

Student-Parent Home Assignments

This set of home assignments and videos is intended to broaden your mission to evangelizing catechesis, that is, to promote a deeper encounter not only between your students and Jesus Christ, but also between students and their parents or another adult mentor as they both grow in their relationship with the Lord.

This accompaniment model of encouraging Catholics to walk together as they grow in their relationship with Christ is a key goal of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Institute on the Catechism. Further, the goal of the Institute is to provide “a systematic exposition of God’s Revelation within the communion of the Catholic Church” as it sends out “missionary disciples as witnesses to the Good News of Salvation.”

With those purposes in mind, Ave Maria Press in partnership with Holy Cross Family Ministries provides the following fifteen student-parent assignments on topics covering a broad scope of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. These assignment can be used to accompany any course in a Catholic High School curriculum sequence. They include topics with references in the Catechism in areas of Revelation, morality, sacraments, vocation, spirituality, ecclesiology, and more.

These home assignments can be used periodically throughout a semesters, especially when a particular topic is covered in class as part of your course.

You can either print the handouts and spell out the links to the videos and the *Catechism* references or send the handouts via an email or your school’s learning management program to both the students and parents.

There are several things for the students and parents to do together: watch and discuss a short video, write separate answers to a question and discuss, read a passage from the Catechism and discuss, and work on a short project.

The objective of these assignments is for students and parents to learn together and grow in knowledge and friendship with Christ.

You do not have to collect any of the “work” the students and parents do together other than a signed copy of the handout when they have completed the assignment.

Topics

- **Topic 1: Baptism**
- **Topic 2: Being Human**
- **Topic 3: Popes 101**
- **Topic 4: Social Teaching**
- **Topic 5: Problem of Evil**
- **Topic 6: Gospels**
- **Topic 7: The Bible**
- **Topic 8: Mary**
- **Topic 9: Proofs of God**
- **Topic 10: Spirituality and Mental Health**
- **Topic 11: Everyday Discernment**
- **Topic 12: Life After Life: The Catholic View of Heaven and Hell**
- **Topic 13: Reconciliation**
- **Topic 14: Real Presence**
- **Topic 15: Marriage**

TOPIC 1: Baptism

Introduction: Baptism is the very first sacrament we receive. Most of us know the image of a baby being baptized with water and understand that Baptism is important, but why? What really is Baptism and what does it do? Kai and Libby help us gain a fuller vision of Baptism, the sacramental gift through which we are born again of water and spirit and become God's own.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. What is the significance and symbolism of water?
2. What does it mean to be born again of water and spirit?
3. Why do we baptize babies?
4. What are the other extraordinary forms of Baptism?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following question: How can an ordinary person in everyday life be a priest, prophet, and king?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 1213-1222](#). Why is Baptism "the basis of the whole Christian life"? Write your answer below.

Do: Make a Baptism collage. Ask a parent or godparent for photos and to answer the following questions (check your Baptismal certificate if necessary):

1. What is the date of your Baptism?
2. Where were you baptized and by whom?
3. Are there any interesting details about that day? Were you chill? Did you cry? Was there a party?
4. Now that you are older, what hopes does your parent or godparent have for you as you grow in your faith?

Verify: Read and sign the following statement.

I attest that we have collaborated and completed together all of the requirements of this assignment.

Adult Signature

Student Signature

TOPIC 2: Being Human

Introduction: Our Catholic faith not only teaches us about who God is, it reveals who we are. Kai and Libby explore what our Catholic faith reveals about being who we are as body and soul human beings made in God's image and likeness.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. What does it mean to be human?
2. What are some of the big questions we've always asked?
3. Who are we inside?
4. Why did God create us?
5. How are we different than other creatures (like animals and angels)?
6. Who is someone who you think really represents being made in the image of God?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following question: What are some of the greatest challenges and lies in our society about what it means to be human?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 1](#). What three things does God call humanity to do? Write your answer below.

Do: Create a playlist of songs that capture what it really means to be human. Think about the themes discussed in the video, the big questions humans have always asked, and the truths about why God created us.

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TOPIC 3: Popes 101

Introduction: The pope is a highly visible representative of our Catholic faith, recognizable and known all over the world. Who is he? What do we believe about the office of the pope and his power? Kai and Libby clear up many misconceptions and questions about the papacy, offering a summary of our Catholic understanding of St. Peter's successor.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. Who "invented" the papacy?
2. What are some things that the pope can and can't do?
3. What do we believe is the Holy Spirit's role in the selection of a pope?
4. What does it mean to be the vicar of Christ?
5. Where can you directly read what the pope wants to communicate?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following question: Think about the metaphors for the pope's role that are described in the video. Which papal role do you think is the most necessary in the world right now?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 881-882](#). Why is it important that the pope, even though he has supreme power in the Church, is also described as a shepherd rather than a king? Write your answer below.

Do: Look up quotes from various popes through the centuries. Find one papal quote that resonates with you and create a hand-drawn or digitally created quote graphic to display in your room or in another place you can see regularly.

Verify: Read and sign the following statement.

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TOPIC 4: Social Teaching

Introduction: What does it mean to be a good person? Is it just being nice, or is there something more specific Catholics are called to do in society? Kai and Libby discuss the seven tenets of Catholic social teaching, or how we should live out our faith in response to problems and injustice in society.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. What makes a good Catholic?
2. What do hymns, holy water, and incense have to do with defending human rights around the world?
3. What are some ways we can see sin is part of social systems and structures?
4. What are some ways we see poor stewardship of creation in our society?
5. What are some ways we see violations of human life and dignity in our society?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following question: St Mother Teresa told people who wanted to join her work with the poor of Calcutta, "Find your own Calcutta." What is your own personal Calcutta and what can you do to respond?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read the summary of the seven tenets of CST [here](#). How is the sacredness and dignity of human life connected to all of the other tenets? Write your answer below.

Do: Choose one of the seven tenets of Catholic Social Teaching and develop an activity that your friends, family, class, or group can complete together. Have each participant write a short reflection on how the activity went and share it here.

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TOPIC 5: Problem of Evil

Introduction: Why do bad things happen to good people? It's one of the oldest human questions that can deeply challenge our faith. Kai and Libby address the Catholic understanding of the problem of evil and how free will, love, and faith can help us to understand suffering in a new way.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. Why is free will necessary to be fully human?
2. What does free will have to do with the problem of evil?
3. How does God give suffering a meaning?
4. Is God really all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following questions: When was a time you found faith even in a time of struggle or suffering? If you don't have your own example, who is a person who you think exemplifies trusting God even in suffering?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 1505](#). Why is Christ's healing of sin "a more radical healing" than the healing of illnesses and infirmities? Write your answer below.

Do: Write and send a letter of encouragement and a spiritual bouquet (promise of certain prayers) to someone who is suffering.

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TOPIC 6: Gospels

Introduction: We think we know the life of Christ, but do we actually know the Gospels? Have we read them, or do we just settle for knowing the “gist?” Kai and Libby survey the four Gospels, who wrote them, how they are distinct, and why we need all four.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. Why is it important that the oral tradition was written down into the Gospels?
2. What would be different in our understanding if we had only one Gospel?
3. The word “Gospel” means “good news.” Why is the story of Jesus’ life “good news?”
4. Why is it important to actually read the Gospels instead of just knowing about them?
5. The Gospels were inspired by God, but written by human persons. How do those two realities work together?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following questions: What is your favorite story from the Gospels about Jesus’ life? How does this story help you better know and understand Jesus?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 126](#). What does the Church teach about the historical accuracy of the Gospels’ account about Jesus’ life? Write your answer below.

Do: Go to [usccb.org](#) and click on the Gospel reading for this coming Sunday. Read it before Mass and do the following: identify a word or phrase that stands out to you; identify one main idea that stands out to you; summarize the Gospel passage in a sentence or two.

Verify: Read and sign the following statement.

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TOPIC 7: The Bible

Introduction: We know the Bible is God’s Word, but how did it come to exist? When and where were the different books written? Who were the authors? Why does the Catholic Bible contain six “extra” books? How do we know what such an ancient text means for our lives today? Kai and Libby explore the origin of the Bible and how we should interpret what we read there.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. Who wrote the Bible—God or human authors?
2. Who decided what books to include in the Bible?
3. What does it mean to read the Old Testament in light of the New Testament?
4. Why does it “take a village” to understand the Bible?
5. How does the “law of love” help us to interpret Scripture?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following question: The Bible exists ultimately because God wants us to know Him. Based upon your reading of Scripture, what are some things you think God wants us to know about Him?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 115-119](#). What are the four “senses” of Scripture? What does each one mean? Write your answer below.

Do: Create inspirational Bible verse rocks for strangers to find. Paint clean rocks with references for verses that offer encouragement about God’s love and mercy (for example, “John 3:16” or “1 Corinthians 13”). Place the painted rocks in places that strangers can find them and be inspired by the verses you’ve chosen.

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TOPIC 8: Mary

Introduction: What do Catholics believe about Mary? Is she just a human like the rest of us or something more? Can she answer prayers even if she's not God? How did Mary remain free of sin? Kai and Libby clarify what we believe about Mary and how we honor her as the mother of God.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss

1. What does 'fiat' mean, especially in reference to Mary?
2. How is Mary the same and how is she different than other human persons?
3. What can we learn from how we see Jesus and Mary interact?
4. What is the difference between adoration and veneration?
5. What does Mary's Assumption reveal about our own hope of resurrection?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following questions: Prayer is about a relationship. What is your current relationship with Mary? How can you develop your relationship with Mary?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [Luke 1:28](#) and [Luke 1:41-42](#). How can you see the "Hail Mary" prayer contained in Scripture? Write your answer below.

Do: The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., honors Mary under her various titles around the world. Take the [virtual tour](#) and choose one of Mary's titles that you relate to most.

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TOPIC 9: Proofs of God

Introduction: How do we know God is real? Doesn't science contradict religion when it comes to God's existence? Our Catholic belief in God does not rest merely upon superstition or blind faith, but also draws on logic and reason. Kai and Libby take you through a few of the rational arguments for the existence of God that Catholics have proposed throughout the centuries, and how faith and logic can work together.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. How can we use reason and intellect, not just blind faith, to prove God's existence?
2. What is the argument of causation?
3. Who is St Thomas Aquinas and how is he important to proof of God?
4. How can scientific facts (like the laws of physics) show that God's existence is more likely than the random creation of the universe?
5. What is the role of experience and desire in understanding God's existence?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following questions: Who is someone who makes God "believable" to you? What does this person do that points toward God's existence and love?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 50](#). On what basis can we know God's existence with certainty? Why do we also need divine revelation? Write your answer below.

Do: Go on a scavenger hunt around your neighborhood to collect photos of five items that remind you of God's existence and presence. Write a brief explanation of why you chose each item.

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TOPIC 10: Spirituality and Mental Health

Introduction: Mental health is an important topic. Many people aren't sure what role our faith plays in mental health. How are mental health and spirituality connected? Can you "pray away" mental illness? Is there hope for people who die by suicide? Kai and Libby discuss Catholic teaching on mental illness, and what you can do if you and someone else is struggling.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. Why are both the priest *and* the therapist important?
2. How do mental and spiritual problems differ?
3. What should we do if we or someone we love is suffering from mental illness?
4. What does our faith teach about victims of suicide?
5. What are some resources for you or others suffering from mental illness?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following question: What do you think are some major ways our culture undermines mental health?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Choose one day/theme of the [USCCB's Novena for Mental Health](#). What insight does the Church offer on this issue? Write your answer below.

Do: Invite several friends or family members to pray the [USCCB's Novena for Mental Health](#).

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TOPIC 11: Everyday Discernment

Introduction: We know God loves us and wants what is best for us. But how do we know what decisions He wants us to make? What tools does God give us to discern the best choices? Kai and Libby share some techniques, including the much-talked-about discernment of spirits, that will hopefully make the process easier for making choices, big or small.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. John 10:10 says that Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly. Why is it important to remember this during discernment?
2. Will God call us to do something immoral for a good outcome?
3. What is consolation versus desolation in the process of discernment?
4. How are guilt and shame different?
5. How should we respond if we realize we've made a mistake in decision making?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following questions: What is a time you felt called to do something (big or small)? How did you know you were called? Describe the experience.

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read Pope Francis' [catechesis](#) on discernment. How is joy an important tool in discernment? Write your answer below.

Do: Keep a discernment journal for a particular decision you have to make. You may use a note in your phone or a paper journal. Each day for at least two weeks, spend a few minutes praying with these discernment questions: Which potential option gives me more consolation versus desolation? Which potential option makes me feel more like myself versus less like myself?

Verify: Read and sign the following statement.

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TOPIC 12: Life After Life: The Catholic View of Heaven and Hell

Introduction: What happens to us after we die? This is one of life's greatest questions that can seem like a total mystery. Our Catholic faith teaches us that after death, we continue existing in heaven, purgatory, or hell. Are these real places? Where do our bodies go? How do we get to heaven instead of hell? Kai and Libby lead us through some basics of the afterlife.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. What does heaven feel like?
2. What does it take to get to heaven?
3. What happens to our bodies in heaven?
4. Why do people go to purgatory?
5. What is hell like?
6. Why do people go to hell?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following questions: What do you look forward to about heaven? What are some earthly attachments you struggle to let go?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 1027](#). What are some of the images Scripture gives us about heaven? Write your answer below.

Do: We should pray for the dead, especially to assist the souls in purgatory. In many Latin cultures, *ofrendas* are small altars set with pictures, personal belongings, or other objects that remind us of deceased relatives. Create an *ofrenda* for your loved ones somewhere in your home to serve as a reminder to pray for them.

Verify: Read and sign the following statement.

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TOPIC 13: Reconciliation

Introduction: Confession can be intimidating, but it is one of God's greatest gifts of healing to us. How does the sacrament work? Why do we confess our sins to a priest? Kai and Libby explain the powerful but often misunderstood sacrament that enables us to mend our relationship with God and heal.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. Who "invented" Confession?
2. In whose place does the priest stand?
3. What does the word "absolve" mean?
4. What three things are required for a valid confession?
5. How often should we go to Confession?
6. What is the seal of Confession?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following question: The Sacrament of Reconciliation is God's gift of mercy and healing. What do you think holds people back from receiving this gift?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 1460](#). What is the purpose of a penance? What should a penance take into account? Write your answer below.

Do: Write an examination of conscience for yourself using either the [Ten Commandments](#), the [Beatitudes](#), or [1 Corinthians 13:1-13](#). Next, look up Confession times at your parish and invite a friend to go with you this week.

Verify: Read and sign the following statement.

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TOPIC 14: Real Presence

Introduction: If you made your first communion, you know that the Eucharist is important. But Communion isn't just a rite of passage or tradition or a symbol of Jesus. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is actually Jesus, really present under the appearance of bread and wine. Where does this belief come from? How does it affect us today? Kai and Libby dive into the profound miracle of love that happens every time we go to Mass.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. What does "real presence" in the Eucharist mean?
2. What is the difference between *accidents* and *substance*?
3. What happens to the accidents and substance of the bread and wine at the consecration of the Eucharist?
4. What is transubstantiation?
5. Why do we kneel or genuflect in front of a tabernacle?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following questions: Jesus becomes one with us in the Eucharist at Mass. What are your favorite parts of Mass? When do you find it hardest to focus?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 1377](#). When does the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist begin and how long does it last? Write your answer below.

Do: Jesus is present with you in the Eucharist. Choose a small way to share Jesus with the world around you. Maybe it's offering to pray with someone, praying grace publicly in a restaurant, or inviting someone to Mass or adoration with you. Discuss your experience with your group or leader.

Verify: Read and sign the following statement.

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TOPIC 15: Marriage

Introduction: Marriage is an ancient human institution that spans every time and culture. For Catholics, marriage is also a beautiful sacrament. How is the Catholic view of marriage unique? Why are there so many rules around it? Kai and Libby explain the four conditions for sacramental marriage and why marriage matters to the world.

Watch: Watch the video [here](#).

Discuss:

1. What does it mean that marriage is a sacrament?
2. What does it mean that marriage is a vocation?
3. What are the four elements of valid, sacramental marriage?
4. Why does marriage occur in public (in the Church)?
5. How should we treat people who experience divorce?
6. What does an annulment say about the four elements of sacramental marriage?

Write: Individually write your answers to the following questions: Who is a married couple that really lives out the sacrament of marriage? How are they a sign of God's faithful love?

Adult Answer	Student Answer

Research: Read [CCC 1604](#). What is the fundamental vocation of every human person? What does the love of a husband and wife image? Write your answer below.

Do: Interview a married couple about their vocation. Ask them about how they met, how they discerned God was calling them to marriage, how they have lived out their wedding vows, how the sacrament of marriage has impacted their lives, and other questions you may have. Write a summary of the interview.

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