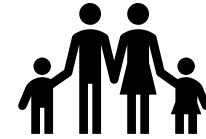




St. Joseph's Parish



Family Activity Sheet



Week 3 of Ordinary Time: 24-31 January 2021



Welcome once more to this weekly “magazine”. Once again, our Sunday readings provide a choice of reflections for the family. The story of Jonah and the Whale is familiar to most of us and if you have a copy of the whole story in a children’s Bible, it’s worth reading the whole thing. The extract for Sunday’s Mass is just the highlight of the story. Sunday is “Sunday of the Word of God” and there is a suggestion on how we can give honour to the most sacred book we own. This week’s prayer is the Sign of the Cross. Again, a prayer that is so familiar that we often don’t even think about it! Maybe be you can write out a list of all the different times we make the Sign of the Cross. I wonder who can come up with the longest list? As was said last time, do decorate these prayers and keep them somewhere special. This is also an opportunity to make sure that everyone knows the key prayers by heart, so that you can pray them at home in your family prayer time. This week sees the feast of the conversion of St Paul and there is a reflection to read to the family on him, using a very famous painting by Caravaggio.

There are Four Dimensions of the Faith making sure that Jesus Christ is the centre of everything we do



Speaking/Learning the faith (which the Church calls “professing the faith”)

Celebrating it in the liturgy and the sacraments

Living it (in Christ) – i.e. the choices we make in everyday life

Christian prayer.

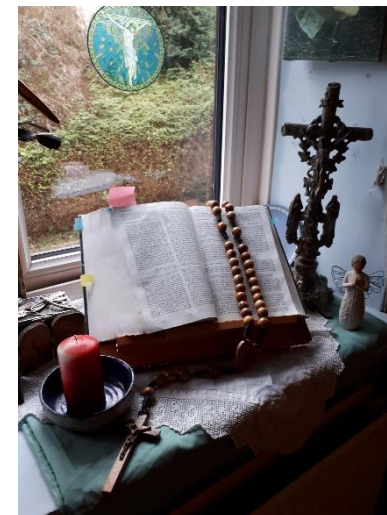
Sunday 24th January 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time: Sunday of the Word of God.

Sunday of the Word of God, Pope Francis writes:

“I hereby declare that the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God. This Sunday of the Word of God will thus be a fitting part of that time of the year when we are encouraged to strengthen our bonds with the Jewish people and to pray for Christian unity. This is more than a temporal coincidence: the celebration of the Sunday of the Word of God has ecumenical value, since the Scriptures point out, for those who listen, the path to authentic and firm unity.”

The Apostolic Letter "Aperuit Illis" of Pope Francis

This is an ideal opportunity to think about how we can engage with the Bible as a family. If you don't already have a “sacred space” in the home, this is a good opportunity to create one. You need a nice-looking Bible (a children's' one is fine) and a white cloth and a candle. A crucifix is a good idea too if you have one. Each week you can add different things, such as pictures or other religious items such as a rosary to reflect the Church's liturgical season. If you have different coloured cloths to reflect the liturgical year, that is a bonus, e.g. in the picture it's a green cloth under the white one because it's ordinary time now. The important thing is that the Bible has pride of place as it's the sacred Word of God. In the picture, a wide windowsill has been used, and the little “stained glass” picture is visible from outside as a witness to the world. Please do send in your photos of your family sacred spaces. It would be great to see what you have created, and you will inspire other people. (They can be anonymous if you prefer).



How to read the Bible with the family:

There are as many ways of reading the Bible as there are people, but probably the best way as a family is to focus on the Gospel or one of the other readings each week. Before beginning, light a candle, make the Sign of the Cross, and take a moment to still yourselves and realise that you are in the presence of God. Jesus said that where two or three people gather in His name that He would be with them (Mt. 18:20), so He is truly present with you.

One person read the selected passage slowly and thoughtfully and then everyone can have a time of quiet reflection – for how long, depends on the age of the children. Each week in these activity sheets we offer suggestions for discussion to help you to enter into the word of God and realise how God is speaking to you personally. Younger children may like to draw a picture of the Gospel story and these can be added to the family sacred space or put up in their bedrooms. Finish with a time of quiet and some prayers. Do finish with a traditional prayer, and the Sign of the Cross.

Again, we see that the first reading points to and is completed by Jesus in the Gospel, so both readings have been included. are both lovely to look at with the family. The First reading is the conclusion of the story of Jonah (and the whale) who was commissioned by God to preach to people. He famously was afraid of his commission and tried to escape, but God knew that he had a job to do. It would be a good idea to read a children's version of Jonah and the whale first if you have a copy or retell it in your own words if you don't, so that the children can see where this passage is in context.



First reading: Jonah 3:1-5,10

The word of the Lord was addressed to Jonah: 'Up!' he said 'Go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach to them as I told you to.' Jonah set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was a city great beyond compare: it took three days to cross it. Jonah went on into the city, making a day's journey. He preached in these words, 'Only forty days more and Nineveh is going to be destroyed.' And the people of Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least.

God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behaviour, and God relented: he did not inflict on them the disaster which he had threatened.

Family reflection on the First Reading:

- Light a candle
- Someone read the First Reading



Discuss these questions together.

Q: Who called Jonah? (A: God did ["The word of the Lord" is a way of saying "God"]).

Q: How did Jonah respond? (A: If you have told the whole story, then the answer would be that at first, he ran away but then he responded obediently. Otherwise it is that he was obedient.)

Q: How did the people of Nineveh respond to Jonah's preaching? (A: they believed him and fasted and put on sackcloth [which was worn as a sign of being sorry].)

Q: How did God respond when he saw that the Ninevites did? (A: He did not punish them for being so evil.)

Q: Thinking about the whole story of Jonah, what can we learn about him? (A: Suggestions such as he was afraid initially, but he realised that God had asked him to do something very special, that he must have been a good preacher as people listened to him).

Q: What does God ask us to do? (A: Lots of possible answers, love Him, to pray and spend time with Him, tell people about Him, love people, help at home or at school [when we are there], be patient with Mum, Dad, brothers and sisters, to do our best in everything we do.)

Q: How do we know that Jonah was sorry for running away? (A: because he was obedient in the end).

Q: How can we show that we are sorry for when we have disobeyed God and our parents? (A: Various possible answers, and if the children have made their first confession they could be encouraged to think about the Sacrament of Reconciliation).

Last week we heard the account in the Gospel of John of the call of the first disciples – here is the one that we are probably more familiar with.



Gospel

Mark 1:14-20

I will make you into fishers of men

Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' He said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'

As He was walking along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men.' And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on a little further, He saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending their nets. He called them at once and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after Him.

Family reflection on the Gospel:

- Light a candle
- Someone read the Gospel



Discuss these questions together.

Q: Where was Jesus? (A: In Galilee/near the Sea of Galilee)

Q: What did three things do we hear Jesus saying at the being of this Gospel passage? (A: 1. The time has come ...2. Repent...3. Believe the Good News")

Let's think a bit about these three statements.

Q: What does Jesus mean when He says "The time has come?" (A: Various answers possible, but the main point is that God has planned the History of Salvation since the Fall, since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden and now is the time of salvation – Jesus has come to save us from slavery to sin.)

Q: What do you think that Jesus means when He says that the "Kingdom of God" is close at hand? (A: Various possible answers, including Jesus' time has come, His kingdom is here, wherever Jesus is, His kingdom is there so when we meet Jesus in prayer and in the sacraments, we are living in His kingdom.)

Q: What does "repent" mean (A: It means to be sorry. Literally it means to think again (Re + "pent" which is from the Latin for "to think".)

Q: Why is Jesus asking us to think again, to repent? (A: Various possible answers: to learn think again about the way we live, e.g. our behaviour. Is it the kind of behaviour that is "pleasing" to Jesus? Do we ask Jesus to help us to become better people?)

Q: Jesus then called two sets of brothers, who? (A: Simon Peter and Andrew, and James and John.)

Q: What was their response? (A: They followed Him....)

See below for a concluding prayer to this discussion.

Concluding prayer for this family time



Read this slowly and gently aloud and try to join in yourself mentally. Where there are a series of dots, pause a bit to allow the picture to develop in everyone's mind.

Shut your eyes and imagine you can see Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee There are a lot of people around and you are there. Jesus watches Simon Peter and Andrew in their boat and when they look up they see Jesus looking at them He smiles at them and they wave at Him.... He waves to them and they come ashore. "Follow Me" He says, And I will make you into fishers of men" Simon Peter and Andrew leave the boat and follow Jesus..... Then Jesus turns and smiles at you..... See Him smiling at you..... Feel His love pouring into your heart.... He gently says your name (add the names if you wish, gently)..... Jesus then says "I love you"..... Hear Him saying this. Hear his gentle voice.... He says it again..... "I love you" then He says, "Will you follow me too?" Answer Him in the silence of your heart.... Your answer is private, just between you and Jesus.

When you are ready, you can come back into the room.

The Sign of the Cross

In the Name
of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit
Amen.



The Sign of the Cross explained



This wonderful short prayer has two aspects to it:

1. It's a prayer of words
2. It's a prayer of action.

Lets think about the action first. When we pray the prayer, we draw a cross on our bodies, covering our chest. It's like a shield of protection; the protection of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It's the protection of Jesus' cross. Jesus died on a cross so that we could go to heaven and also to know His love on earth.

We pray with our bodies; we use our arms to mak the Sign of the Cross. God created us body and soul and in the Sign of the Cross we use out bodies to pray.

Q: How else to we pray with our bodies? (A: E.g. kneeling, genuflecting, bowing, joining our hands, raising hands, priests bless with the Sign of the Cross, ...)

The words of the Sign of the Cross:

- The Sign of the Cross is like a doorway into and out of prayer. We enter in through the Most Holy Trinity. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and our prayer is generally addressed to the Father, in the Son (Jesus) by the Holy Spirit. (We can also speak directly to Jesus and also to the Holy Spirit).
- Making the Sign of the Cross reminds us that we are baptised in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are united to God in a very special way. God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, has claimed us for His own and He never lets us go, provided we choose to stay with Him or choose to come back to Him. Once, baptised we are baptised for ever!

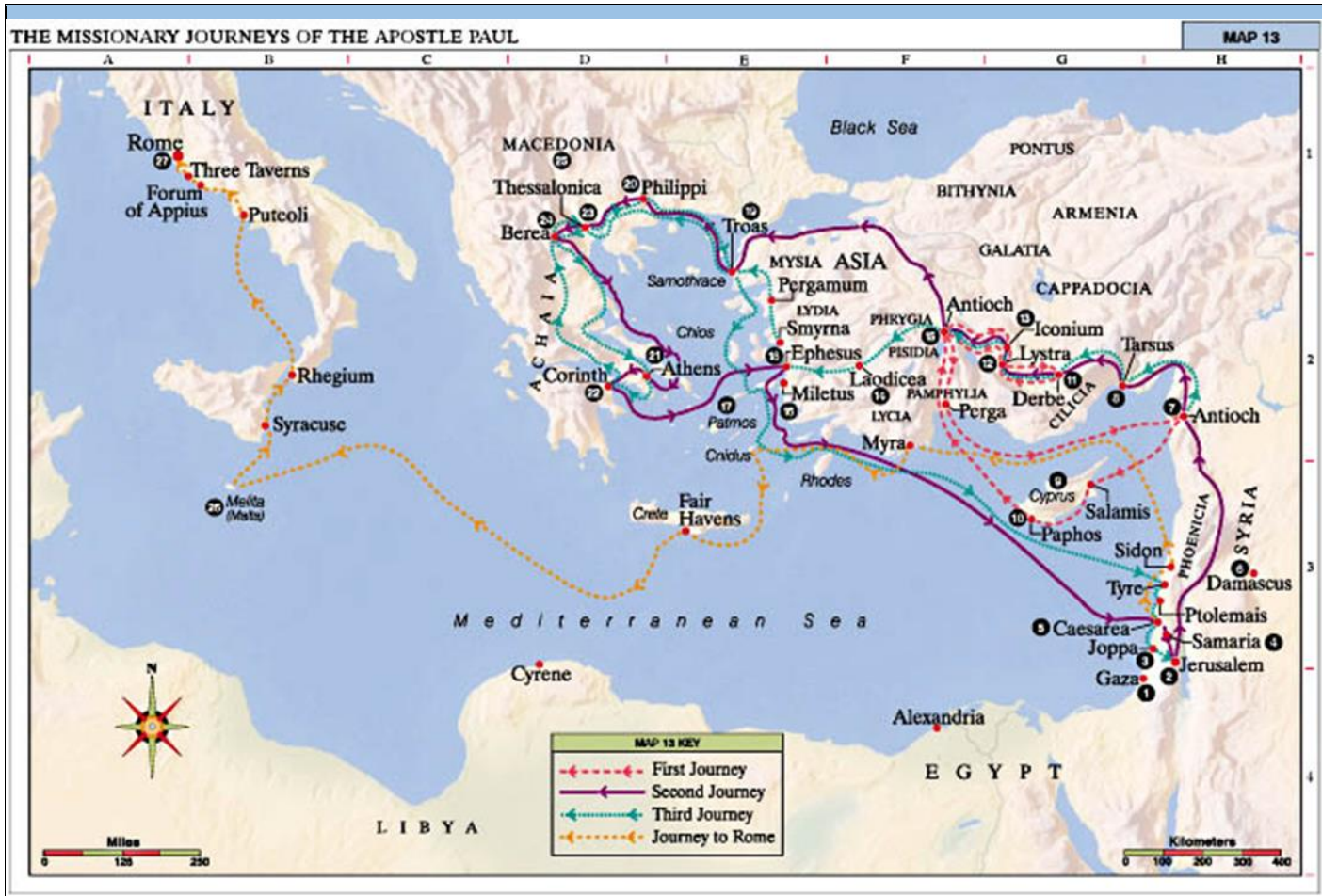
Monday 25th January, Conversion of St Paul: A reflection to read to the family.



After Jesus ascended into heaven, the Apostles told others about Jesus and lots and lots of people became His followers. St Paul, who was originally known as Saul, hated the followers of Jesus and wanted to kill them. (This story is in the Bible, Acts, chapter 9). He was on his way to a city called Damascus when all of a sudden he saw a bright light and he fell down. He could not see anything, but heard a voice saying “Why are you persecuting me?” Saul replied “Who are you?” and the voice said “I am Jesus and you are persecuting me. But get up and go into the city and you will be told what to do.” Saul was now blind and was led into the city by his friends and he stayed there for three days, fasting (eating nothing) and praying. A follower of Jesus called Ananias was nearby. One day whilst he was praying he heard Jesus telling him to go to Saul and lay his hands on him so that he might get his sight back. Ananias was surprised and said to Jesus, “but Lord, this man came here to gather up your followers and have them killed!” But Jesus said that things were different now and Saul was going to travel all over the place teaching about Jesus. Nervously, Ananias went to Saul, and calling him “Brother Saul”, he laid his hands on Saul and immediately he could see again. Full of joy, Saul went with Ananias and was baptised. Saul became Paul and is one of the Church’s greatest ever missionaries. He wrote letters to the early Christians and we often read these at Mass.

This is a famous painting of the “Conversion of St Paul” by an artist called Caravaggio. Saul (Paul) has fallen off his horse which is about to step on him. It is a symbol of the way Saul was going to treat the followers of Jesus. Look at the light shining on Saul, lying on the ground, and the darkness all around. It shows how Saul was living in the dark about Jesus. The light that is in the centre of the picture is the light of Jesus. Both the man and the horse look at Saul on the ground. They don’t hear Jesus’ voice, which only Saul hears, they only see the light, but don’t understand. They look puzzled. Other people don’t always understand our faith and can be puzzled by it. What is Saul lying on? A red cloak. Red in Sacred Art means humility and in his letters, St. Paul used to say that he was the least important person. He recognised that his work was only possible because he trusted the Holy Spirit to guide and help him. Finally look at his arms? What are they doing? They are reaching out like a baby reaches out for their parent. Saul (St Paul) has become like a baby, totally dependent others. Firstly on his friends who took him to Damascus and then throughout the rest of his life, he was dependent on the Holy Spirit who guided him every day. (On the next page is a map of all his missionary journeys and some places to find.)

We too are dependent on the Holy Spirit. Each one of us who has been baptised has been filled with the Holy Spirit and in Confirmation we are strengthened by that same Holy Spirit. St Paul wrote that we can call God “Father” because we have been joined to God the Son (Jesus) by the Holy Spirit. You can end this reflection with a slow and thoughtful Sign of the Cross, and think about how the Holy Spirit helps us.



This is a map of St Paul’s missionary journeys around the then known world.

Can you find these places on the map:

- **Jerusalem**
- **Damascus**
- **Antioch** (where the followers of Jesus were first called “Christians”)
- **Corinth** (where the “Corinthians lived, whom St Paul wrote to)
- **Ephesus** (home of the Ephesians)**Philippi** (home of Philippians)
- **Thessalonica** (home of the Thessalonians)
- **Rome**
- **Cyrene** (where Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus carry the Cross came from).

If you have travelled to any of these places, may be you would like to make a mark on the map to the paces you have been to.”

Map from: <https://aleteia.org/2018/09/19/a-quick-guide-to-st-pauls-travels-according-to-todays-map/> (This is an interesting link if you want to know more).

