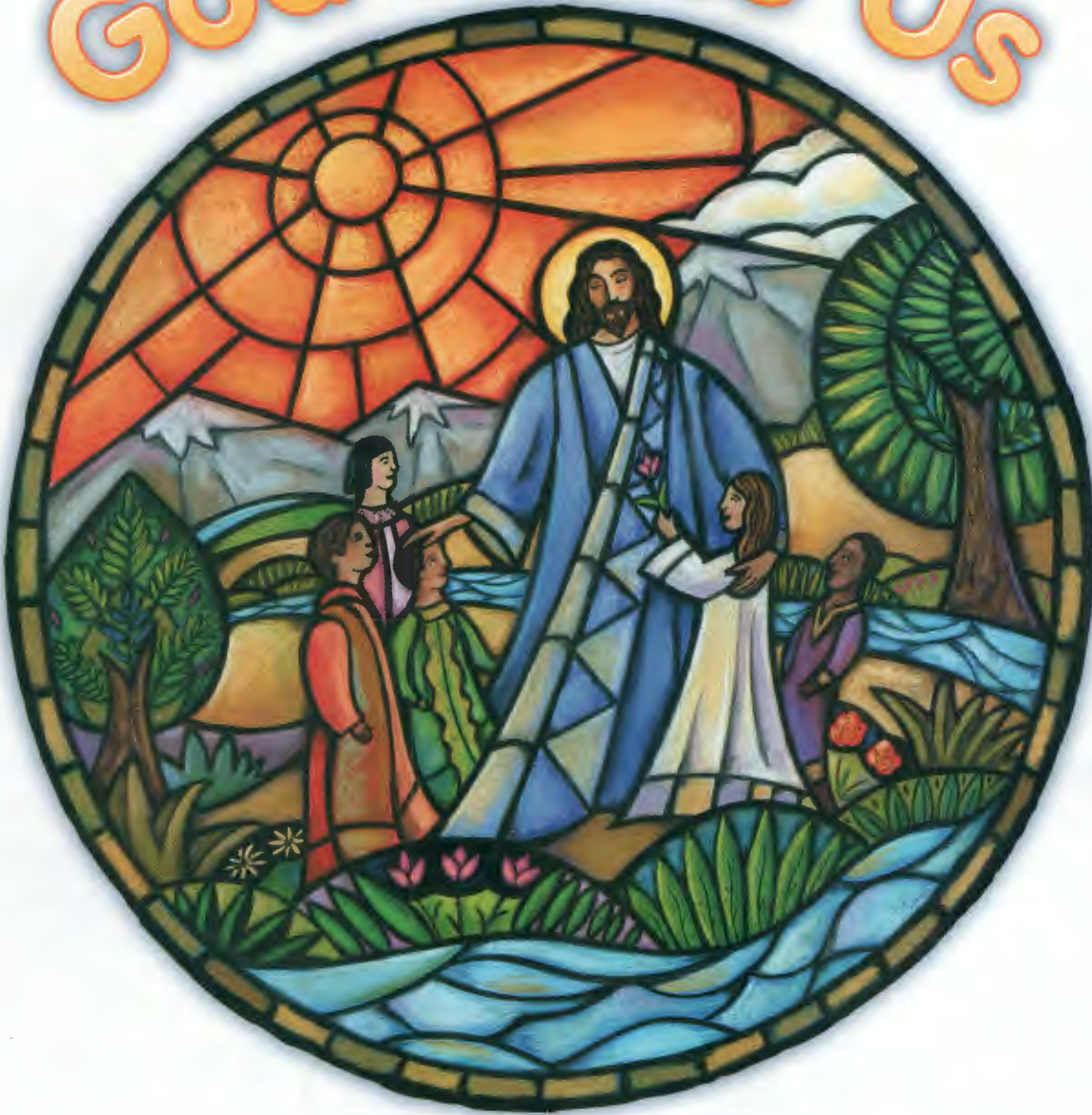


KINDERGARTEN

God Loves Us



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Choosing Is Good

We should think before we choose.

We want to make good choices.

When we make good choices,
we are happy.



God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus.
Mary chose to do what God wanted.



Scripture

Mary said yes to God.

Based on Luke 1:38

Yes

Mary is the mother of Jesus.

Mary is our mother too.

Mary helps us say yes
to God.



Try This

Color and decorate the word **Yes**.

Color Mary's dress.

Ask Mary to help you say yes to God.

Choosing in Families



The Lesson Your Child Learned

Mary, the perfect follower of Jesus, shows us that we attain happiness and self-fulfillment by loving surrender in obedience to God's will. By their choices, family members contribute to family unity or take away from it. The self-control and good habits your child learns now lay the foundation for a moral life. In this chapter the children learned the importance of making good choices. They learned that Mary is their mother and will help them do what God wants.

Living the Lesson

Over the years I've come to recognize the small decisions that loom large in my life at home. Do I empty the dishwasher or leave it for someone else to do? Do I make an effort to call when I'm going to be late? Do I think to send a no-special-occasion card to my wife, parents, or daughters during the year to say, "You're special to me every day"? I see these seemingly small decisions as indicators of the healthiness of my commitments and relationships. If I'm withholding the small things, I know that in some way I'm also withholding my heart, which can have potentially large consequences.

The same is true with God. Do I make time for God at the beginning of the day? Do I thank him throughout the day for all the help that he sends my way? Do I look for the presence of God in others and treat them accordingly? If you focus on the small decisions that will open your heart, your relationships with your family and with God will reap giant rewards.

—Tom McGrath, author of *Raising Faith-Filled Kids* (Loyola Press)



Bringing the Lesson Home

- Read with your child the pages from this chapter that were sent home.
- Assist your child with the Hail Mary prayer printed on the back of the Mary card he or she brings home.
- Point out the happiness your child's good actions bring the family and the pain bad actions cause.
- Let your child make decisions and encourage him or her to stand by them.
- Guide your child to take responsibility for his or her actions. Be sure to model this behavior too.
- Let your child know what is acceptable behavior at home and in public and expect conformity. Take the time early on to explain the reasons for what you ask your child to do.

Celebrating the Church Year

To Everything There Is a Season

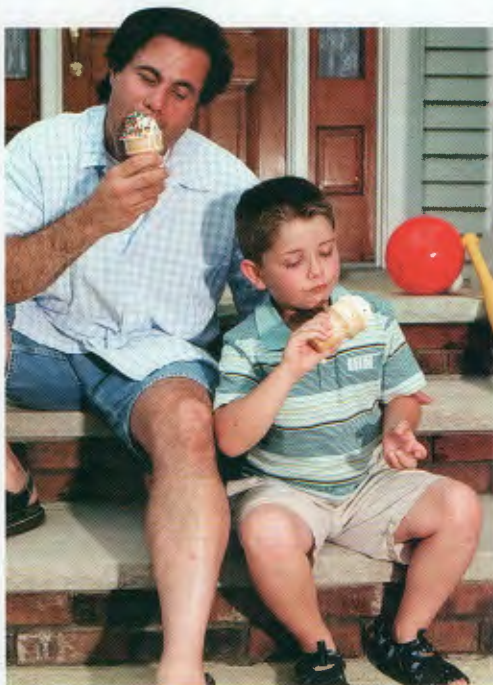
One of the many delights of having a child in kindergarten is that classroom lessons and activities revolve around the yearly calendar. Seasons and feast days, holidays and ordinary time make up a large part of the curriculum and, because the calendar is now a significant part of your child's life, it will become a noticeable part of yours. That is a very good thing, because living in harmony with the rhythms of the earth satisfies an ancient and universal, though often neglected, yearning: to feel part of the natural world around us.

The liturgical year of the Church mirrors and expands these natural rhythms. From the glowing candlelight on our Advent wreaths to the ashes that mark the beginning of Lent, to the abundance of flowers at a May Crowning, our seasonal symbols and liturgies seek to make visible that which is invisible: the loving presence of God in all things.

Making the Most of Time

We can make the most of the time we have, or let the moments of our life pass by. Here are some ways to add depth to the days you and your family spend together.

- Get each day off to a good start. Rather than getting caught up in a frantic rush, start the day with a simple prayer, offering God the “prayers, works, joys, and sufferings” of the day to come.
- Celebrate feasts and seasons. In addition to Christmas and Easter, make a point of celebrating a saint's day for each family member, either on the feast of the saint the person is named for or on the feast of his or her favorite saint. Get a calendar listing the main feast days of the church and make a point of celebrating in a special way at least once a month. Involve your child in preparing the festivities.
- Make ordinary moments special. During the long stretches of “ordinary time,” plan a celebration or two, “just because.” Have a special dessert at dinner or go out for ice cream “just because God made us a family.”
- Create and appreciate family rituals. First, congratulate yourself on the positive family rituals your family has already adopted. You might also consider picking a night of the week as family night—a time for games, watching a movie, telling or reading aloud stories, riding bikes, or doing another fun activity as a family. Make it a time everyone can count on being together.



*There is a time for everything,
and a time for every affair under the heavens.
A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.*

Based on Ecclesiastes 3:1–2



Making the Most of Time *continued*

- Savor the gift of the present moment. Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is among you.” (Luke 17:21) Realize that this present moment is the one in which we can encounter God—not some distant and theoretical time in the future, but right here and right now. Be open to and look for evidence of God’s presence in your life right now:
 - a. in the joyful innocence of your child
 - b. in the strength you receive to rise to the challenges you face during the day
 - c. in the acts of loving kindness you receive from family members, neighbors, and even strangers
 - d. in the beauty of nature, the joy of music, the creativity of artists, the goodness of people who sacrifice for others, and the sheer exuberance of being alive
- Attend the seasonal liturgical celebrations in your parish as often as possible. They are often family friendly, and they will help nurture in you and in your child a sense of the sacredness of each season throughout the year.
- Take regular walks with your child to look for signs of the season. Help sharpen your child’s powers of observation by asking questions such as, “What is it that you like about what you see?”



The Practicing Catholic

Some years ago in the fall, I attended an exhibit of artists from Mexico. Each artist had created an *ofrenda*, or offering, to commemorate the life and times of a deceased family member. I was so moved by what I saw that I decided to make an *ofrenda* at home in memory of my father. I gathered photographs and a few other items that he had used and treasured during his life and placed them on the mantle in my living room. As I worked, long-forgotten incidents from my childhood came flooding back, and I remembered my father vividly in specific ways that I had not since he died—things like his twinkly eyes, his laugh, and especially the way his hands looked and felt. This ritual has become my treasured tradition on the Feast of All Souls, partly because of the powerful memories it evokes and partly because I can share them with my children.

Ann O'Connor, author of *The Twelve Unbreakable Principles of Parenting* (ACTA Publications)



Ofrenda for My Father, Ripot Garcia