

Help your child to memorise...

God is the creator of the whole world and of all the people in it.

We should look on the world as a gift from God and as a sign of God's love and power.

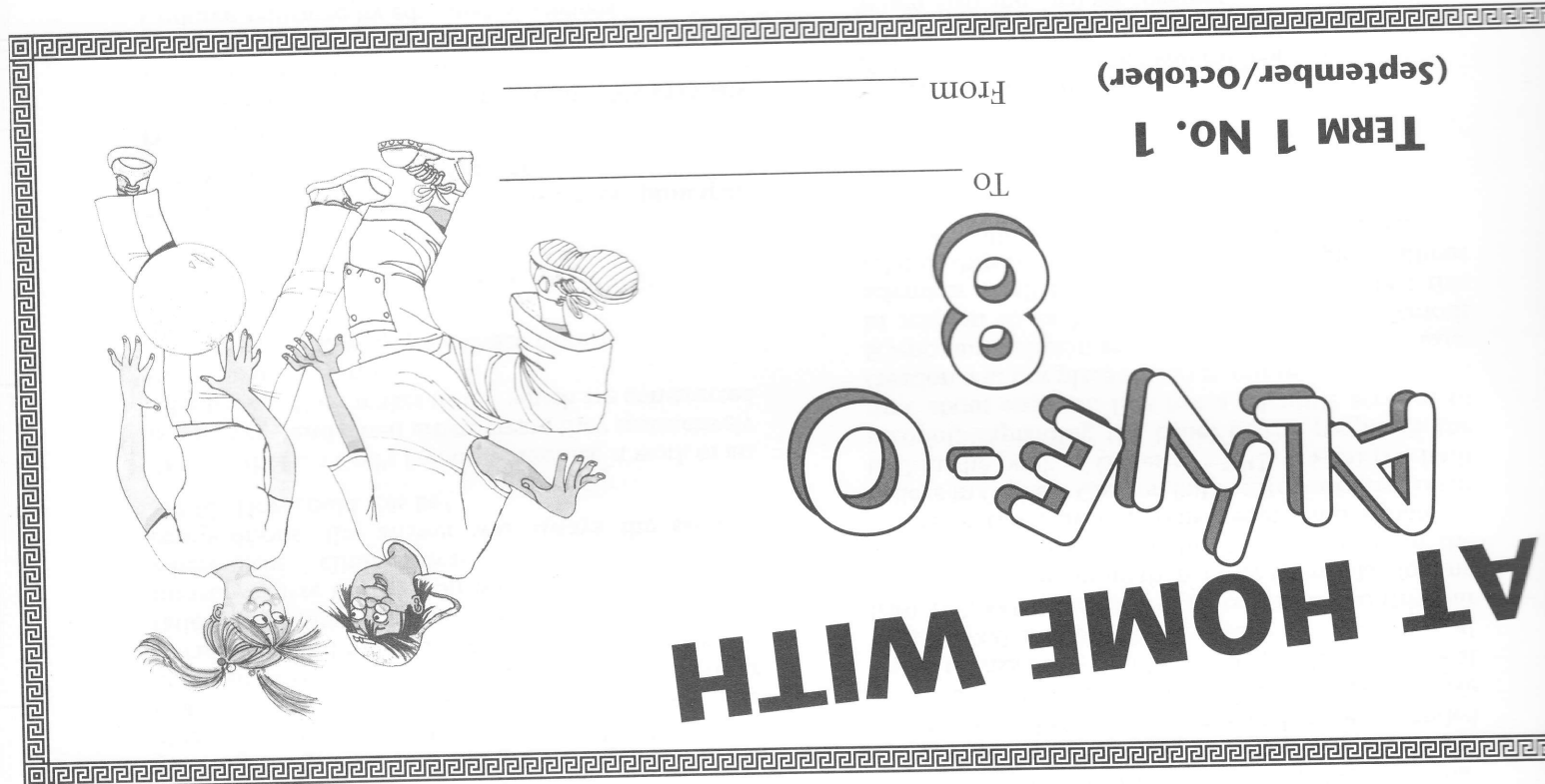
Christians love and reverence the Bible because it is the Word of God.

In the beginning was the One who is called the Word. The Word was with God and was truly God. The Word became a human being and lived here among us.

Women and men are the greatest of all God's creatures on earth because they are made in the image and likeness of God.

Pray together...

Spirit of God in the heavens.
Spirit of God in the seas.
Spirit of God in the mountain-tops.
Spirit of God in me.
Spirit of God in the sunlight.
Spirit of God in the air.
Spirit of God all around me.
Spirit of God everywhere.



Prayer to the Trinity

Praise to the Father.
Praise to the Son.
Praise to the Spirit.
The Three in One.



Consider with your child...

- the importance of space in juggling, *e.g. so that things don't crash into each other.*
- the importance of space in relationships, *e.g. members of a class; nurses and patients; members of a parish community; members of the Church; rich and poor.*
- space in a family – different living spaces within a house/trailor/apartment, etc.
- how we give each other space within a family.

Consider with your child...

- family relations – people who are your relations by birth/fosterage/adoption/marriage.
- the core ingredients in all family relationships, *e.g. love, respect, forgiveness, care, etc.*
- the different kinds of relationship you have with your family relations, *e.g. cousin to cousin; foster child to foster mother, etc.; nephew to aunt/uncle; grandparent to grandchild, etc.*
- close relations; 'far-out'/distant relations.
- whether you are closer to some family relations than others, *e.g. are you closer to some of your cousins/aunts/grandparents, etc. than others?*
- what factors might influence these relationships being 'close' or more 'distant'.
- the difference between 'a relation' and 'a relationship'.

Background reading for parents...

The Presence of God

I see his blood upon the rose,
And in the stars the glory of his eyes;
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.

I see his face in every flower;
The thunder and the singing of the birds
Are but his voice; and, carved by his power,
Rocks are his written words.

All pathways by his feet are worn;
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea;
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn;
His cross is every tree.

(Joseph Mary Plunkett)

* * * * *

Another thing Sister Immaculata told them was about the Golden Mean and the Fibonacci Series – how God's favourite ratio was 1/1.62 and how almost all growing things corresponded to this... She made them measure the spirals of chrysanthemum heads and the chambers of shells and the points where twigs emerged from branches. She shepherded their calculations and the class was amazed to discover the ratio was always the same. Then she asked them to measure where the horizon was in famous paintings, where the climax was in famous musical compositions; the answer was always the same – 1/1.62. How could this be?

'It's just that it's God's favourite number. A work of art is a prayer – and when artists create they instinctively offer back to their maker things which are constructed in his favourite ratio.'

(Bernard McLaverty, from Grace Notes)

* * * * *

The plea of an American high-school principal, expressed in a letter to her teachers:

Dear Teacher,

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no [one] should witness.

Gas chambers built by learned engineers.

Children poisoned by educated physicians.

Infants killed by trained nurses.

Women and babies shot and burned by high-school and college graduates.

So, I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human.

Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmans.

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.

(Catherine Furlong and Luke Monahan (eds.),

School Culture and Ethos: Cracking the Code)

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Juggling Life

Our lives are made up of different relationships – with God, with different people and different things. In trying to keep all of our relationships going, it can seem like we are constantly 'juggling'. Just as a juggler juggles plates or balls or skittles and things, we juggle times, places, jobs, events, friends, work, family, hobbies and so on. Just as the juggler tries to keep all these items moving in the proper relationship to each other, so we too try to keep all our relationships going in a way that brings joy and satisfaction to our lives. It is God who gives us the energy to keep all the relationships in our lives going.

* * * * *

God's Universe

Some ancient people once believed that the earth was the back of an elephant that stood on a tortoise that swam in a bottomless sea. We know so much more about the world now, thanks to science. We know that the universe is expanding... fast. In the time it takes you to read this, the universe will have expanded almost a quarter of a million miles in all directions. We know, thanks to the Hubble telescope, that there are at least 10,000 million galaxies, each of which has at least 100,000 million stars! In comparison to this, our planet Earth is no more than a tiny snowflake floating in the air. Because of all this new awareness of the nature of the universe, some people find it hard to believe in God the Creator. But the story of Creation as told in the book of Genesis (1:1-31; 2:5-25) is a faithful account, explaining the belief of the people of the time about creation. It is not a scientific account of creation and our place within it, our relationship to it. Science and religion are not in competition, but exist in relation to each other. One of the most famous scientists of all time, Albert Einstein, described this relationship very well when he said, 'Religion without science is blind; science without religion is lame.'

* * * * *

A Perfect Relationship

If there's one thing in life you can count on,
If there's one thing you can know for sure,
When Two and Two get together
Their relationship adds up to Four.

Upside down, inside out, back to front – no matter,
Two and Two always make Four.
Should their relationship change – tell me this,
Could we count on *anything* anymore?

And if we can't count on numbers
As reliable as Two and Four
To get-it-two-gether in relation to each other
Then, believe me, there's trouble in store.

For, take Two away from Two and what happens?
Not only is there no Four
But neither is there 'Two' or 'Two'.
It's over! There's *nothing* anymore.

So if, when it comes to 'relations',
You're confused, don't quite know the score;
Count on God whose relationship with us
Is as dependable as Two's is with Four.

Help your child to memorise...

We sin when we refuse to love God our Father and to love our neighbours as Jesus taught.

Jesus asks us to be sorry and to repent because he wants us to return to God.

In the sacrament of Reconciliation God our Father forgives us through the words and actions of the priest.

'Everybody who drinks this water will get thirsty again. But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give is like a flowing fountain that gives eternal life.' (John 4:13-14)

Try a Bible Search with your child...

The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11)

Jairus' Daughter (Mark 5:21-43)

The Centurion's Servant (Matthew 8:5-13)

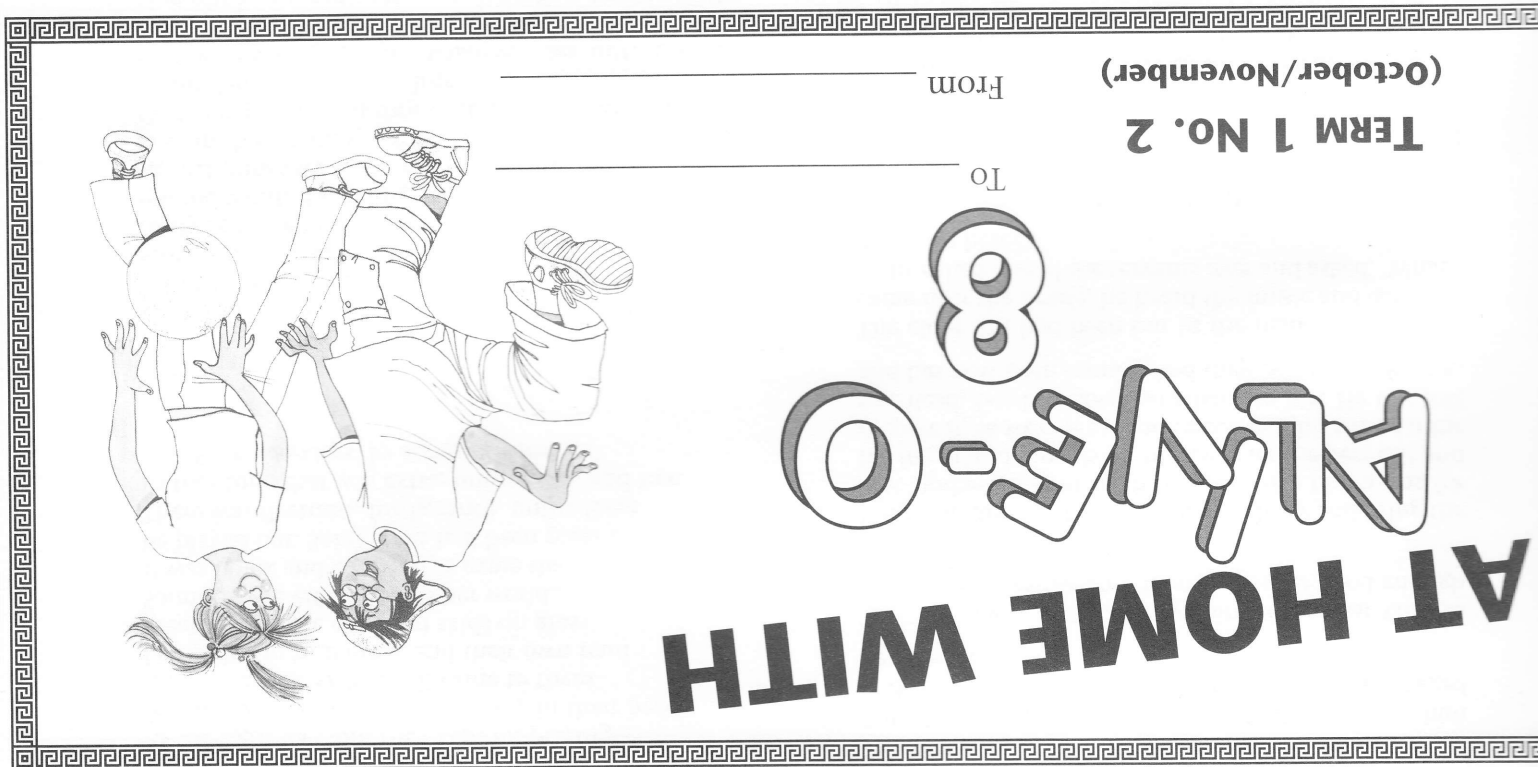
Micah (based on Luke 9:10-16)

Ishvah (based on Luke 18:15-17)

The Woman at the Well (John 4:7-43)

A woman anoints Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-39 and 44-47)

A woman anoints Jesus' head (Mark 14:3-6)



Pray together...

God here.
God now.
God always.
God everywhere.
Amen.

Act of Sorrow

O my God, I thank you for loving me.
I am sorry for all my sins,
For not loving others and not loving you.
Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again. Amen.



Consider with your child...

- a cross is just two pieces of wood arranged in a certain way, but to Christians it is much more than that – why?
- a church is just a building, but to Christians it is much more than just a building – why?
- a Bible is just a book with pages, but to the followers of Jesus it is much more than that – why?
- a congregation is just a group of people, but to those in the congregation it is much more than that – why?

Background reading for parents...

Remember words are life;
Child, husband, mother, wife:
Remember, and I'm done:
Words taken one by one
Are poems as they stand –
Shore, beacon, harbour, land,
Brook, river, mountain, vale,
Crow, rabbit, otter, quail:
Faith, freedom, water, snow.
Wind, weather, floor, and floe.
Like light across the lawn
Are morning, seas, and dawn:
Words of the green earth growing –
Seed, soil, and farmer sowing.
Like wind upon the south.
Amen. Put not asunder
Man's first word: 'wonder... wonder...'
(William J. Bausch)

* * * * *

Youngsters shouting their heads off in a field
As the light dies and they kept on playing
Because by then they were playing in their heads
And the actual kicked ball came to them
Like a dream heaviness, and their own hard
Breathing in the dark and skids on grass
Sounded like effort in another world...
It was quick and constant, a game that never need
Be played out. Some limit had been passed,
There was fleetness, furtherance, untiredness
In that time that was extra, unforeseen, and free.
(From 'Markings' by Seamus Heaney)

* * * * *

We know that God is carefully holding each one of us
– and all that fills the spaces between us.
From time to time, we allow things that shouldn't
really be there to get into the spaces between us, e.g. an
unkind word, the wrong action.
At such times we know that something is 'out of place'
and 'in the wrong space'.
God always offers us forgiveness and shows us how to
mend damaged relationships.
God wants to put right whatever has disturbed the
spaces in our relationships.
God offers us forgiveness and all that we need to be the
best we can be, right here, right now.

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In Baptism we are Reborn

A church is a building, but to the people who gather in
it to celebrate, it is more than just a building – it is a
symbol of God's presence in the world. The word
'Church' is also used to describe the people who make
up this special community. We can enter the church
building through the door, but in a more meaningful
way we enter the Church community through
Baptism. We are reborn into the Church and into the
world of its signs and symbols and meanings.

* * * * *

Two Sons

(Luke 15:11-32)

Once a man had two sons. The younger son said to his
father, 'Give me my share of the property.' So the
father divided his property between his two sons.

Not long after that, the younger son packed up
everything he owned and left for a foreign country,
where he wasted all his money in wild living. He had
spent everything, when a bad famine spread through
that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

He went to work for a man in that country, and the
man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would
have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no
one gave him a thing.

Finally, he came to his senses and said, 'My father's
workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to
death! I will go to my father and say to him, "Father, I
have sinned against God in heaven and against you.
I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat
me like one of your workers."'

The younger son got up and started back to his father.
But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him
and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged
and kissed him.

The son said, 'Father, I have sinned against God in
heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough
to be called your son.'

But his father said to the servants, 'Hurry and bring the
best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for
his finger and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and
prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. This son of mine
was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost
and has now been found.' And they began to celebrate.

The elder son had been out in the field. But when he
came near the house, he heard the music and dancing.
So he called one of the servants over and asked, 'What's
going on here?'

The servant answered, 'Your brother has come home
safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the
best calf.' The elder brother got so angry that he would
not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. But he
said to his father, 'For years I have worked for you like
a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have
never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a
dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted
your money. And now that he has come home, you
ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast.'

His father replied, 'My son, you are always with me,
and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad
and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now
alive. He was lost and has now been found.'

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Symbols have Meaning

People from different countries can have national
symbols like a flag. A group can have a symbol like a
certain combination of colours, or a certain song, or
place. For the members of that group, it is not just a
song, or colour combination, or place; it is much more
than that. The word symbol means 'thrown together'.
In a symbol, what the thing is and the deeper meaning
we give to it come together. When we look at the
symbol we see 'more than just' the external
appearance; we see the deeper meaning.

Advent Prayer

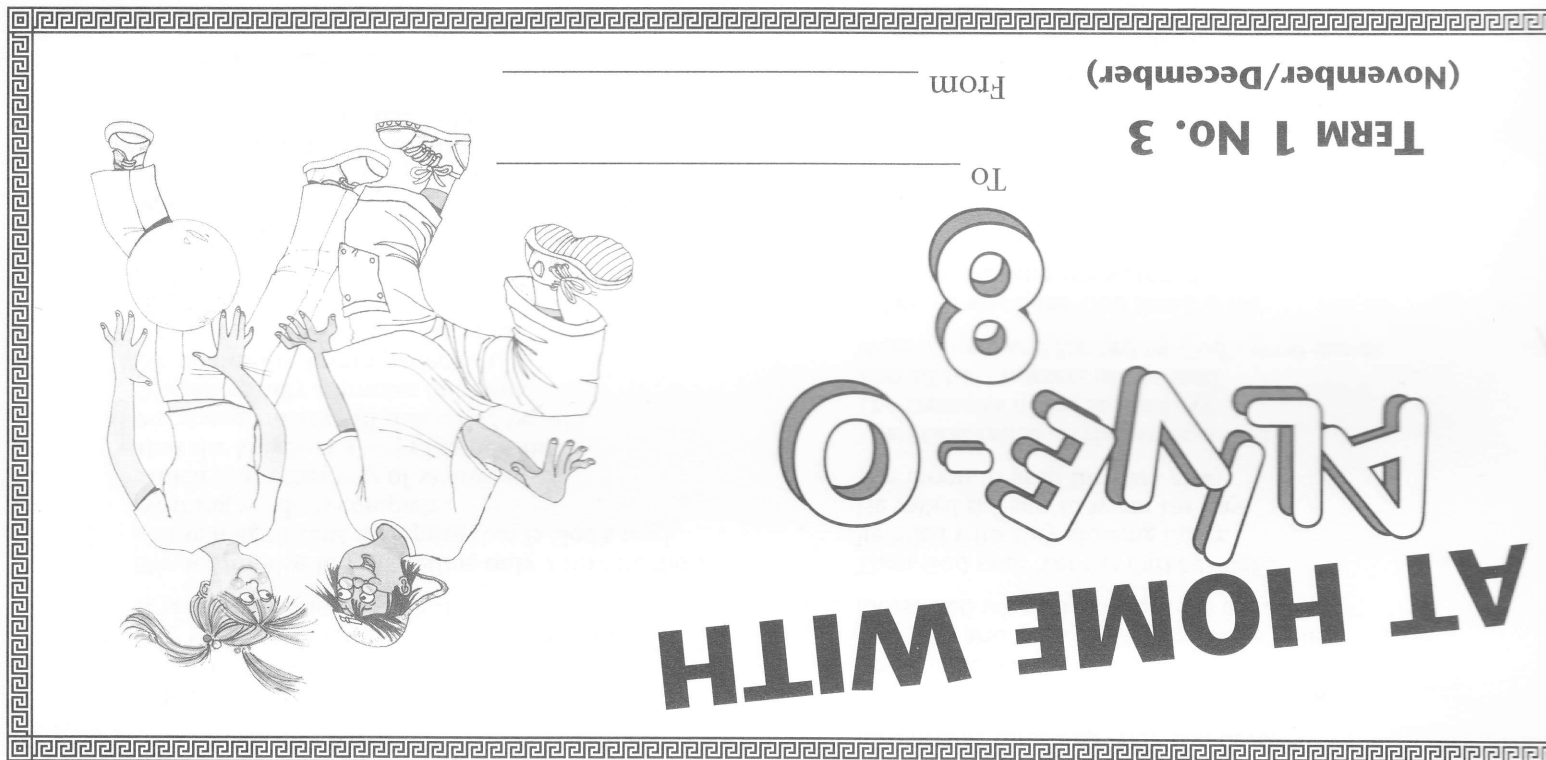
Every Valley

1. A voice cries out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord.
Make straight in the desert a highway,
A highway for our God.'
2. Comfort all my people;
The time for war is gone.
The blind shall see, the deaf shall hear,
The lame shall leap for joy.
3. Stand upon the mountain top.
Lift up your voice to the world.
Sing joyfully, Jerusalem!
Behold, behold your God.

Christmas Carol/Prayer

In the Bleak Mid-winter

1. In the bleak mid-winter frosty wind made moan.
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone.
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow.
In the bleak mid-winter long ago.
2. Angels and archangels may have gathered there.
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air.
But only his mother in her maiden bliss
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.
3. What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise man, I would do my part.
Yet what can I give him, give my heart.



Help your child to memorise...

The Seven Sacraments of the Church are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony.

Pray together...

When the angels told the shepherds the Good News, they immediately started praising God and telling others what they had heard. We too have heard the Good News of God's love for each one of us. We too have heard the Good News of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Let us too praise God and share again that Good News with each other.



Consider with your child...

- who meets or gathers together for this celebration of Marriage.
- what different roles or parts are involved.
- what symbols and rituals are involved, e.g. *joining hands, and usually exchanging rings.*
- what words and stories are told/spoken, e.g. *'we take each other as husband and wife and promise to love each other truly, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health, all the days of our life'.*
- how the couple will grow through this sacrament, e.g. *a woman and man learn how to love each other in good times and in bad times; they share their love, their faith and their lives with their children; they try to work through difficulties or problems that may occur; they help each other become the person each is meant to be, etc.*

Background reading for parents...

Fr John Flynn was curate of Clontarf. Every Wednesday and Sunday he called to Joseph's house and in the inside pocket he carried the pyx bearing the consecrated bread. God assumed beautiful credit by breathing through the Eucharist. Candle light burned as the priest began his polished prayers of terrible beauty... Joseph would then attempt to open his mouth to receive communion, only to grind his teeth clenched tight in a vice-gripped lockjaw. His eyes would dwell lovingly on his Maker, voices of reverence would seep from his soul, cable-clothed God would be before him and the boy would be still trying to coax his muscles to relax and allow him to receive his master. When Fr Flynn came with communion, the sensitive man noticed that Joseph hesitated a very long time before managing to receive the Sacred Host. Fr Flynn was never in a hurry to leave. Communion served to join the silent boy with silent God.

*(Christopher Nolan,
from Under the Eye of the Clock)*

* * * * *

It helps now and then to step back
and take the long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete,
which is another way of saying
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection,
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No programme accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

That is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further
development.
We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything
and there is a sense of liberation in realising that.
This enables us to do something
and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,
a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do
the rest.

We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference between
the master builder and the workers.

We are workers, not master builders;
ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.
(Archbishop Oscar Romero)

* * * * *

When God comes among us, he doesn't first of all clear humanity out of the way so that he can take over; he becomes a human being. He doesn't force his way in to dominate and crush; he announces his arrival in the sharp, hungry cry of a newborn baby. He changes the world not by law and threat but by death and resurrection.

(Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, 2003)

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Creation

Long long ago, long long ago,
When all was darkness, deep and low,
The voice of God called forth the light
To split the curtain of the night.
Then what was light he called the day
While what was night in darkness lay.

Then God divided earth and sea
And marked the place where each should be
With mountains rising high and steep
And oceans spreading wide and deep.

Then God called seeds to sprout and grow
And all the flowers that we know.
The trees and grass, both great and small,
Blossomed when they heard his call.

Then God said: 'Let the darkest night
Be filled with tiny glowing lights.'
He called the sun to warm the day,
The moon to keep the dark away.

Then God called all that swim and fly,
The creatures of the sea and sky,
And all the creatures of the land
Were shaped and formed by God's good hands.

When all was done God loved it all,
The dewdrop and the waterfall,
The timid creatures and the strong,
The robin and the thrush's song.

He searched the sea and sky above
To find one who would share his love.
When none was found, his plan unfurled,
God made a man to share his world.

He made a man and woman too
To share his world so bright and new;
To love the earth, the sea, the sky,
The creatures, fish and birds that fly.
God gave them all to man to show
His special love, long, long ago.

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Help your child to memorise...

The Ten Commandments in traditional format:

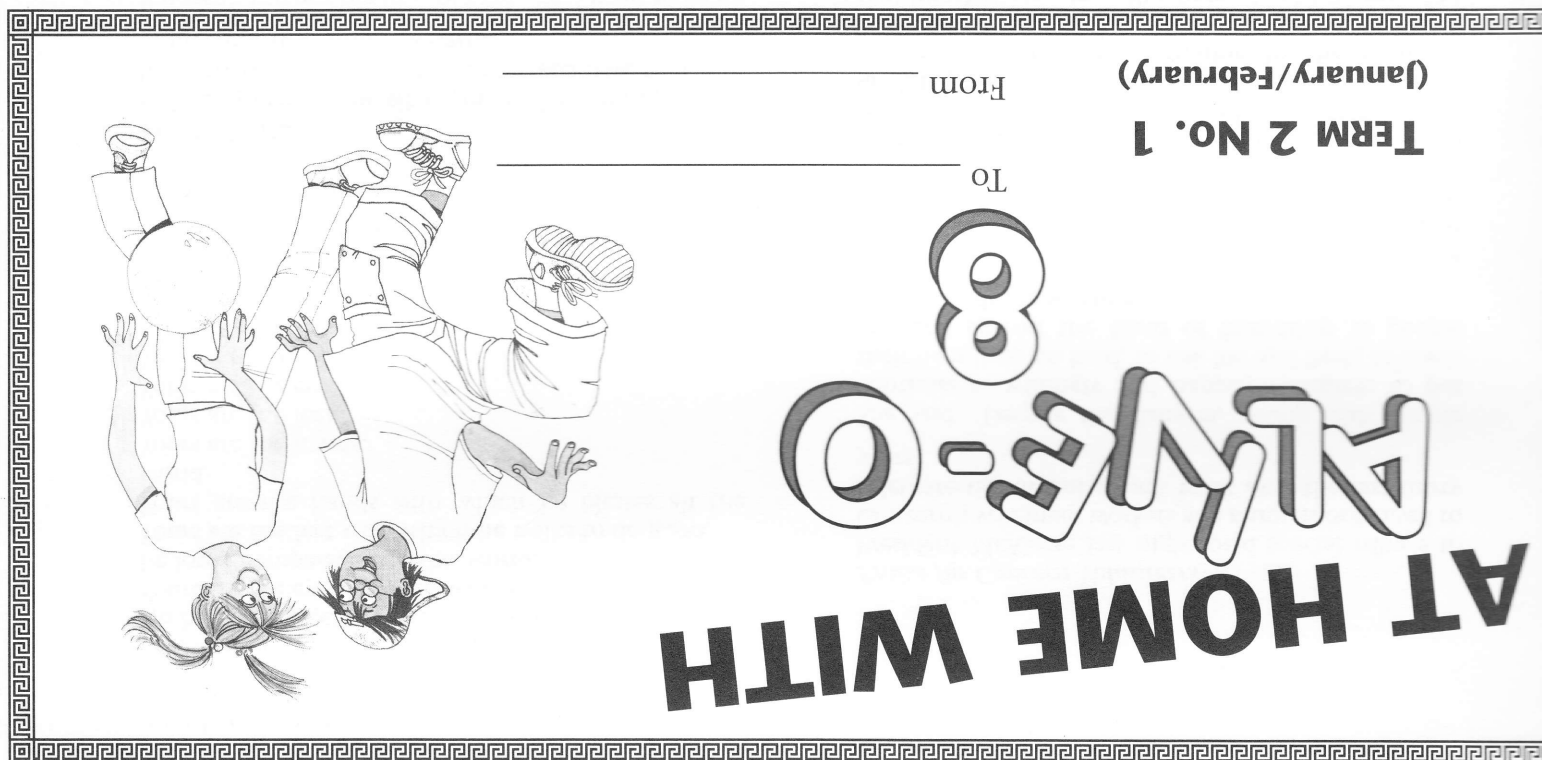
- First: I am the Lord your God, you shall not have strange gods before me.
Second: You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
Third: Remember that you keep holy the Sabbath day.
Fourth: Honour your father and your mother.
Fifth: You shall not kill.
Sixth: You shall not commit adultery.
Seventh: You shall not steal.
Eighth: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
Ninth: You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.
Tenth: You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

Pray together...

Holy Spirit, you fill us with the fire and energy to do things we might not have thought possible.
Fan the flame of your Spirit within us so that we can show, by what we say and what we do, that we want to live as Jesus showed us.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
Enkindle in us the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created,
And you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.



Do/Click

You might like to visit the following websites with your child:

www.concern.ie
www.larche.ie
www.sttherese.com
www.missio.net

Help your child to memorise...

When Pentecost day came around they had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a mighty wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire room in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech. (Acts 2:1-4)

The Precepts of the Church

1. To come together to celebrate Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.
 2. To fast and abstain on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
 3. To confess sins at least once a year.
 4. To receive Holy Communion at least during the Easter season.
 5. To give financial support to the Church and clergy.
- (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2041-46)

Background reading for parents...

Christ has no hands, no feet, but yours

The town of Mainz in Germany was very badly bombed during the second world war. In the course of its destruction, immense damage was done to its very beautiful cathedral. When the war finally ended, the citizens of the town got together and decided to try to rebuild their magnificent cathedral. They searched through the rubble, salvaging all they could. Painfully and laboriously, they rebuilt the church, stone by stone. They found the original altar in pieces and managed to patch the marble together and make it match. In the course of their work, somebody remembered that high above the altar was a very fine cross with the figure of Jesus crucified on it. Again they searched, but could only find the cross with the torso and head of Jesus on it. It had no hands and no legs.

The leaders met and talked about having the fixture of Christ remade, and the discussion went back and forth. Then somebody made the suggestion that they leave the crucifix as they found it and inscribe underneath the words:

Christ has no other hands but yours,
no other feet but yours.

Prayer of St Teresa

Christ has no body now, but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which
he looks compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands.
Yours are the feet.
Yours are the eyes.
You are his body.

(Margaret McEntee (ed.)

Resources for Catechists and Chaplains)

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The Invitation

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the centre of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shrivelled and closed from fear of further pain. I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it or fake it or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own, if you can dance with wildness and let ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, to be realistic, to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself; if you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul; if you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see beauty, even when it's not pretty, every day, and if you can source your own life from its presence. I want to know if you can live with failure, yours or mine, and still stand on the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, 'Yes!'

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up, after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the centre of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside, when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

(*Oriah*, The Invitation)

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Praise for Concern Volunteers

President McAleese last night paid special tribute to Concern's volunteer workers at a reunion organised to celebrate the organisation's work over the last thirty years.

She said, 'Despite the dangers, young Irish people continue to willingly and happily volunteer to put their own lives on hold, to risk life and limb, to reach out and extend the hand of friendship to people whose needs are so great.'

The President told the gathering, which included some of those who volunteered for the organisation's earliest missions, that while conditions have greatly changed for those volunteering today, the risks are just as great. 'Concern's early volunteers went abroad with a primitive travel network to support them. They had no satellite phones, no solar-powered laptops and little or no prospect of early evacuation in the event of hostilities. While today's volunteers have access to more sophisticated supports, the pace at which wars and disasters now unfold is terrifying. The forty-day exodus of one and a half million people from the refugee camps of Goma back to Rwanda was a startling example of how quickly and dangerously events can unfold.'

Mrs McAleese said it was a night to recall the tremendous work undertaken by Concern volunteers in the world's trouble spots: 'Over the past thirty years, many of you have borne witness to the pain of the civil war in Biafra, the youthful exuberance and hopefulness of Live Aid for Ethiopia and the repeated challenges of tending to survivors and orphans of Vietnam, Rwanda and Kosovo.'

President McAleese said it was also a night to remember the sacrifices made by Concern volunteers in their work abroad: 'We particularly remember, with great sadness, Valerie Plaice, who died tragically in the ambush of a Concern vehicle while working in Somalia in 1993.'

(by Michael O'Kelly, from Irish Examiner, 2000)

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Discuss with your child...

Sponsors

It is desirable that the sponsor for Confirmation be the baptismal sponsor. The sponsor should be a confirmed, practising Catholic who has received the Eucharist. Except in unusual circumstances, a sponsor must be not less than sixteen years old.

Consider with your child...

- What is a 'sponsor'?
- Why do people or organisations look for 'sponsorship'?
- How do Confirmation sponsors differ from 'commercial' sponsors?
- What qualities would make a person a good sponsor?
- Name the types of situation in which sponsors might help you.

Help your child to memorise...

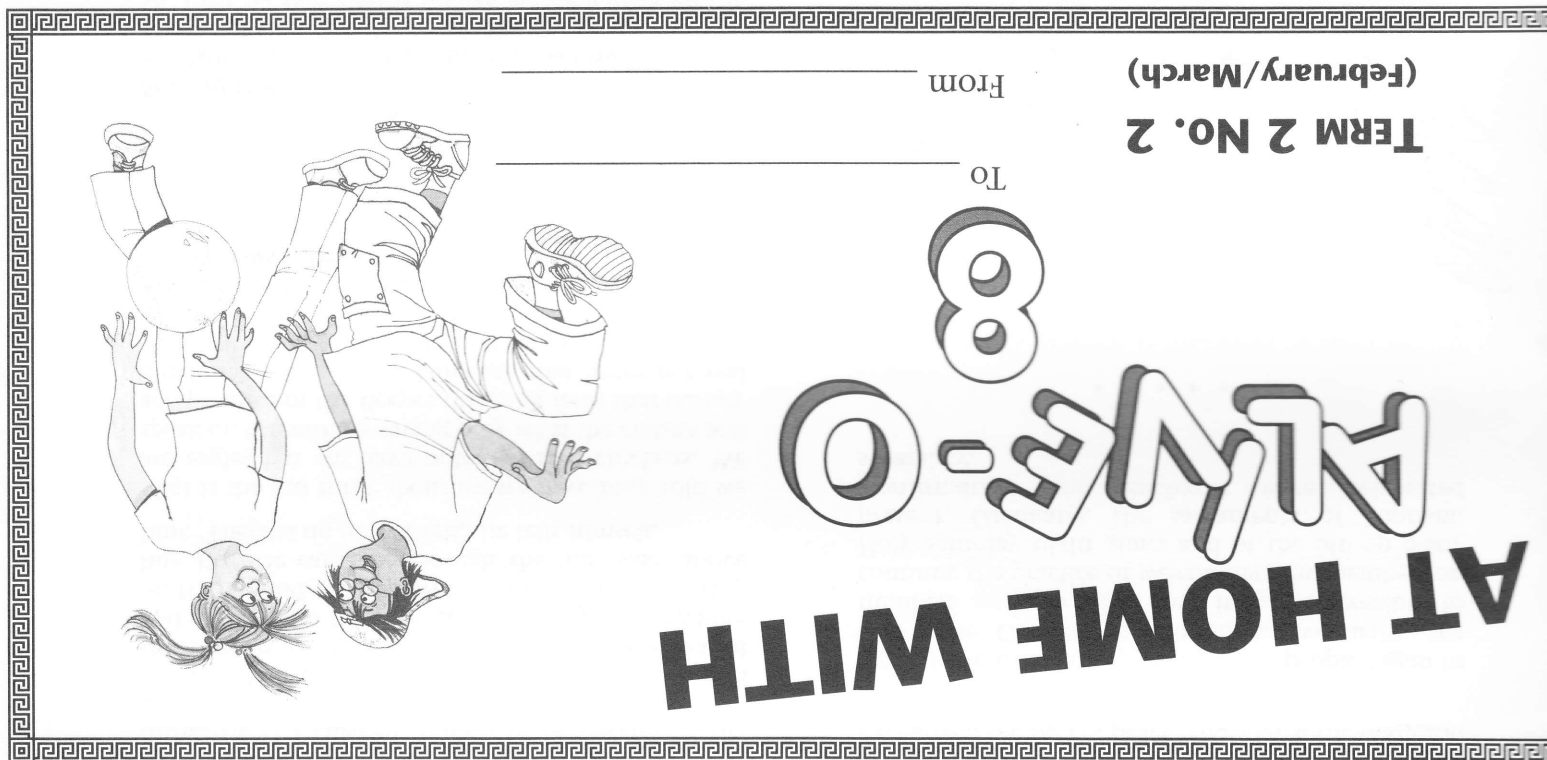
The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, right judgement, courage, knowledge, reverence, and wonder and awe in God's presence.

The Fruit of the Spirit: The Fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Christians honour Mary because she is the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God and our Mother too.

The Immaculate Conception means that God created Mary free from all sin, from the first moment of her existence.

By the Assumption we mean that after her death Mary was taken body and soul into the glory of heaven.



Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit, I want to do what is right.
Help me.
Holy Spirit, I want to live like Jesus.
Guide me.
Holy Spirit, I want to pray like Jesus.
Teach me. Amen.

Pray together...

O God, who has taught the hearts of the faithful
by the light of the Holy Spirit,
Grant us in the same spirit to be truly wise,
And ever to rejoice in his consolation,
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Consider with your child...

a time when someone 'confirmed' you, or 'confirmed' what you were doing, perhaps by using phrases like:

- 'Well done!'
- 'You did it!'
- 'I think you're right!'
- 'Way to go!'
- 'Yes!'
- 'You're looking good!' etc.

Background reading for parents...

Legend says that when Jesus returned to heaven, the angel Gabriel asked him if all people knew of his love for them. 'Oh, no!' said Jesus, 'only a handful do.' Gabriel was shocked and asked, 'How will the rest learn?'

Jesus said, 'The *handful* will tell them.'

'But,' said Gabriel, 'What if they let you down? What if they meet opposition? What if they become discouraged? Don't you have a back-up plan?'

'No,' said Jesus, 'I'm counting on them not to let me down.'

(Mark Link, Vision 2000)

* * * * *

What would it mean to our lives if we really believed that we are so incredibly favoured, so profoundly loved and entrusted with a mission?

You may be familiar with the Sufi tale about an orphaned eagle who is raised by chickens. The eagle thinks he is a chicken, forever to be pecking at the ground, until another eagle flying overhead sees him and reveals to him who he really is. But the eagle who thinks he is a chicken resists the notice. He is fearful and denies who he really is. He goes back to pecking on the ground even when the other eagle is showing him how he can soar through the blue skies above him. 'There is no deeper self,' he tells himself.

That is the sad truth about us: we have been told we are eagles but we have opted to stay chickens. We speak on the surface, saying only what the culture will accept and not the deeper things of faith that occupy our hearts. We speak a language that belies our real sensitivity, and stick to the cultural image of what we should look like, dress like and sound like. Thus doing, we bury our gift, our status as highly favoured.

(William J. Bausch)

* * * * *

Fruit of the Spirit

St Paul wrote a letter to the young Christian community in Galatia, in ancient Turkey, around AD 56. In it he says that if we are led or guided by the Spirit, then we can live 'Spirit-filled' lives. He says that the 'fruit' of the Spirit in a person's life is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. In other words, if we try to live 'Spirit-filled' lives, then God's Spirit will make us loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled.

We could think of a 'Spirit-filled' life like this:

Love – the Spirit lives!
Joy – the Spirit dances!
Peace – the Spirit rests!
Patience – the Spirit waits!
Kindness – the Spirit gives!
Goodness – the Spirit moves!
Gentleness – the Spirit acts!
Faithfulness – the Spirit dwells!
Self-control – the Spirit smiles!

* * * * *

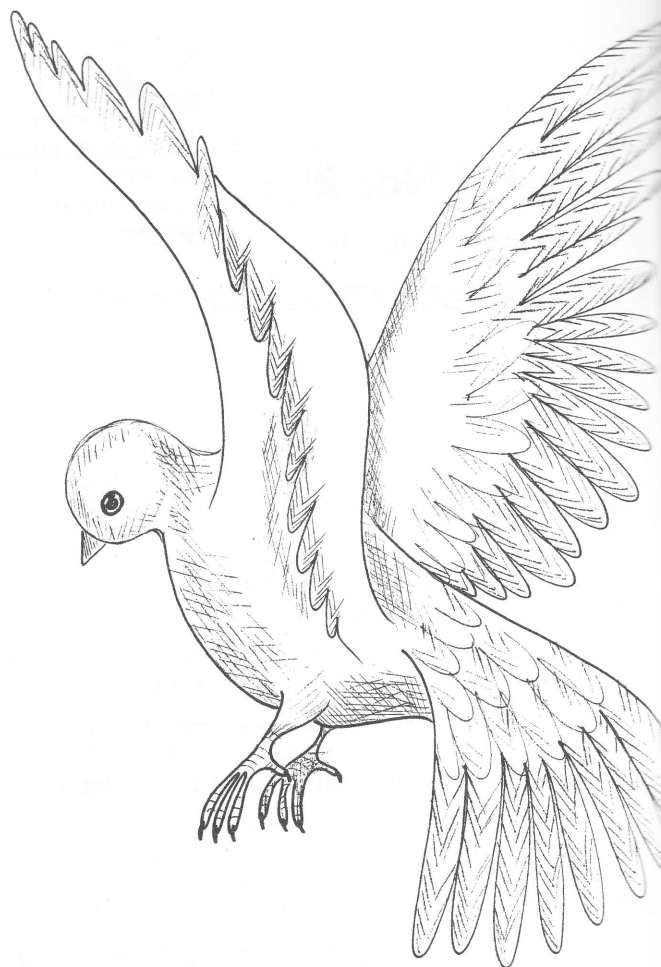
The History of Confirmation

After Pentecost, many people wanted to join the new communities of believers. Whenever people were converted and baptised, the apostles visited them, laid their hands on them and prayed that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

Through Baptism, a believer entered into the Christian community. Gradually, over the next couple of centuries, a special ritual for entry into the Christian communities developed. This took place on Holy Saturday night, when the whole community gathered at dusk to celebrate Easter. Those who wished to join the Christian community were first anointed with oil to strengthen their faith. Then, going to the baptismal pool, they declared their belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, while plunging into the water three times. The oil of chrism was then poured on their heads, anointing them with the Holy Spirit. Laying hands on them, the bishop prayed for the Holy Spirit to come on them. Now, at last, they were allowed to share fully in the life of that Christian community by joining in the breaking of bread. They prayed with the faithful, exchanged the sign of peace, and shared the body and blood of Christ.

After the fourth century, many more people began to join these Christian communities. Eventually, the numbers were so great that it was impossible to continue the practice of welcoming new members on Holy Saturday night alone and of the bishop being present. Gradually, the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist were celebrated separately.

* * * * *



Help your child to memorise...

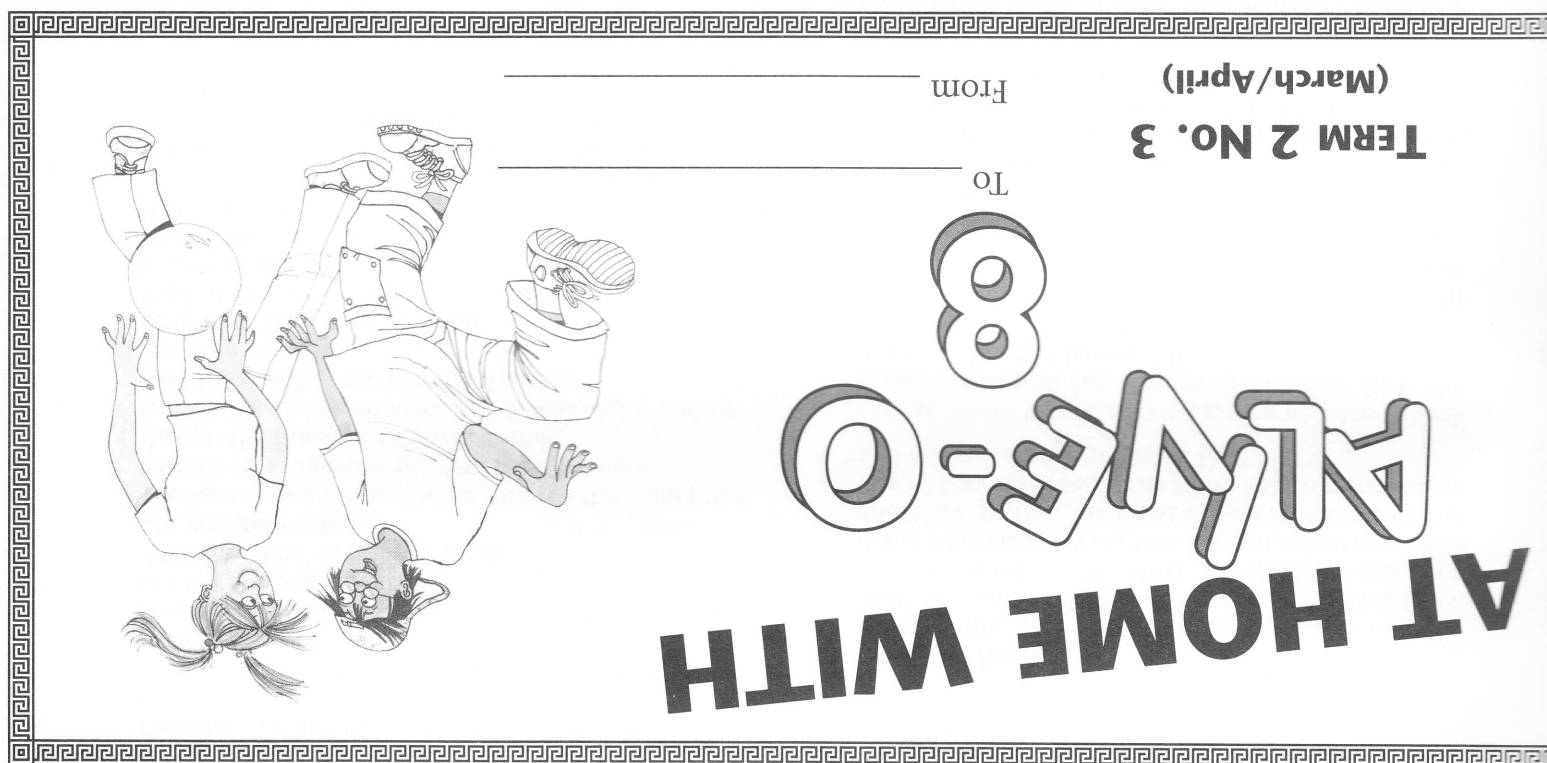
'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.' (John 15:13)

'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 15:34)

Consider with your child...

In the early Church, the whole community 'journeyed with' the catechumens on the final stage of their preparation for Baptism. This Lent, think about how we might 'journey with'

- those who are in need.
- those who are treated unjustly.
- those who are homeless.
- those who are bullied.
- those who are rejected.
- those who are laughed at.
- those who are sick.
- those who feel lost or afraid.
- those who can't find God in their lives.
- those who are already doing good work.
- those who bring light and fun to the world.



Just a thought...

This Lent, turn away from sin. Love God and love others.

This Lent, take the Spirit of Love with you as you journey.

Try a Bible Search with your child...

Jesus is arrested – Matthew 26:47-56

Peter denies Jesus – Mark 14:66-72

Jesus dies on the cross – Luke 23:33-49

The Word of God

A reading from the prophet Joel.
(cf. Joel 2:12-15)

Now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your heart.
Return to the Lord, your God.
For he is generous and forgiving,
slow to anger and rich in kindness.
Gather the people together to pray and repent.

This is the word of the Lord.



Background reading for parents...

The Living Spirit

The misery here is quite terrible and yet, late at night when the day has slunk away into the depths behind me, I often walk with a spring in my step beside the barbed wire, and then time and again it soars straight from my heart...

There is a really deep well inside me. And in it dwells God. Sometimes I am there too. But more often stones and grit block the well, and God is buried beneath. Then he must be dug out again.

One ought to be able to live without books, without anything. There will always be a small patch of sky above, and there will always be enough space to fold two hands in prayer. For once you have begun to walk with God you need only keep on walking with him and all of life becomes one long stroll.

(Etty Hillesum, who died in Auschwitz)

* * * * *

The Journey

One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began,

though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice –

though the whole house began to tremble and you felt the old tug at your ankles.

'Mend my life!' each voice cried.

But you didn't stop.

You knew what you had to do, though the wind pried with its stiff fingers at the very foundations – though their melancholy was terrible.

It was already late enough, and a wild night, and the road full of fallen branches and stones:

But little by little,

as you left their voices behind,

the stars began to burn through the sheets of clouds,

and there was a new voice,

which you slowly recognised as your own,

that kept you company

as you strode deeper and deeper into the world,

determined to do the only thing you could do –

determined to save the only life you could save.

(Mary Oliver)

* * * * *

The Stations of the Cross

Jesus is condemned to death.

Jesus receives the cross.

Jesus falls the first time.

Jesus meets his mother.

Simon helps Jesus to carry the cross.

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.

Jesus falls the second time.

Jesus speaks to the women.

Jesus falls the third time.

Jesus is stripped of his garments.

Jesus is nailed to the cross.

Jesus dies on the cross.

Jesus is taken down from the cross.

Jesus is laid in the tomb.

Jesus is raised from the dead.

* * * * *

The Lenten Journey

The forty days of Lent is a period of purification and enlightenment, the final stage of preparation for those catechumens (those adults preparing for Baptism) who are to be baptised during the Easter Vigil. Other baptised adults in the Christian community help the catechumens during this time. In fact, it is seen as an opportunity for the whole Christian community to prepare for Easter by 'journeying with' the catechumens who are preparing for Baptism.

This 'journeying with' calls Christians to repentance and renewal. It obliges those who are between the ages of twenty-one and sixty to fast, and those who have reached the age of fourteen to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. It encourages us to do voluntary acts of penance, such as acts of self-denial, almsgiving and prayer. On Ash Wednesday our foreheads are marked with ashes in the sign of the cross. The ashes remind us of our weakness and sinfulness. The cross reminds us of Jesus' suffering and of his love for God the Father and for us.

* * * * *

Keeping a Journal

Many people have kept journals and diaries over the centuries. Samuel Pepys, who lived from 1633 to 1703, is remembered for his *Diary*, in which he described many important events that happened between 1660 and 1669, such as the Great Plague (1665-6) and The Fire of London (1666). The *Diary* was written in code and was not deciphered until 1825.

During World War II, a young girl named Anne Frank began a diary on her thirteenth birthday. In it she recorded the experiences of her family as they lived for two years in hiding from the Nazis in occupied Amsterdam. They were eventually betrayed and sent to concentration camps; Anne died in Belsen. Her diary has been translated into over thirty languages.

When someone keeps a diary outlining their spiritual journey or growth, it is often called a journal. Pope John XXIII kept a journal from the age of fourteen until he died. It was published after his death as *The Journal of a Soul* and read by millions.

Keeping a spiritual journal has helped many people to see different stages in their 'faith journey'. Keeping a journal can give us an opportunity to reflect on what God is doing in our lives as we make our journey.

Keeping a journal can help us as we try to journey in a 'Spirit-filled' way.

* * * * *

Help your child to memorise...

Jesus is our Saviour because by his life, death and resurrection he freed us from sin and raised us to a new and everlasting life.

Easter reminds us that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and has conquered sin and death.

Act of Faith

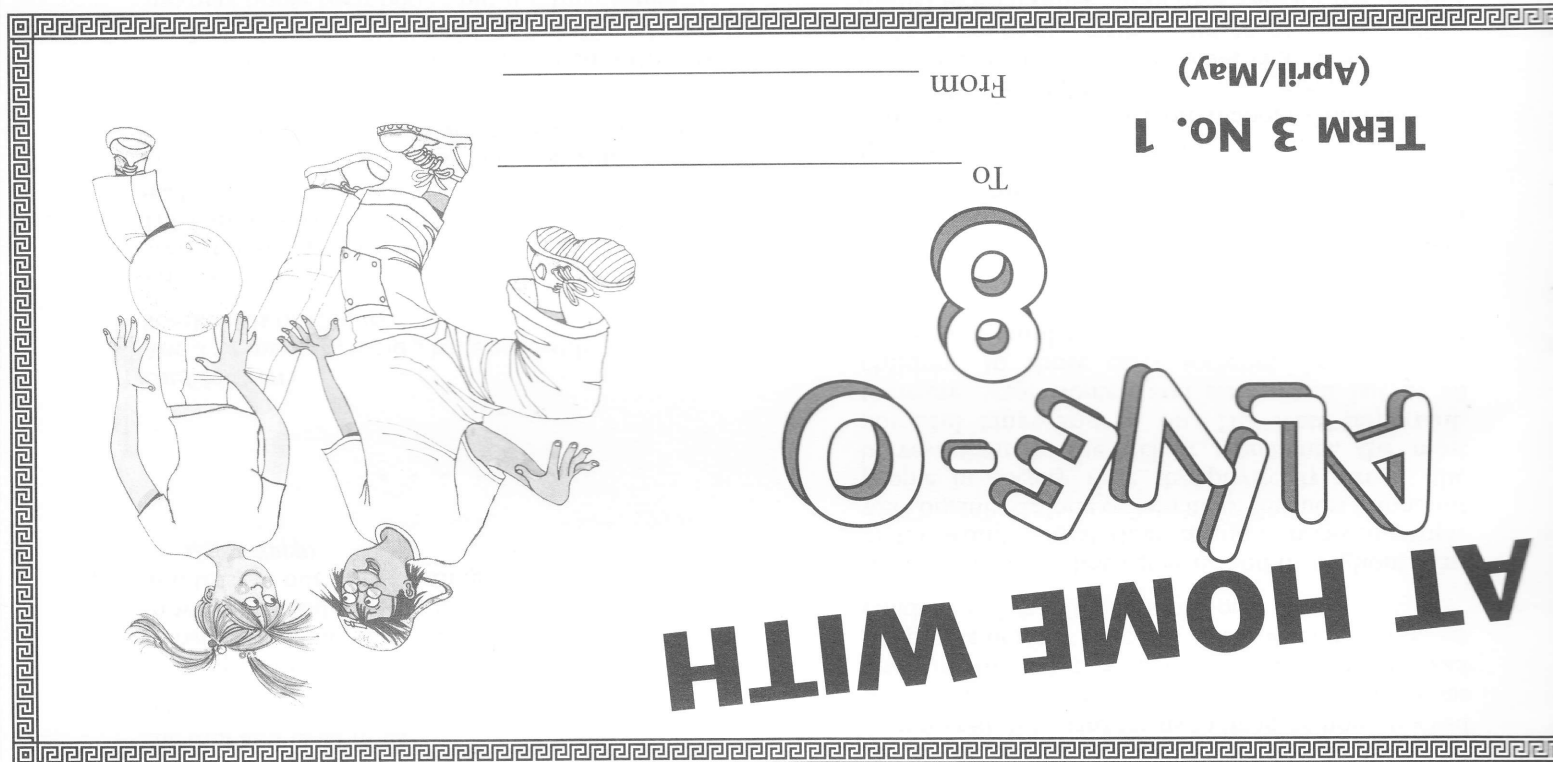
O my God,
I believe in you
And in all that your Holy Church teaches
Because you have said it
And your Word is true.
You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
You are my Lord and my God.
Lord, I believe; increase my faith.

Act of Hope

O my God,
I put my hope in you
Because I am sure of your promises.
Deliver us, Lord, from every evil
And grant us peace in our day,
As we wait in joyful hope
For the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Act of Love

O my God,
I love you with all my heart,
With all my soul, and with all my strength.
Lord, increase our love.
Help us to love one another.



Pray together...

Regina Caeli

Queen of Heaven, rejoice. Alleluia.
For he, whom you were worthy to bear, Alleluia,
Has risen, as he promised. Alleluia.
Pray for us to God. Alleluia.
Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, Alleluia,
Because the Lord has truly risen. Alleluia.

Let us pray:

O God, who gladdened the world by the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; grant, we pray, that through the Virgin Mary, his mother, we may enter into the joys of eternal life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Consider with your child...

The Risen Jesus began the journey with his first followers.

The Risen Jesus continues to 'journey with' us today:

- through the gift of his Spirit in us at Baptism and Confirmation.
- through his word to us in scripture.
- through his presence in the Eucharist.
- through the sacraments, which bring his story to life in us.
- through people who live as he showed us.

Try a Bible Search with your child...

You will find accounts of the Resurrection in the four Gospels: Matthew 28:1-18; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-21:25.



Background reading for parents...

The Easter Challenge

You believe because you can see...

Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.
(John 20:29)

Every year it happens:
earth shakes her sleepy head,
still a bit wintered and dull,
and feels new life stirring

Every year cocoons give up their treasures,
fresh shoots push through brown leaves,
seemingly dead branches shine with green,
and singing birds find their way home

Every year we hear the stories

empty tomb, surprised griever,
runners with news and revelation,
unexpected encounters,
conversations on the road,
tales of nets filling with fish,
and breakfast on a seashore

And every year
the dull and dead in us
meets our Easter challenge:

to be open to the unexpected,
to believe beyond our security,
to welcome God in every form,
and trust in our own greening

(Joyce Rupp)

* * * * *

On Children

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said,
Speak to us of Children.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for
itself.

They come through you but not from you,
and though they are with you yet they belong not to
you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
for they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,
for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make
them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.

The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the
infinite, and

He bends you with His might that His arrows may go
swift and far.

Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness,
for even as He loves the arrow that flies,
so He loves also the bow that is stable.

(Kahlil Gibran from The Prophet)

* * * * *

Snowflakes are not alike, yet they make snow.

People are not alike, or we'd not know

who Charles is, who is Suzie, Jane or Sam.

Skin, bones, hair, eyes, mouth, nose, and here I am—
not you: your mouth, nose, skin, bones, hair and eyes
differ from mine in colour, shape and size.

And yet we get along, though I dislike
your licorice and you wish you had my bike.

(David McCord)

* * * * *

Kingdom Children

We are very familiar with the words Jesus said and the
stories he told. We have been hearing them from our
families and communities since we were very young.
They have been passed on from generation to
generation since Christianity first came to Ireland.
Because we have grown up with the words and stories
of Jesus, it can be difficult for us to imagine a time
when they were unheard of, and different, and
unexpected. It is hard for us to imagine how shocked
people must have been at some of the things Jesus
said. One thing in particular that would have shocked
the people of Jesus' time was what he had to say about
children and the Kingdom of God.

In Palestine where Jesus grew up and throughout most
of the world at that time, relations between people
were organised along certain lines: the most important
people in society were the physically strong, the
bravest fighters, the richest merchants, the most
powerful kings and so on. The least important,
therefore, were women and slaves, and last of all
children. In those early societies, boys had no
importance until they grew up and could work, or
fight. Girls had very little importance even when they
grew up, since women were physically weaker than
men; any little importance they gained was in relation
to how they served the needs of men as wives or as
mothers of their children.

Jesus was unhappy about these kinds of relations
between people. He spoke often about God's love for
all people. He taught people, and showed people, how
to 'love one another as God loves you'. When people
had the right relationship between them, when they
related to each other out of love, care for the weakest
and poorest, a commitment to equality regardless of
age, colour, gender, race, or anything else, then Jesus
said 'the Kingdom of God is among you'.

When Jesus spoke about the Kingdom or the Reign of
God, he challenged people to create the right
relationships between them, relations based on love.
But in case those people listening thought he just
meant right relationships between adults, he did not
stop there. When adults asked him one day, 'Who is
the greatest in the Kingdom of God?', Jesus shocked all
those listening to him, and challenged their attitudes
to both children and adults, when he said, 'I promise
you this. If you don't change and become like a child,
you will never get into the kingdom of heaven. But if
you are as humble as these children, you are the
greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' They were
stunned. They had never heard the likes of this before.

* * * * *

Pray together...

Act of Love

O my God,
I love you with all my heart,
With all my soul, and with all my strength.
Lord, increase our love.
Help us to love one another.



FAIRTRADE

Guarantees
a **better deal**
for Third World
Producers

(May)

TERM 3 No. 2

From

To



**AT HOME WITH
ALIVE-8**

Help your child to memorise...

'A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.' And he said, 'Let anyone with ears to hear listen!' (Luke 4:3-9)

'Love others as much as you love yourself.'
(Matthew 19:19)

'My father has blessed you! Come and receive the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created. When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink.' (Matthew 25:34-35)



Background reading for parents...

A Parable of Soup!

One day I went into a restaurant at lunchtime to have a quick bite to eat. The restaurant was busy. I took my place in the queue, and when I got to the counter I ordered a bowl of soup and some bread. Eventually, as the queue progressed, I came to the checkout, where I paid for my soup and bread. I looked around for a table. The restaurant was full by this time, but I spotted an empty seat and made my way to it. I set my bowl of soup and plate of bread on the table, and as I did so I realised that I had forgotten to collect a spoon. 'Drat!' I thought. So quick as I could I went to a small table beside the checkout and grabbed a spoon before returning to my table.

But when I got back to my place I could only stare in disbelief. A person was sitting there eating my soup! (Pause – Allow the children time to speculate about what kind of person this might have been.)

As I stood there, staring, the person said nothing but simply gestured towards an empty chair at the table, pushed the bowl of soup into the middle of the table, broke off a piece of the bread and handed it to me. What could I do? Without a word I sat down, dipped my bread into the bowl as the person was doing, and in silence we finished the soup between us.

When the soup was gone, the person stood up, smiled and left the table.

Oh No! – what did I see then but my bowl of soup and bread, sitting untouched, on the table behind!

* * * * *

Perspective: Aren't we blessed?

The following is something to ponder...

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness... you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation... you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.

If you can attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death... you are more blessed than three billion people in the world.

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep... you are richer than 75% of the world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish somewhere... you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read at all.

* * * * *

Paradox of Our Time

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers; wider freeways but narrower viewpoints.

We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgement; more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values.

We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbour.

We conquered outer space but not inner space.

We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul.

We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice.

We write more, but learn less.

We plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait.

We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; big people and small character; steep profits and shallow relationships.

These are the days of two incomes but more divorce; fancier houses but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.

Remember, spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.

Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.

Remember, to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember to say 'I Love You' to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for some day that person will not be there again.

Give time to Love, give time to speak, give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

George Carlin

(Written as a reflection after the Columbine High School deaths)

* * * * *

Help your child to memorise...

God wants us to treat the world with respect and love because God created it for our use and enjoyment.

God wants us to develop the world and to share its blessings with all people.

We honour the saints because they loved God and are with God for ever in heaven. They help us by their prayers.

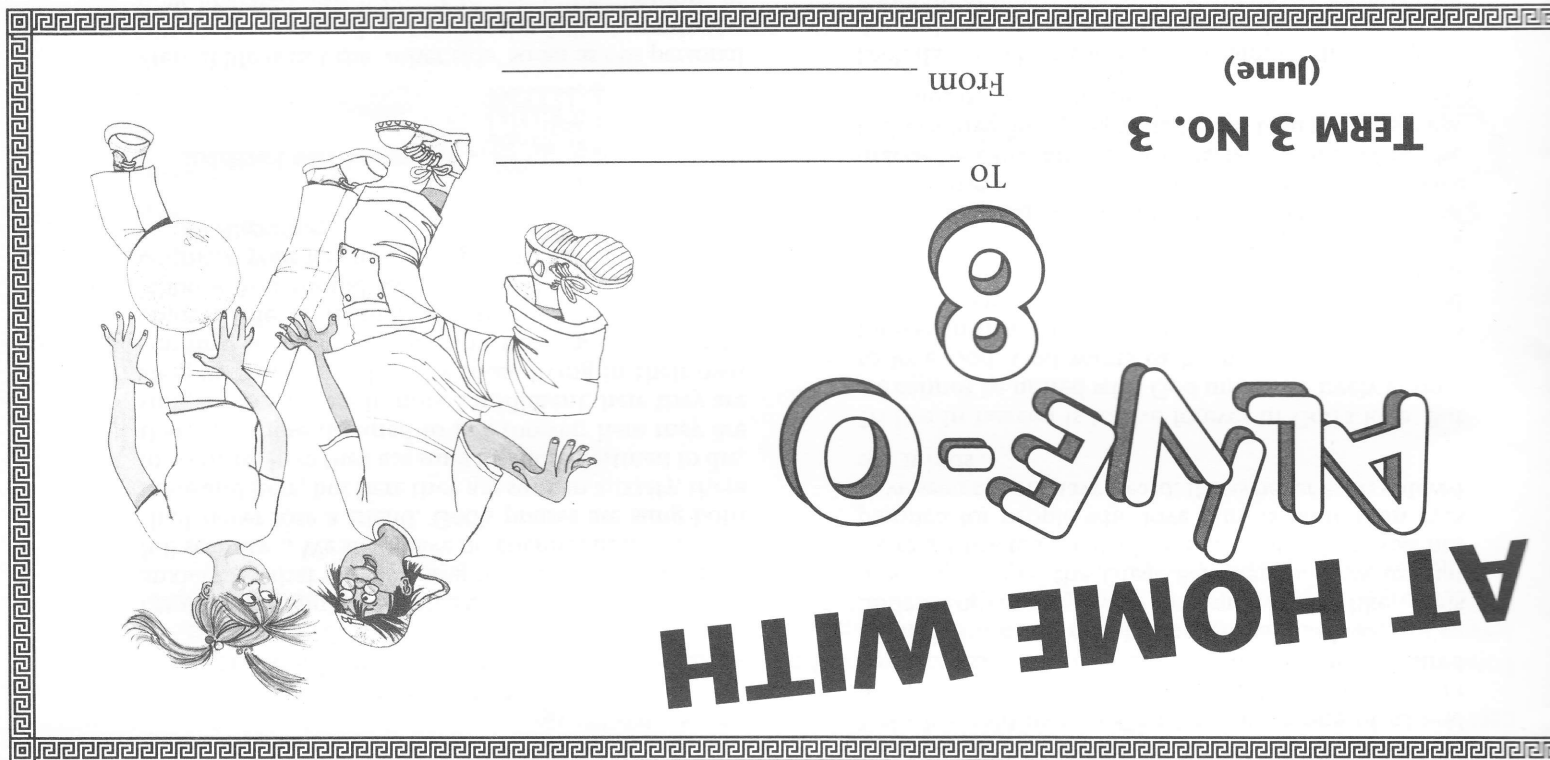
We pray for the dead to ask God to purify them and bring them to eternal happiness in heaven.

Protecting our environment

Go to www.10steps.ie

This site suggests ten 'commandments' or suggestions to help us, as individuals, to protect the balance in our world, by the choices we make.

1. Shop for the environment.
2. Get into recycling.
3. Say no to plastic bags.
4. Compost your waste.
5. Don't litter and don't tolerate those who do.
6. Water is life. Use it carefully.
7. Dispose of waste liquids correctly.
8. Do short journeys in short time.
9. Turn down and switch off.
10. Become label-conscious.



Consider with your child...

- creation as divided into living things and non-living things.
- the God-given balance between living things and non-living things.
- the role of the human being in relation to this 'balance'.
- possible effects of distorting this balance.
- this balance in different situations, e.g. a large city; a rural village, etc.

Pray together...

God of love, you love each one of us with an everlasting love.

You want us to live with you for ever in love in heaven.

Teach us, as we live, to choose love each day.
Amen.

Sanctus

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.



Background reading for parents...

Teach your children
what we have taught our children –
that the earth is our mother.
Whatever befalls the earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
If men spit upon the ground,
they spit upon themselves.

This we know.
The earth does not belong to us;
we belong to the earth.
This we know.
All things are connected
like the blood which unites one family.
All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
We did not weave the web of life;
we are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web,
we do to ourselves...

(Chief Seattle)

* * * * *

Let us sing alleluia here on earth, while we still live in anxiety, so that we may sing it one day in heaven in full security... We shall have no enemies in heaven, we shall never lose a friend. God's praises are sung both there and here, but here they are sung in anxiety, there in security; here they are sung by those destined to die, there, by those destined to live forever; here they are sung in hope, there in hope's fulfilment; here they are sung by wayfarers, there by those living in their own country. So then... let us sing now, not in order to enjoy a life of leisure, but in order to lighten our labours. You should sing as wayfarers do – sing, but continue your journey... Sing then, but keep going.

(St Augustine)

* * * * *

Eternal life is not the 'other side' so far as our personal history is concerned, but rather the radical interiority, now liberated and brought to full self-realisation, of that personal history of freedom of ours *which we are living through even now* and which, once it has been fully brought to birth in death, can no longer be lost. The only further development which it can still achieve then is to lose itself in a loving immediacy to the ultimate Mystery of existence called God, and thereby discover its own fullness.

(Karl Rahner)

* * * * *

The 'Balance' in Creation

In order to help them think about the world, scientists divide it into two basic categories – Living Things and Non-Living Things. All living things breathe, grow and reproduce and can be placed under the heading of plant, animal or human. Non-living things do not breathe, do not reproduce and do not grow, e.g. stones. As scientists have studied living and non-living things, they have discovered how interconnected and interdependent living and non-living things are. Increasingly, scientists are becoming more and more concerned with the *balance* that exists in the world, between all its different forms of life. Today we are beginning to realise how some things that humans have done have had an impact on that balance, and how careful we need to be that we do not upset it further.

* * * * *

The Promise of Heaven

Jesus has told us that God loves each one of us and wants us to share that love forever. In heaven, we will be completely happy and there will be no more hatred or selfishness or evil or sin. It is hard for us to understand exactly what heaven will be like. Jesus used stories like the Great Banquet to show us that we're all invited. St Paul tells us that 'what God has planned for people who love him, is more than eyes have seen or ears have heard. It has never even entered our minds'.

To live in heaven is to live forever in God's love. But we cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love God. God wants each one of us to be happy forever in heaven, but God also gives us the right to choose freely how we will live our lives. Jesus showed us how to live and has given us his Spirit to help us live as his followers, as kingdom people. Heaven is a continuation and a completion of God's kingdom of love. Those who do not choose to live kingdom lives of love here on earth, cut themselves off from God the Father's love. Being separated from God's love is what is meant by the word 'hell'.

Each day, we choose again and again, by the things we do and say, whether we want to be part of God's kingdom of love, truth, justice and peace. By choosing to love God and each other, we are preparing to live in God's kingdom of love – heaven – when we die. Both here on earth and in heaven, we are part of God's kingdom when we love God and one another. That is why we pray for those who have died and have 'gone before us, marked with the sign of faith'. We ask God to purify them with his love and bring them to eternal happiness in the kingdom of heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification.

* * * * *