

VIRTUES FOR THE YEAR OF

*Hope*

September: HOPE

—trusting in God's loving plan

October: STUDIOUSNESS

—seeking knowledge to grow closer to Truth

November: HUMILITY

—accepting your limitations and God-given talents

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 set over us

May: DILIGENCE

—doing your best and working hard until you're finished

## INTRODUCTION TO THE YEAR OF HOPE

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*"We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that . . . hope does not disappoint." (Romans 5:3-5)*

*"Though He slay me, I will hope in Him." (Job 13:15)*

*"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast." (Hebrews 6:19)*

*"So that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:7)*

*"[He] has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance . . . reserved in heaven for you . . . In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials . . . prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:9-13)*

*"I wait for the Lord, and in Him I hope." (Psalm 130)*



The theological virtue of hope, given to us in baptism and strengthened as we grow in faith, is very different from the way we use the word "hope" in everyday language. Usually, we say "hope" when we mean "wish" or "want"; we say, "I hope you're doing well", "I hope I get this promotion". Christian hope does not mean a wish, but a *certainty*, a trust in God's promise that He has created us to be with Him in heaven.

The virtue of hope enables us to suffer with joy in this life, knowing that even when the things that happen to us are evil, the Lord will use them for our salvation. The virtue of hope reminds us that the sufferings of this life are short and small compared to the greatness of joy prepared for us in eternity. The Christian knows that places hope in wealth, in persons of power, in anything that is of this world is foolish, since these will all fail us at some point. God alone will never fail us, and heaven is the only world which shall not pass away. Therefore we anchor our hearts in heaven, and with that grounding, we can bear all the storms and trials of this life. Like a life-line anchored to a faraway shore, hope gives us the strength and direction we need to be continually pulled toward God, seeking the path He has planned for us in this life, recognizing that it is a journey toward eternal life with Him.

Hope also seeks God's plan for us in this life since we know that He loves each of us uniquely and has a particular plan for us to glorify Him and find our way to heaven. This provides an opportunity for the students to focus on discovering their talents, and strengthening these talents through practice, so that they are prepared for the vocation to which God calls them. Properly understanding the virtue of humility (accepting our limitations and God-given talents) allows children to discern the gifts God has given to each of them, and to rejoice in the gifts given to others. Virtues such as studiousness, temperance, obedience, and diligence provide opportuni-

ties to focus on developing study skills such as research, time management, following directions, and completing our work well—all within the framework of seeking God's will for us in this life, that we may join Him forever in heaven. The virtue of fidelity reminds children of this purpose, even in schoolwork; the virtue of patience allows them to make mistakes without giving up; and the virtue of cheerfulness reminds them not only to avoid taking themselves too seriously, but that God's command to "be perfect" is different from the common tendency toward perfectionism in our world. A sure sign that we are following God's plan and doing all our work for His glory and not our own is joy.

Our Catholic tradition cries out in gratitude to Jesus, our Redeemer, "*Ave Crux, Spes Unica!*" (Hail, cross, our only hope!), and to His Mother, "*Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve*" (Hail holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope). This year, we look to the cross and to Our Lady as signs of hope, knowing that the love of God triumphs over evil and that we have a Mother in heaven who will hold us close through life's sorrows, drawing us to rejoice at her side in eternity.

## HOME PROJECTS FOR SEPTEMBER

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HOPE—trusting in God’s loving plan

### *Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Joseph*

1. Discuss: what promises did God make and keep in the Old Testament? What promises did God make in the New Testament? Each day this month say a prayer thanking God for His promises and tell Him you can’t wait to see how He keeps them, because you know He will.
2. Practice saying the prayer: “Jesus, I trust in You!” especially when you are sad or afraid.
3. Christian hope does not mean making a wish or wanting something. It means knowing for sure that God loves us and will bring us to heaven if we follow Him. Draw a picture of heaven and describe it to your parents.

### *Grades 3-5—Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton*

1. Learn and pray the *Act of Hope* each day this month.
2. Write a poem about how our lives on earth are only a journey to heaven, our true home.
3. Look back on something bad that happened to you. What good did God bring out of it? Pray for the ability to trust, in hard moments, that God will always conquer by bringing good even out of evil.
4. Search for a beautiful image of heaven and post it in your room this month to remind you that it is your true home.
5. Pray each night this month, asking God to tell you about your vocation, how He is calling you to give your life to serve and follow Him.

### *Grades 6-8—Blesseds Louis and Zelig Martin*

1. Make a list of songs that talk about “love forever”. Does this life last forever? Whether we know it or not, what do all people truly long for? Find a joyful song that is about loving God in heaven (or could be easily interpreted to be about loving God in heaven), and make it your fall-back tune for humming at random moments this month. If people ask you what song it is, tell them why you chose that one.
2. When you experience evil or discouragement, fight the tendency to look inward and despair—look upward and forward to Christ and heaven, which makes suffering worthwhile. Confirm your soul in hope by saying out loud, to a friend, why this suffering is worthwhile.
3. Interview parents (yours or someone else’s). How have they planned for their children’s future? Have they planned for their children’s eternal future? Ask if their plans have ever failed or turned out differently, and whether the virtue of trusting in God’s plan helped them at those times.

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## HOME PROJECTS FOR OCTOBER

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STUDIOUSNESS—seeking knowledge to grow closer to Truth

### *Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Albert the Great*

1. Find something in nature that is really tiny but really beautiful. What does this teach us about God? Find something really, really big in nature that is also beautiful. What does this teach us about God?
2. Ask your mom or dad why it is important to go to school and learn. How does it help us to live God's plan for us? Can it help us to get to heaven?
3. Each day, think of one thing you learned at school that taught you something about God and share it with your parents. Try to find things from all your classes, not just religion class. You can even use things you learned at recess!

### *Grades 3-5—Saint Thomas Aquinas*

1. List every subject you learn about in school. See if you can explain to someone how each subject brings you closer to God.
2. Make an extra effort this month to seek God in all your studies. For example, if you study planets, think about how they glorify God. If you study parts of speech, think of how marvelous it is that He gave us the gift of language and how He wants us to use it. If you read a story, think about how each character is doing in his/her relationship with God.
3. Exercise your ability to wonder. What do you wonder about God? Make a list. Chose one or more questions from your list and try to find out the answer.
4. Study God's design in the universe by researching the Golden Ratio. See if your local library can get the video *Donald in Mathmagicaland*, a little-known treasure that teaches the design we find in nature, architecture, music, and sports.

### *Grades 6-8—Saint Edith Stein*

1. Interview a convert to Catholicism. How did learning about doctrine influence his or her faith?
2. Interview a devout Catholic doctor or scientist. Ask how scientific knowledge brings him or her closer to God.
3. Brainstorm questions about the faith with a friend. Use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or the *YouCat* to try to find the answers.
4. Discuss: does training your mind (in, for instance, mathematics) make it better able to receive truths about God? How? What does this say about the way we should do our schoolwork and homework?
5. There is a difference between acquiring knowledge, being overwhelmed with information, and seeking facts that are a waste of our time. With your friends, list a few examples for each of those three categories and dare each other to go on a "facts fast" from things that you don't really need to know (no, schoolwork does not count!). Compare your experiences: did you feel starved? Purified? Does how long you kept at it make a difference?

## HOME PROJECTS FOR NOVEMBER

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HUMILITY—accepting our limitations and God-given talents

### *Grades Pre-K-2—Saint John the Baptist*

1. Discuss with your parents: Is it okay not to be good at something? Does that mean we shouldn't even try? What should we do if we try really hard at something and can't do it? Follow their advice this month.
2. One of the beautiful reasons God gave different people different limitations and talents is so that we can help each other. Talk about the limitations and talents of each member of your family and how you can help each other. (Don't miss the simple things, like the older people being able to help the younger ones when they can't reach things!)
3. All our talents come from God. When someone tells you "thank you" for using your talent, say "you're welcome", and in your heart say, "Thank You, God for giving me that talent."
4. What is the difference between knowing our talents and bragging? If you have a bad habit of bragging, try to break it this month.

### *Grades 3-5—Saint Pio of Pietrelcina*

1. Tell your friends and family members the talents you admire in them—and praise God for those talents!
2. Don't be shy about proclaiming and using your talents, because it's not about you. God gave you those talents, and many of them! Ask your parents and friends what talents they see in you and write a prayer thanking God for them and asking His help to use them well.
3. Sometimes when we're not good at something we get embarrassed. Why? Talk to your parents about something that's like that for you and how you can accept it and grow in humility this month.

### *Grades 6-8—Saint Therese of Lisieux*

1. Why is it important to know our limitations and God-given talents? How is this related to the virtue of hope? Is it true or false that "you can do anything if you put your mind to it"? Choose sides and debate the question with a friend. Why are there so many movies based on this theme? Is there a difference between overcoming difficulties and ignoring the limitations God has placed upon us? If so, what is the difference?
2. Write a poem or draw a picture about how tiny each person is compared to the universe God made—and yet how hugely important each person is to God.
3. Sometimes we boast about who we know, things we have, or things we do to try to make ourselves feel important. See if you can identify a character in a book or a movie who does this. Do you admire that person? Do you think he/she is more important because of their connections, possessions, or actions? What makes a person truly important or worthy of praise? Avoid boasting this month.
4. Among your friends/class/teammates, pass around a paper with each person's name and ask everyone to write down one gift or talent they see in that person.
5. Discuss areas where you know you lack talent and laugh about them together.

## HOME PROJECTS FOR DECEMBER

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PATIENCE—waiting or enduring without complaint

### *Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Monica*

1. Don't complain whenever you have to wait for something this month. If you forget, say "Sorry, Lord. Please give me patience!"
2. Whenever you get a gift or treat this month, wait at least a few minutes before eating or opening it (unless your parents or teachers tell you to have it right away). How long can you wait? Make your waiting a sacrifice to God. Offer it up for someone who needs prayers.
3. During this month, when your family or classmates have to take turns for things, offer to go last.

### *Grades 3-5—Saint Isaac Jogues*

1. Make a list of things that are *fast* today compared to decades or centuries ago. This month, when you're annoyed at something taking too long, see how many things from your list you can name while you wait, and pray for patience.
2. Be patient with yourself. If you don't get something right the first time, stay calm and try again.
3. When you're stuck waiting, pray a decade of the rosary for someone you know needs prayers.
4. How long can you wait for something? Choose something you want (not something you need) and challenge yourself to wait a day or a week for it.

### *Grades 6-8—Saint Rita of Cascia*

1. List things in our culture that foster impatience—things that people expect to be *instant*. Come up with a revolutionary way to use one of those things to grow in patience rather than the opposite.
2. We get annoyed and complain when we think something is unreasonable or less than we deserve. How are these two viewpoints related to hope and humility? Think of something that frequently makes you complain, and discuss how hope or humility can help you to grow patient with it this month.
3. A good measure of our patience is how we respond to other people's faults or our own. How is patience related to the virtues of humility and forgiveness? Write a short prayer to use this month asking God for patience and include one or both of these other virtues.
4. The virtue of patience helps us to endure when we ourselves or those we love are suffering. The suffering of Christ is referred to as His "Passion", a word that comes from the same root as the word patience. On your own, prayerfully read the Passion of Christ (look at the end of one of the four Gospels). With your friends, discuss why Christ had such patience. Ask Him to help you follow His example.

## HOME PROJECTS FOR JANUARY

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FIDELITY—being faithful to promises and commitments

### *Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Cecilia*

1. Make a new year's resolution and focus on keeping it. Choose something small—if your goal is too big it will be too hard to keep your promise. If you make a mistake, pray for fidelity and try again.
2. Do you trust someone who breaks promises? Don't make promises unless you are sure you can keep them. Make a promise to your parents about something you will/won't do for a day or a week. Do your very best, but remember they love you and they'll forgive you if you make a mistake. Yet they want you to try your hardest!

### *Grades 3-5—Blesseds Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi*

1. At your baptism, your parents made promises on your behalf. What were they? Find out what "baptismal promises" are and use them as an examination of conscience this month.
2. What is a covenant? How many can you find in the book of Genesis? (You can skim and look at the section headings.) Does the Lord ever break a covenant? Which people in Genesis keep God's covenant? What is the "New Covenant" and how can you keep it this month?
3. Why do people say, "talk is cheap"? Discuss and write a poem, song, rap, or pledge titled "Walk the Walk".

### *Grades 6-8—Saint Gianna Molla*

1. Are there commitments that go with the sacrament of confirmation? Find out what they are and choose a way you can practice this month to grow strong enough to make that commitment.
2. Find a priest/Sister/married couple who has/have celebrated the 50th anniversary of their vows of marriage or religious life. When people make these vows, *what* do they promise to God? Find out in your interview, and discuss with a friend whether you should make a similar (less formal) commitment, according to your state in life.
3. Pray every day this month for your future spouse and ask God to strengthen you in the virtue of fidelity in whatever commitment He calls you to make with your life (He might be the Spouse!)
4. Discuss commitment in our culture today. What are some common commitments and how do they compare to the past? Why is the virtue of fidelity important? Is there a revolutionary way you can practice or promote fidelity to commitments this month?



## HOME PROJECTS FOR FEBRUARY

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CHEERFULNESS—looking on the bright side

### *Grades Pre-K-2—Saint John Bosco*

1. List appropriate ways to make people smile. Count how many times you can make someone smile each day.
2. Explain the expression “every cloud has a silver lining”. When you have to do something hard or something you don’t like doing, practice listing what is good about the situation.
3. It’s true: frowning faces aren’t handsome, cute, or pretty. Practice smiles and scowls in a mirror with your child, and comment how much better they look when they are happy. Agree on a signal (such as touching the corner of your mouth) that you will use to remind him or her to wipe off a frown.
4. Choose a day of the week that will be a “no complaining day” in your house and at school. You can’t complain, either! Discuss afterwards whether the family is happier on these days.

### *Grades 3-5—Saint Philip Neri*

1. Learn some appropriate jokes and share them.
2. Discuss “glass half-empty/half full” mentalities. What are the benefits of seeing the full half? Practice naming positive aspects when faced with hard situations and share how this tool affects experiences this month.
3. Play a family game or watch a fun movie together.
4. Whistle while you work: chose a chore you dread and sing to a CD or the radio while you do it this month. (Make sure it’s uplifting music!)
5. Practice encouragement: whenever you hear someone complaining this month, give them sympathy, but then point out things they are good at and how they can use them to overcome their troubles.
6. Watch the movie *Annie* and discuss the benefits of a positive attitude. Choose something that could get you down and be more positive about it this month.

### *Grades 6-8—Blessed Miguel Pro*

1. Discuss your family’s recreational activities. Are they truly re-creative, refreshing and restorative? Or are they draining, causing extra stress and busyness?
2. Discuss the self-consciousness and need for peer approval experienced by most teens. When you catch a peer criticizing him/herself, be sure to tell them the true good you see in them, including the good qualities of their character.
3. Discuss signs of teen depression. Are certain types of music and fashion warning signs of depression? Why does society glamorize depression? At what point should a true friend report a concern to an adult?
4. Listen to oldies music together and discuss cultural trends toward happiness or sadness. What is the root? What are the effects? What should we do about it?
5. Practice seeing the good in everything. Even when something bad happens, pray and ask God to help you to see the good He can bring out of it. For example, a bad grade might motivate you to study more than ever before. Being sick might provide extra quality time with your family, or a temporary misunderstanding with a friend might give you a chance to meet someone new. Try to thank God for everything, even what seems bad. Find the good in it!

## HOME PROJECTS FOR MARCH

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TEMPERANCE—enjoying things in a proper, balanced way  
(Pre-K–2 translation: only having a healthy amount of something good)

### *Grades Pre-K-2—Saint Teresa of Avila*

1. Talk about nutrition. Practice identifying a balanced meal and reasonable portions. Identify unbalanced meals and super-sized portions. Why is nutrition important?
2. Practice sharing attention: when you talk with people this month, make sure that they get enough time to talk as you do. Some people are quiet, so you might need to ask them questions.
3. Try watching TV only on weekends. Discuss how it affects your routine and your relationships.
4. Discuss health and establish expectations, such as “You can only have (#quantity),” or “You have to eat your \_\_\_\_\_ before you can have any \_\_\_\_\_.”

### *Grades 3-5—Saint Camillus de Lellis*

1. Discuss video games. What is the difference between having fun and being addicted? What happens if someone spends too much time on video games? Try cutting back this month. Discuss afterwards whether it was hard or easy.
2. Try eating only 2/3 of your normal amount of sweets this month.
3. Discuss how you spend your time. Is there a balance between prayer, rest, work, and play? Is there any one activity that takes over too much of your time and energy? Are there enjoyable activities that deserve more of your time? Make a resolution this month that will help balance your schedule.
4. See if you can eat sweets only on Sundays.
5. Choose something that you think you do too much. Try to see how many days you can go without doing it.

### *Grades 6-8—Venerable Matt Talbot*

1. Discuss addictions: alcohol, drugs, food, smoking, pornography, etc. What causes addiction? How can you help someone who has an addiction? Can caffeine or sugar be addictive? What about texting, music, or talking on the phone? Try to cut back on one of these this month as an experiment.
2. Discuss eating disorders. How are they caused? How can you help someone you suspect has an eating disorder? When should you report a concern? What are your own eating habits? Are you too controlling of what you eat? Too indulgent? Take steps to correct any imbalance this month.
3. Discuss how you spend your time. Is there a balance between prayer, rest, work, and play? Is there any one activity that takes over too much of your time and energy? Are there enjoyable activities that deserve more of your time? Make a resolution this month that will help balance your schedule.

## HOME PROJECTS FOR APRIL

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OBEDIENCE—saying “yes” to the loving will of God and those He has set over us

### *Grades Pre-K-2—Our Lady*

1. Make a list of people you should obey. Choose one of those people and work on obeying him or her better this month.
2. Focus on your teacher’s directions this month. Give him or her your *full* attention and try to do right away whatever is asked.
3. Sometimes selfishness or our temper can get in the way of obedience. Make a list of people you should obey, and never say “no” to them this month.

### *Grades 3-5—Saint Juan Diego*

1. Memorize the Ten Commandments in a creative way that you can share with your class.
2. What are your class/school rules? Choose the one that you find hardest, and practice following it carefully this month.
3. Play one of your favorite games—but leave out an important rule. What happens? Leaving out some rules might make the game more fun, but is that true for every rule? Which ones are necessary to make the game work? Make it a goal to follow the rules of all your games this month without arguing.

### *Grades 6-8—Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini*

1. Sometimes we say we’ll do something and then forget. Practice doing such things *right away* this month, or come up with ways to remember (for example, write a note, and put it in your bedroom doorway so that you will see it when you walk over it—or if you can’t scrub the shower right away when your mom asks, put the cleaner on your night stand so you remember to do it before you go to bed).
2. Obedience includes the things you know parents, teachers, etc. *want* you to do, even if they don’t say it. A person who excels in the virtue of obedience is good at figuring out what is wanted/needed *before* being asked. Confuse your parents and teachers this month by trying to figure out what they want/need and doing it before they ask.
3. Often we argue or disobey because we think a rule is unreasonable. Choose a rule like this that is hard for you to follow, and discuss why it might be in place. Does it protect the rights of others? The good of the whole group? If you’re stuck, ask a responsible adult to help you understand the rule. See if you are strong enough to submit to it this month, even if you don’t like it. Make it a sacrifice and offer it up for someone who really needs your prayers.

## HOME PROJECTS FOR MAY

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DILIGENCE—doing your best and working hard until you're finished

### *Grades Pre-K-2—Saint André Bessette*

1. Work on finishing puzzles or mazes this month. Don't give up!
2. Make a calendar that shows the last month of school. For every day you work your hardest, give yourself one smiley face during the first week, two smiley faces for a "worked my hardest day" in the second week, three smileys in the third week, and four smileys per day in the fourth week—because it's harder toward the end! How many smileys would that be if you got them all? How many do you think you can get? Make a goal and try to reach it.
3. Choose a chore at home and discuss how you could finish it better. (For example: after you clean your room, could you vacuum it? Or after you feed the dog, do you put things away neatly?). Work on doing it your best this month, especially finishing it carefully.
4. Read and discuss *The Little Engine that Could*. How can you imitate him this month?

### *Grades 3-5—Saint Francis de Sales*

1. How would you feel if your mom sorted and washed your laundry, but didn't dry it? Or if your dad marinated meat for dinner, but didn't cook it? Name the *last step* of a few of your daily tasks and focus this month on doing the last step well.
2. If we remember to do everything as a gift for God, we'll do our best. This month, say a quick prayer in your heart (such as "All for You, Jesus!") before each task you start.
3. If you feel yourself losing steam while doing your chores or homework, ask to take a break and jog around the block.
4. Make your tasks a game this month: before you start, name a time record or high score that you want to beat.

### *Grades 6-8—Saint Catherine of Siena*

1. Discuss how diligence is related to the virtue of hope. When you're tempted to quit or to do a sloppy job this month, pray the *Act of Hope*, or doodle the word "hope" in your notes as a reminder of your goal and your reason for putting forth your best effort.
2. Think of something you enjoy doing, and make it a "reward" to yourself by deciding to do that enjoyable thing only after you've completed doing a less desirable, but necessary task.
3. Come up with your own motto/battle cry (perhaps something similar to the cheer for your favorite sports team). Use it to motivate yourself this month whenever you are tempted to give up.