skill or a personality trait that can help others. List a special talent, ability, or trait below. Explain how you can share these with others to help spread God’s love.

A talent, ability, or trait God has given me is

________________________________________________________________________

I can use these to spread God’s love by

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Art Print 3 shows God revealing himself as a pillar of fire to lead his Chosen People to freedom. In what ways does God reveal himself to you?

In the Presence of the Lord

The Israelites, God’s Chosen People, were enslaved in Egypt for generations. God heard his people’s prayers for freedom and chose Moses to lead them out of Egypt. It was while tending a flock of sheep in the wilderness near Midian that Moses first found himself in God’s presence.

At Midian, the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses as a fire flaming out of a bush. Although the bush was on fire, it was not being consumed.

adapted from Exodus 3:1–2

During the subsequent flight from Egypt, God made his presence known again. This time it was not just Moses who recognized his presence, but all the Israelites did as well.

The Lord preceded the Israelites to show them the way, as a column of cloud by day and as a pillar of fire by night. Thus they could travel both night and day.

adapted from Exodus 13:21

In the Old Testament, God sometimes made his presence known in spectacular ways. Today God might reveal himself to us in more subtle ways, but the effects of his presence are no less awe-inspiring. We know God is with us every day, whenever we witness acts of kindness, love, healing, faith, and inspiration.

Knowing God’s Presence

Complete each sentence to explain how you are able to experience God in your life.

I am able to “see” God when ____________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
I am able to “hear” God when ____________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
I am able to feel God’s presence when ______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
Art Print 4 depicts the Annunciation. How is Mary’s reaction to Gabriel’s news an example for us all?

The Annunciation

Mary is visited by the archangel Gabriel, who has life-changing news for her. Mary’s response to this message serves as a model for us. Mary quickly set out to share this news with her cousin Elizabeth. Before Mary could say anything, Elizabeth, moved by the Holy Spirit, knew the great news.

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”

Even though she was presented with an unexpected fate, Mary trusted the Lord and knew he had a plan for her. Mary is the ultimate example of what it means to say yes to God’s call. She is a model for all of us. Just like Mary, when God calls us to action, we should trust him and answer that call. When faced with a difficult or scary situation, we can rely on and trust God, just as Mary did.

We Can Say Yes

How does God ask us to say yes? When we make decisions, even small decisions, we can say yes to God. Think of the last 24 hours. What are some ways you have said yes to God? Throughout the coming week, be conscious of ways you say yes to God. Every night take some time to list a few of these instances.

Our Catholic Character

The Canticle of Mary (Luke 1:46–55), also known as the Magnificat, is the Virgin Mary’s praise of God in response to her cousin’s blessing. It is an important part of the Church’s liturgical service and is most frequently recited or sung in the Liturgy of the Hours. It is possibly the earliest Marian hymn and has been set to music by a number of composers, including Bach and Mozart.
Art Print 5 shows a mother and a father nourishing their child both physically and emotionally. What do we require to feel spiritually nourished?

**Nourishing Our Faith**

Helping others, both physically and spiritually, is part of what we do as members of the Church. We follow in the footsteps of Jesus and seek to nourish our community members. To do this, we must practice. Just as we practice to become better at a sport or hobby, so too must we practice being doers in the world. We must practice our faith. We are called to be disciples of Jesus, but this is not always easy. It is something that requires dedication. Luckily, we can look to the saints to show us how to practice being active in our faith.

**Saint Frances of Rome: A Model of Discipleship**

Frances, from an early age, wanted to help those in need. She was doing God's will. After a flood brought famine and disease to Rome in the early 15th century, Frances took to action to help others. She declared that no one asking for alms would be turned away. She sought out those who were poor and provided grain, wine, oil, and clothing. Later in her life, when civil war struck Rome, she turned her house into a hospital and shelter for those in need. Frances dedicated her life to being a disciple of Jesus’. She modeled the importance of nourishing others. She shows us that practicing those actions is part of a faith-filled life.

**Growing During Ordinary Time**

During Ordinary Time, we think about how we can grow as disciples of Christ. This is when we can practice our faith. This is when we can nourish our souls and those of other people. On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of needs you see in people around you. Then write some steps you can take to help others meet their needs. Explain how your steps will help you grow during Ordinary Time as you help to nourish others.
Art Print 6 shows Jesus addressing a group of children with kindness, love, and respect. How can you respond to Jesus’ loving acceptance?

Children as Role Models in Faith

Throughout his ministry, Jesus modeled how we should treat one another, in a way that often went against the customs of his culture. During Jesus’ time, everyone had a place in society. Children especially held a very low position in the community; in fact, they were placed in the same category as servants. So how did Jesus react when the children were brought to him?

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.”

Mark 10:13–15

Jesus’ actions were different from the attitudes of his day. His response to the children shocked those who heard, even his disciples. Jesus showed compassion to children and considered them to have great value to God, serving as role models for adults through their humility and innocence. Throughout his ministry, Jesus interacted with people whom society considered unworthy. Jesus’ loving example is the basis for the guiding principle of Catholic Social Teaching—the dignity of the human person. The moral vision behind Catholic Social Teaching is the message that human life is sacred and that the human person is the clearest reflection of God among us.

Our Inner Child

Answer the following question on a separate sheet of paper. What is one way you can become more childlike in your faith? What is one way you can show compassion to others, just as Jesus did?

Our Catholic Character

The dignity of the human person is a fundamental value of the Catholic Church. All human life is sacred, and this includes the life of a child. Children are part of God’s creation and are therefore precious to him. All life must be treated with dignity, no matter the person’s age, race, gender, income level, or abilities. This idea was further reinforced by the U.S. bishops, who stated that humanity should always be considered more important than technology, money, progress, or business.
Art Print 7 shows Jesus in a new light, with the Holy Family living in a modern-day big city. How is Jesus present in our lives, now and in the future?

**Jesus’ Presence—Then and Now**

The disciples believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah. After all, the prophets had been predicting his arrival for a long time. So when Jesus began to tell them he would be leaving, they were stunned. If Jesus were the Messiah, why would he leave? Why did he talk about his own death? Hadn’t his ministry just begun? The disciples were confused.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where [I] am going you know the way.”

*John 14:1–4*

Like the disciples we must keep our faith today. Although Jesus is not physically with us, he and God are present in all things. Just as the disciples believed Jesus would return, so do we. Jesus is with us now and always, just as he was with the disciples.

**Jesus Is With Us**

When Jesus rose and met with his disciples, he commissioned them to preach the gospel and baptize all nations. He said, “Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” And Jesus is present in our lives today. On a separate sheet of paper, make a word web that shows how Jesus is present in your life. In the center circle, write “Jesus with Us.” Then draw connecting circles with the following titles: Through Mystery and Word, Through People, Through Your Deepest Longings, Through Memories and Thoughts, Through Scripture, and Through Dreams and Other Ways. For each of these circles, list several ways Jesus is with you.
Art Print 8 shows a representation of the Holy Family traveling in the dark of night to Egypt. What hardships has your family experienced and how, as a family, did you get through it?

**A Family Faces Hardship**

The Holy Family faced problems that many families face today: the need for shelter, personal safety, the means to provide for basic necessities, and a way to educate the children. Families often endure economic and physical hardships to provide these things. The experiences of the Holy Family model how faith can support us during such hardships. This is exemplified by the story of the Holy Family’s flight into Egypt.

When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

*Matthew 2:13–15*

**Easing Burdens**

Families makes sacrifices, both large and small, to meet their needs. During difficult times, family members support and offer comfort to one another. Think about how each member of your family helps the others. On a separate sheet of paper, make and complete a chart similar to the one below. Add at least five items to each column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Siblings</th>
<th>Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>makes breakfast</td>
<td>drives me to school</td>
<td>makes us laugh</td>
<td>mows lawn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Art Print 9 shows Jesus conversing with his elders in the Temple, an act that he described as being part of his mission. How will we know what our path in life will be?

Finding Our Way in the World

Before Jesus was born, many people knew he would be special. Whether it was in dreams or through angels’ proclamations, many understood that the Messiah was coming. As Jesus grew up, it became clear what his mission was to be—speaking his Father’s Word. As a young man, Jesus was baptized and began his ministry.

The next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

adapted from John 1:29

God has a calling for each of us. We can look to Jesus’ experiences as we seek our own mission in life. We are all born with talents and abilities that point us in a certain direction. Our inspirations and dreams influence the path we will take. Our elders and peers can offer wisdom and encouragement to help us understand where our lives may be headed. But most of all, it is through our communication with God that we may find our true calling in life.

Your Spiritual Journey

God has a plan for us. When we open our hearts we can find what his plan is. On a separate sheet of paper, draw three trails leading toward God, representing his plans for our spiritual journey. Below the first trail, write hopes. Below the second trail, write talents. And below the final trail, write inspirations. In the trail titled hopes, list where you hope your journey will lead you. For talents, list your talents that will help you on your journey. For inspirations, list any inspirations you have received that might draw you in a certain direction.
A Time of Anticipation

Mary was changed when she learned of Jesus’ upcoming birth. As a young woman, unmarried, and from a humble family, she had every right to be fearful and anxious. She felt honored to be chosen by God for a very special role. She was filled with love and grace and the awesome responsibility of caring for the child who was to be the Light of the World. Mary acknowledged this in her words to her cousin Elizabeth:

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”  

*Luke 1:46–49*

As people arrived to see the baby Jesus, Mary listened to them recount the angels’ proclamations of the birth of a child who was the Messiah and Lord.

Mary knew that not only would she and her family be changed by Jesus’ birth, but also that the whole world would be changed because Jesus was the Messiah who had been prophesized for so long.

Face the Change

You too are changed through your relationship with Jesus. Understanding the events leading up to and including Jesus’ birth helps us see the world in a different way. Perhaps through Christ you are less fearful or anxious, or your connection with Jesus gives you peace or allows you to act with courage. On a separate sheet of paper, write about how knowing Jesus has changed you and will change you as you grow in faith. List ways that you prepare to receive more of Jesus’ presence in your life.

Past Meets Present

The Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. As a result, people over the centuries waited in anticipation for the birth of Jesus. Today we anticipate the celebration of his birth during the season of Advent. During Advent we prepare ourselves for the coming of the Messiah and the celebration of his birth on Christmas. We also anticipate a future time when Jesus will walk among us once more, as this has also been foretold.
Art Print 11 shows a man sowing seeds, hoping they will grow strong to resist pests, disease, and drought. What can we do to grow and nurture seeds of faith that help us resist temptation?

Nurturing the Seeds of Faith

When Jesus fasted in the wilderness, the Devil challenged him to turn stones into loaves of bread. Jesus, however, resisted this temptation because he was fed by God. We too can resist temptation by nurturing our faith. Jesus understands the temptations we face because he experienced and resisted temptation himself. He relates the importance of a nurtured faith in a parable through the analogy of a seed.

A seed sown in fertile soil will grow strong—resisting disease, drought, and pests—until it can produce seeds of its own, many times over.

*adapted from Matthew 13:23*

Jesus’ parable teaches us that by giving our faith a fertile place to grow and by nurturing it to become strong, it will in turn help us resist life’s temptations. Strong faith helps us overcome temptation, and every time we overcome temptation, our faith becomes more deep-rooted and grows stronger.

Growing Strong Faith

We all face temptation from time to time. In these moments, we can draw strength from our faith. Answer the questions below about growing your faith.

1. We nurture our faith by giving it a fertile place to grow. How can you do this in your own life?

2. Jesus said that a strong faith will help resist temptation. How has the strength of your faith helped you resist temptation?
A Community of Saints

Through our shared faith, rituals, and beliefs as Catholics, we become one—we become the Church. Along our faith journey, we will be helped by friends and other members of our Church community. We will need the help of others.

In the Scripture story of Jesus healing the man who was paralyzed, we see how God acts through people. The friends and neighbors who lower the man through the roof show that God works through them to answer the man’s prayers. Our simple acts of kindness work the same way. When we reach out to help those who are in need, God is acting through us. Our actions show that we can all act as saints.

For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.

*Philippians 2:13*

Jesus said that with God, all things are possible, and he showed this through the miracles he performed. We carry on this tradition today by helping those who are sick, poor, lonely, weak, and vulnerable. In this way, we are a community of saints.

A Little Help from Our Friends

On a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions below. Think about ways that God has acted through you to help others or through others to help you.

1. How have you brought God’s love to someone you know?

2. How have you felt God’s love through the actions of friends and family?

3. How have these actions affected your life?

Our Catholic Character

Once the man was lowered and met him, Jesus forgave the man his sins, and through this forgiveness, the man was healed. Jesus also forgives us through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. This sacrament heals us and brings us closer to God.
Art Print 13 shows Jesus speaking to a crowd at the seashore. What might he have been saying to the crowd?

**Jesus’ Lesson for Holiness**

Jesus desires for us to live a truly fulfilled life and to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In the Sermon on the Mount, he shows us the way to do this. He shows us how we can find holiness in the least expected places: among those who are poor, those who are meek, and those who are persecuted. Jesus also tells us that to find true happiness means doing something that might be difficult or unexpected such as loving your enemies.

“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, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

_Matthew 5:43–48_

Jesus’ message is that by loving everyone, we can find joy. This is not about achieving personal status or acquiring possessions; instead it is about acting with love. By forgiving our enemies instead of seeking revenge, we are rewarded with freedom and peace. At first, it may seem that doing this would cause unhappiness or dissatisfaction, but we realize God’s reward is the inner peace this gives us. We are free from our desire for revenge, and we grow strong in God’s joy. By choosing to do this, we are building God’s kingdom.

**Joyful Reward**

On a separate sheet of paper, describe a time in your life when you found joy, freedom, or peace in a situation that could have made you angry or unhappy.
Art Print 14 shows Jesus healing Jairus’s daughter as her family rejoices. Has your family found joy in healing?

Jesus Loves All People

Jairus was an important official who asked for Jesus’ help because his daughter was dying. On his journey to Jairus’s home, a hemorrhaging woman also reached out to Jesus because no one else would help her. Jesus healed her and then continued on to heal Jairus’s daughter.

As Jesus conducted his ministry, he met with many people, including those banished from society—criminals, sinners, lepers, and those who were gravely ill. Jesus welcomed everyone who sought his mercy. The religious authorities did not understand why Jesus would associate with sinners and outcasts, and so Jesus shared his reasoning through one of his parables.

“What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it?”

Luke 15:4

Jesus healed both the hemorrhaging woman and Jairus’s daughter because of their faith. He considered the well-to-do official’s daughter and the outcast woman as equals, both as sheep in his flock. It does not matter if a person is rich or poor, healthy or sick, highborn or lowly. Jesus loves us all. Jesus sought those who were ill, isolated, separated, and shunned from society to bring them back into his flock. He did not discriminate.

Our Flock

Think about those whom you do not talk to in your school or community. On a separate sheet of paper, list people you will make an effort to recognize, talk to, and connect with.
Jesus Acts with Humility

Jesus lived and preached a life of humility and servitude. He taught his disciples to put others before themselves. In this regard, Jesus was the perfect role model. He exemplified how to live a life of service and kindness even if it meant doing the humblest task to show God’s love.

So when [Jesus] had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them. “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”

*John 13:12–15*

Jesus demonstrated that the humble are the greatest in God’s kingdom. We can follow his wisdom, not only through large acts of charity, but through our daily actions. By showing humility, we can live fully and realize God’s love in the world.

Walking the Walk

Answer the questions below regarding humility.

What is humility?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How can being humble make someone great?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What qualities are the opposite of humility? How do these qualities get in the way of putting others first?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Taking Meals Together

When people come together to share food and drink, they also share ideas, experiences, and life lessons. People share meals to celebrate events, make pacts, seal contracts, and honor special guests. Through sharing meals, we build relationships. Jesus used the tradition of the Passover meal as a way for him to build on the friendship he shared with his Apostles.

When the hour came, Jesus took his place at the table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I shall not eat it again until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

adapted from Luke 22:14–16

As part of this meal, Jesus took two simple things, bread and wine, and transformed them into his Body and Blood bringing forth the New Covenant, the bond between God and us. From simple things comes the gift of Jesus. The Eucharist celebrates the New Covenant. With the Eucharist, we are in communion with Jesus and the Church. The Eucharist strengthens our connection as members of the Church and to Jesus and God.

Holy Communion

On a separate sheet of paper, describe how we participate in the New Covenant through Holy Communion. Explain how the Eucharist joins you together with Jesus and other members of the Church.

Past Meets Present

In the Jewish tradition, the celebration of Passover is the central feast for remembering God’s gracious salvation of his people. When the Jewish people celebrate Passover they recognize God’s continuing care for them today. In the celebration of the Eucharist, we remember what Jesus has done for us in giving us his Body and Blood that we receive in Holy Communion.
Making Choices

No matter who we are or what we have experienced, we all struggle with difficult choices. How can we know the right thing to do in a given situation? We can rely on our faith and our knowledge to guide our decisions.

The human heart plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps.

Proverbs 16:9

God gives us tools to help us discern the difference between right and wrong. The commandments help us love God and others and reinforce what is most important in life. When making decisions, we strive to stay on the path that God has laid out for us. But what happens when the choice is not so clear or if more than one choice is right in some way?

Whoever answers before listening, theirs is folly and shame. . . . The heart of the intelligent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

adapted from Proverbs 18:13,15

The most difficult choices in life are not the ones between right and wrong, but rather between what seems good and what is best. When we encounter these situations, we can read God's Word and look to similar situations, people’s reactions, and the consequences of their actions. We can pray for guidance. We can listen to our inner voice to find the right choice and stay on God's path for us.

Be a Good Listener

Whom do you listen to when you have an important decision to make?

_________________________________________

How does your own inner voice guide you?

_________________________________________

What would you do if your inner voice did not agree with what family or friends were telling you to do?

_________________________________________
Mary Is Our Model

As the mother of Jesus, Mary is special to us. She is a model of perfect faith because of her acceptance of God’s will in becoming Jesus’ mother. Mary is also someone we can turn to in times of pain and suffering. At his Crucifixion, Jesus gave her to us symbolically through John.

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.”

adapted from John 19:25–26

It is hard for us to imagine the pain Mary must have felt as she watched her son’s death. These circumstances must have been extremely difficult to bear, but as she did when the angel announced that she would bear a child, she trusted God.

Mary’s love for Jesus and her faith in God helped her face the pain of Jesus’ suffering and death. She held Jesus’ body gently in her arms and beheld him with love. Mary’s example helps us persevere through our own times of suffering, and it shows us how to be present for others in their suffering.

Simple Acts of Love

Mary accepted a difficult and painful situation by focusing on her love for Jesus and her faith in God. When people are suffering or in pain, sometimes the best thing we can do is share simple acts of love to show we care.

How can you show someone you are thinking about him or her?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

What can you do to help ease someone’s suffering?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
Art Print 19 shows a congregation united in Christ, reaching out toward Heaven. How do the Sacraments of Initiation guide your way to the Father?

The Sacraments of Initiation

Over the course of your own faith journey, you will encounter challenges, but you will also experience times of great wonder and joy. The Sacrament of Baptism begins our journey, by which we commit ourselves to discipleship. This sacrament welcomes us into the Church. The water of Baptism washes away Original Sin so that we can begin a new life in Christ.

In the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are strengthened and sealed by the Holy Spirit. By the anointing with Chrism and the laying on of hands, we first receive the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit to help guide us on our spiritual journey. In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion. This is the spiritual food for our journey. Each time we partake in this sacrament, it nourishes us spiritually and brings us closer to God.

The sacraments truly connect us with Jesus Christ and build our relationship with him and one another. The sacraments bring us together. The sacraments foster unity, making the Church one.

Your Spiritual Journey

On another sheet of paper, draw a “road map” for your own spiritual journey. Include “stops” for each Sacrament of Initiation. Use specific examples from your life to show how each sacrament has helped or might help you along your journey.
Accepting Something Wonderful

Following Jesus’ arrest, the Apostles must have been stunned because so many of the things Jesus had predicted came to pass. They must have also been confused as Jesus was tried, condemned to death, and crucified. Jesus had taught them about eternal life with God the Father. Jesus explained that these events were all part of God’s plan. So imagine what they must have felt the morning of the Resurrection.

Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. The other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down and saw the burial clothes lying there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there. Finally, the other disciple also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

adapted from John 20:1–9

The mysteries surrounding Jesus’ Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension—the Paschal Mystery—are central to our faith. When the Apostles witnessed these events, they were moved. On the morning of Jesus’ Resurrection, the Apostles recognized something miraculous and wonderful. Jesus’ death brought God’s plan of Salvation to fruition. Jesus’ Resurrection affirms that God’s will has been fulfilled, enabling our Salvation and eternal life in Heaven.

Enter the Mystery

Put yourself in the position of the Apostles depicted in the Art Print. Imagine you were present to witness Jesus’ Resurrection. Write a first-person account, describing the events surrounding that day. Focus on the thoughts running through your head and the emotions flooding your heart.

Our Catholic Character

The Easter Triduum, also known as the Paschal Triduum, is the three-day period before Easter comprised of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. It is a period of prayerful observance that recalls the three days that Christ was in the tomb and ends the season of Lent.
Art Print 21 is a modern-day depiction of the risen Jesus appearing to his disciples who did not recognize him at first. What might keep you from seeing Jesus’ true presence?

Eye-Opener

Have you ever looked for something, searched everywhere for it, torn apart the house, and then suddenly there it is, right in front of you? It’s been there all along, but for some reason, you couldn’t see it. It was almost as though you were momentarily blind. This can happen to people in their spiritual lives.

The disciples experienced a type of spiritual blindness. This is illustrated in the story about Jesus’ appearance to two disciples as they traveled to the village of Emmaus, after Jesus’ Death and Resurrection. Though the risen Jesus approached the disciples who had known him personally, they failed to recognize him. It was not until Jesus broke bread with them that they finally realized the person eating with them was Jesus.

Until Jesus revealed himself as the Son of God, people had been waiting for the prophesied Messiah for centuries. Many, though, failed to recognize the Messiah in Jesus. Even the Pharisees, though they were knowledgeable in religious matters, were blind to Jesus’ divine presence.

Then Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.”

John 9:39

When we see Jesus’ true presence, he opens our eyes. The mystery of Christ allows us to see him and God in all things. With the help of Jesus and God’s Word, we see the world in a new light.

Seek and Ye Shall Find

Describe something in your life that has helped you become aware of Jesus’ presence.

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Art Print 22 shows a musician sharing how to play harmonica with a young person. What skills or abilities have you shared with others?

What Moves You?

The works of talented people move us; they cause us to feel strong emotions or passion. Artists help us see things in new ways. Mathematicians use numbers to explain the world. Writers give us new ideas through their arrangements of words. Athletes show the capabilities of the human body. Musicians make music that touches us on an emotional level. We see someone else’s passion, and we are drawn in by the gifts they share. These are gifts given by God, and they can be powerful tools in our spiritual journey.

Each of us has certain talents or abilities, just like those gifts that others use to inspire us. Some talents we are born with, and some we learn as we grow. These talents and abilities are gifts from God.

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace. Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:10–11

God gives us these gifts to share. He calls us to use these gifts to serve others and to serve the Body of Christ. By doing so, we bring glory to God. We can all practice being good stewards by taking responsibility for our gifts—practicing them and nurturing them in positive, constructive ways.

Sharing Our Gifts

On a separate sheet of paper, illustrate yourself sharing a talent or gift that you have. On the back, make an idea web. In the center, write a talent or ability you have or would like to improve. Then, in the outer circles, explain different ways you can use this talent in positive ways to help or teach others.
A Change of Heart

Saul, later known as Paul, studied Jewish law and was a scholar of the Torah. On his way to Damascus to hunt down and punish followers of Jesus, the Light of Christ struck him blind. In this moment, Jesus told Saul he had a new plan for him. For three days Saul remained blind until the Lord sent Ananias to relay a message. Immediately things like scales fell from Saul’s eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, and soon regained his strength. At once he began to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God. Everyone was astounded. Was this not the man who in Jerusalem ravaged Jesus’ followers and who came here expressly to take them back in chains? But Saul grew all the stronger and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that Jesus was the Messiah.

adapted from Acts of the Apostles 9:18–22

Saul thought he knew what his life would be, but the Lord had different plans for him. Paul became a changed man. He relearned things he thought he had understood. Paul saw the light and spread the Gospel. His words still inspire us today, just as they did for the early Church.

Like Paul, our path may change in our lives. We all set goals for ourselves. As children, we picture what we want to be when we grow up. As teenagers, we think about what will happen after high school; we make plans for college and for a career. As adults, we make plans for our futures. We think we know what we want. We believe we know what is best, but what happens when life doesn’t turn out as we expect? This doesn’t have to be a bad thing, as Paul’s story shows us. Sometimes an unexpected change is exactly what we need.

Lord, Guide My Way

At this lowest point, Paul was knocked down. He learned life’s greatest lesson, got back on his feet, and lived a life of discipleship. On a separate sheet of paper, describe a time you were figuratively knocked down, how you picked yourself back up, and the lesson you learned from your experience. How were you open to this unexpected event?
Mary Reaches Out for Us

In December 1531, Mary visited a humble peasant named Juan Diego in what is now Mexico. Juan Diego was going through trying times, being a Catholic in an area where there were few and caring for his sick uncle. He saw a vision of Mary, and she spoke to him not in Spanish but in his native language. She asked that a church be built at that site, to celebrate God’s presence in the lives of the people.

Juan Diego immediately went to the bishop. The bishop, not believing Juan Diego, asked for a heavenly sign. On the day Mary promised that Juan Diego would receive the sign, he was seeking a priest to hear his dying uncle’s confession. The Lady appeared, telling him his uncle was healed and to visit the top of the hill where she first appeared. Juan found a cluster of roses on the otherwise barren hilltop. Mary arranged the flowers in his cloak and instructed him to present them to the bishop. When Juan Diego opened his cloak, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared.

Juan Diego was faithful even when things were not going well in his life. His troubles make his virtue shine even brighter. The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe also shows how Mary leads people to Salvation through Jesus Christ and that God loves us all, even peasants like Juan Diego. Mary is our mother in faith, and like all mothers, wants to help guide us. At his Crucifixion, Jesus’ words to John show his concern for his mother, and his words to his mother signal her role as Mother of the Church.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

John 19:26–27

Our Mother in Faith

Compare the Art Print to other images of Mary. How are the images similar? Why did the artist of the Art Print include some details and leave others out?

Past Meets Present

In addition to Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1531, Mary appeared in Lourdes, France, in 1858, and in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. During these visitations, Mary often refers to herself as the Immaculate Conception and makes a plea for people to pray. Today we honor Mary during celebrations throughout the year.
Art Print 25 shows Mary and the disciples gathered for Pentecost, when they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to carry on Jesus’ mission. In what ways do you find inspiration?

Inspirited by the Holy Spirit

Our desire for God is written in the human heart. In spiritual art, the heart sometimes represents our desire to be close to God. The Holy Spirit, often symbolized by fire or a dove, brings us closer to God. The Holy Spirit also gives us strength and inspiration, just as it did to the Apostles at Pentecost. We endure through difficult challenges and tasks. We find strength and inspiration, just as Mary did before us, from the Holy Spirit.

“But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts of the Apostles 1:8

The Holy Spirit resides within all of us, but we also find the Holy Spirit in the things that inspire and recharge us, whether that is a love for singing or a passion for cooking. We gain inspiration to go forth with our mission. Our passions recharge us, and, along with the Holy Spirit, serve as our catalysts as members of the Church and God’s kingdom.

Examine Your Life

The Holy Spirit helps us grow closer to God. By reflecting on our daily actions and reflecting on the positive things in our lives, we also grow closer to God. Answer the questions below, and then take time each day to reflect on these questions.

How is God present in my life right now?

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__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

What do I have to be grateful for today?

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How can the Holy Spirit guide my steps tomorrow?

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