**Virtues in Practice—General Program Overview**

**“The Catholic School’s task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life; the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second is the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.” – Congregation for Catholic Education, The Catholic School, 37**

Virtues in Practice (VIP) is a program for children in grades pre-kindergarten though eight to grow in virtues and see the virtues as concrete expressions of their Catholic faith. It is set up in such a way that an entire school can study the same virtue each month, to provide a whole-school (and at home, whole-family) focus. The program covers 27 virtues over a three-year, with 81 saint held up as models of the virtues. These three years emphasize and are named for the three theological virtues, FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY.

* The YEAR OF FAITH focuses on Catholic devotions and the idea that “faith works” (Gal 5:6), by a school-wide emphasis on service projects.
* The YEAR OF HOPE emphasizes study skills, because in order to fulfill God’s plan for our lives we need to develop the talents He has given to us.
* The YEAR OF CHARITY emphasizes community, particularly in regard to students’ interactions with one another, because “he who does not love the brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1Jn 4:20)

Each month children in grades PK-8 learn about the same virtue, but primary, intermediate and middle school students learn about different saints. In this way, students who are in the program throughout their elementary school career will have a basic introduction to a virtue at the primary level with one saint, cover the same virtue again in more detail at the intermediate level with a different saint, and delve into a deeper meaning of the virtue at the middle school level with a third saint. It is a great idea for parents to reinforce these saints as heroes by asking their children to tell them about the saints they are studying each month. Although the virtue is covered in more depth in the upper grades, the same definitions for each virtue are used at all grade levels, so that students become familiar with the particular meaning of each virtue.

Virtue is not something just to know, but to do. Virtues in Practice emphasizes role-playing in the classroom so that students can practice how to act when using a particular virtue, as well as monthly projects designed to help students grow in the virtue of the month by practicing it in real situations. These projects rarely involve making a product, but usually entail a discussion and a behavior goal to help the child develop the particular virtue.

Since parents are the primary educators of the children, Virtues in Practice respects their role by placing individualized conversations about a child’s character in the care of the parent. Home projects are not meant to dictate the role of the parent. Parents are encouraged to participate at home and may choose to create their own project for any month, or may use the suggested list of projects provided as a resource. Virtues in Practice is most effective when parents model the virtue of the month, make references to it, or even choose to do one of the projects themselves. By participating in the home the parents can converse with their child to work on certain behaviors or discuss difficult topics. The school, being St. Gerard Majella, will send home a list of resources and projects for parents to use or develop their own project. A form will be included in the event the family would like to share their home experience.

This past year St. Gerard Majella began the Virtues in Practice program introducing the Year of Faith. This year we will be working through the Year of Hope.

*VIRTUES FOR THE YEAR OF*

*HOPE*

*The Year of Hope offers an opportunity to focus on study skills and vocations. We know that god designed each of us with gifts and talents to suit His plan for our lives, and that He expects us to do our part to increase the talents He has given us so that we are ready to answer His call.*

*SEPTEMBER: HOPE*

*--TRUSTING IN GOD’S LOVING PLAN*

*OCTOBER: STUDIOUSNESS*

*--SEEKING KNOWLEDGE TO GROW CLOSER TO TRUTH*

*NOVEMBER: HUMILITY*

*--ACCEPTING YOUT LIMITATIONS AND GOD-GIVEN TALENT*

*DECEMBER: PATIENCE*

*--WAITING OR ENDURING WITHOUT COMPLAINT*

*JANUARY: FIDELITY*

*--BEING FAITHFUL TO PROMISES AND COMMITMENTS*

*FEBRUARY: CHEERFULNESS*

*--LOOKING ON THE BRIGHT SIDE*

*MARCH: TEMPERANCE*

*--ENJOYING THINGS IN A PROPER, BALANCED WAY*

*APRIL: OBEDIENCE*

*--SAYING “YES” TO THE LOVING WILL OF GOD AND THOSE HE HAS SENT OVER TO US*

*MAY: DILIGENCE*

*--DOING YOUR BEST AND WORKING HARD UNTIL YOU’RE FINISHED*

*The Act of Hope*

*O my God, relying on Your almighty power*

*and infinite mercy and promises,*

*I hope to obtain pardon of my sins,*

*the help of Your grace, and life everlasting,*

*through the merits of Jesus Christ,*

*My Lord and Redeemer. Amen*

*VIRTUES FOR THE YEAR OF*

*HOPE*

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