

Fully Alive Grade 5

Grade 5, Theme One

Family Letter

Dear Family,

We are ready to begin the first theme of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. Because the partnership of home, church, and school is so important, this letter is written to let you know what we talk about in class, and to offer some ideas for your involvement. For more information, please go to www.occb.on.ca.

About Theme One

The first theme of *Fully Alive*, called “Created and Loved by God,” is like the foundation of a house. Everything else depends on it. In this theme we explore the Christian belief that we are made in God’s image, and that God knows and loves each one of us. We are a very special creation. Because of this, we respect and value ourselves and others.

In Theme One we will:

- meet a group of six imaginary Grade 5 students and their teacher, Mr. Talbot.
- recognize and appreciate God’s everlasting love for us.
- explore the importance of respect for ourselves and others.
- examine the many ways we develop during our life journeys, and learn about the end of our life journey on earth and the beginning of a new life with God.
- discover that we are connected to many people, both living and dead, through their influence on our family members.

Working together at school and at home

- Ask your child to tell you about the story of Paul and what happened when he stole a magazine from a store.
- You might also ask about the “rule of respect,” which the students learned about in a story about Mr. Talbot’s classroom. What is the rule? Why is it important?
- One of the stories we will discuss is about the death of an elderly person. Ask your child to tell you about this story. Children often have questions about death, and this story provides an opportunity for you to answer some of these questions.
- In the last topic of this theme, the students will be bringing home a sheet about special people who influenced your life or the life of another person (grandparent, other relative, close family friend). Your child has been asked to interview you (or another person) about these special influences.

Teacher: _____ Date

Theme One Topics

In Grade 5, this theme is developed through six topics. The theme begins with a reflection on God’s continuing love for each person, and with an introduction to six imaginary Grade 5 children who appear throughout this year’s *Fully Alive* program. In the remaining topics, the students explore the meaning of forgiveness and reconciliation; the importance of respect within the small community of the classroom; the ways in which people develop during their life journeys; the natural end of human life and the beginning of a new life with God; and, finally, the influence of the many people who contribute to the students’ lives and the lives of their family members.

Topic 1 — God’s Love is Forever

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

I John 4:9

Summary

This topic helps the students understand that God created us with an immense capacity for love, a capacity that is brought to life by the people in our lives. They consider the fact that, unlike many of the things in our daily lives, babies don’t come with instructions. But if they did, the main instruction would be — love me forever. This “forever” love mirrors God’s love for each person. The students also meet six imaginary children in this topic — Sarah, Paul, Sabrina, Joseph, Lucy, and Luke — who are beginning Grade 6 and wondering what the new school year holds for them.

Main Ideas

- God loves each one of us forever and wants us to know this love.
- God gives us other people who are part of our life journey.
- The people in our lives love and care for us and teach us how to love others.

Family Participation

• The six imaginary children who are introduced in this topic are an important part of Grade 5 of the *Fully Alive* program. Here is some background information about them and their families:

• **Sarah Doyle** — Sarah is 10, and is the only child of Maureen Doyle, who is single and has never been married. Maureen Doyle is a social worker at a large hospital, and adopted her daughter when Sarah was a baby. Maureen Doyle's mother, Sheila Doyle, is close to her daughter and her granddaughter. Sarah is quiet, but friendly, and likes to write stories.

• **Paul Dirksen** — Paul is 10, and lives with his father, Andy, and his stepmother, Kate. Paul has a 16-year-old brother, Mike, and a six-year-old stepsister, Julie. Paul and Mike's mother lives in Vancouver, and the two boys usually spend their summer with her. Their parents separated six years ago when Paul was 4 and Mike was 10. Paul is fond of his stepmother, but his brother Mike has found the separation of his parents more difficult.

• **Sabrina Burke** — Sabrina is 10, and lives with her parents, Sam and Elizabeth Burke. She has two younger brothers, Tom and Matthew, and a little sister, Tania. Three years ago, Sabrina's older sister died in an accident. The Burke family is Afro-Canadian. Sabrina is Sarah Doyle's best friend, and is good at math.

• **Joseph Shapko** — Joseph is 10, and has just moved to Ontario from Winnipeg. He lives with his parents, Joseph and Teresa Shapko, and his little sister, Grace. His mother was born in the Philippines, and later moved to Canada with her family, settling in Winnipeg. Joseph is very interested in computers, which is the business in which his father works.

• **Lucy Silva** — Lucy is 10, and lives with her parents, Luis and Joana Silva, and her younger sister, Catrina. Mr. and Mrs. Silva came to Canada from Portugal just after they were married. Mr. Silva works in a factory that makes car parts, and has just been laid off. Lucy is shy, and a little unsure of herself outside her home.

• **Luke Thompson** — Luke is 10, and lives with his parents, Michael and Natalie Thompson, his older sister, Hannah, and his grandfather (his mother's father), Bill

Macmillan. Luke is autistic, and has some difficulties relating to other people. He has a special interest in drawing structures, like bridges.

- At the end of this topic, the students wrote a short description of themselves, and their thoughts and feelings as they begin Grade 5. You might ask about this description. What are your child's expectations for this new school year?
- In school, the students discussed the idea that, unlike many things in our homes, babies do not arrive with instructions telling their families how to look after them. You may want to discuss this idea at home. Your child can probably think of lots of situations in which he or she has to follow instructions — to make a model, to bake something, or to prepare a project the way the teacher wants it done. Things don't turn out the way they are supposed to unless we follow the instructions.

You might point out that it is the same way with people. God created us, and knows how we work best, and what will make us truly happy. If we want to be the people God intends us to be, we need to learn about and follow the commandments and the teaching of Christ. You can help your child understand that in order to be truly free, we need God's help. And just as it's not always easy to follow the rules for a school project or a model airplane, so it's not always easy to follow God's rules. It takes practice, effort, and perseverance to be free in the way God intended us to be.

Topic 2 — Learning about Love

Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to live; he was lost and has been found."

Luke 15:31-32

Summary

This topic features a story about Paul, who has done something wrong, and runs away to avoid facing his father. In the end, he discovers that his father's love is much greater than he had imagined. The topic provides an opportunity for the students to explore forgiveness, the need to make restitution for any harm that was done, and reconciliation, both at a human level and through the sacrament of reconciliation.

Main Ideas

- When we do something wrong, the people who care about us continue to love us. They may be upset or angry, but they still love us.
- When we have harmed another person by our actions, we need to ask for forgiveness and try to make up for what we have done.
- We also need to ask God for forgiveness. God always loves us and is always ready to forgive us.

Family Participation

- You and your child might like to read together the story about Paul, “Mr. Kostas’s Store,” which you will find at the end of this theme. At school, the students were asked to write a letter to Paul, telling him what they thought about what he did and what happened when his father found him. You might ask about this letter. What did your child think about Paul’s situation?
- By this age, most children have had the experience of having done something wrong and being afraid of how their parents will react. This might be a good opportunity to talk about it, and to let your child know that, like the parents in the story, your love never stops even when you’re angry and disappointed. Children need to hear this said many times.
- One of the most important ways that children learn about God’s love and forgiveness is through the love and forgiveness of their parents. The way we handle situations when our children have done something wrong is a real test of parenthood. The temptation to over-react and express our shock (“How could you!”) or to become very angry is natural, but in the long run only teaches children to be fearful or defensive. For this reason, it’s a good idea to take a few moments to calm down if you’re feeling very upset and angry about something your child has done. Once you and your child can talk calmly about the situation, reassure him or her of your love (“I don’t like what you did, but I love you”). Be firm and clear about why the behaviour was wrong, and then spend some time helping your child figure out how to repair the situation and what can be done to avoid the problem in the future.
- This topic also offers an opportunity to talk about the sacrament of reconciliation. It is so important for children to know that God forgives our sins much more easily than we

forgive ourselves. The sacrament of reconciliation is a gift that allows us to start over again and to receive the help we all need in our lives. Asking for and offering forgiveness for our sins is part of all our relationships — with each other and with God. As parents, there are many occasions when our children need our forgiveness. There are also times when we have been unfair, unreasonable, or out of control, and owe them an apology.

Topic 3 — Mr. Talbot’s Classroom

Respect yourself and others will respect you.

Confucius

Summary

This topic introduces Mr. Talbot, the teacher of the imaginary Grade 5 classroom. It is the beginning of the new school year, and Mr. Talbot and his students are getting to know each other and talking about they can expect of each other during the year. This topic provides an opportunity for the students to discuss Mr. Talbot’s rule of respect, and consider the meaning of respect and the importance of appreciation and respect for each individual in the classroom.

Main Ideas (Mr. Talbot’s Rule of Respect)

- Respect yourself and the gifts God has given you.
- Respect each other and remember that each one of you is a person whom God created and loves.
- Respect the work that you will do this year, and the work of each person in our classroom.
- Respect our classroom — not just keeping it clean and tidy, but also working together to create an environment that is friendly, cheerful, and busy with good work.

Family Participation

- At the end of this topic the students were given a sheet with questions about themselves. They were asked to take the sheet home and complete it, and were invited to bring in photographs of family members and friends. You might ask your child about this sheet and what family photos he or she might like to share.

- The most important focus of this topic is the idea of respect, which includes appreciation, admiration, and thoughtfulness. It also means to recognize the value of someone or something.

As children get older, they are often very hard on each other. You may hear talk at home about students who are unpopular and considered to be “losers.” When this happens, it is an opportunity to talk about respect for the value and the unique qualities of each person. Grade 5 children are old enough to understand that they may not want to be friends with all members of their classroom, but still owe them respect.

Respect within the family is also important. Brothers and sisters can become very frustrated with each other. Attitudes of respect, friendliness, and tolerance are developed at home, but not without patient and consistent effort on the part of parents.

- Part of Mr. Talbot’s rule of respect is respect for the work that each student will do during the school year. This kind of respect is the result of effort and persistence. Some children find it easier than others to develop good work habits, to persist despite difficulties, and to experience the pleasure of knowing that they have done their best. It’s important for parents to take an interest in children’s work whether it is school-related or a hobby, and to give them some help when they need it, but avoid providing too much help. Often, what children need most is someone to help them learn how to get organized, make sure that they understand the work they are supposed to do, give them encouragement when they are having difficulties, and show appreciation for their effort when they have finished.

Topic 4 — A Journey

Do not walk through time without leaving worthy evidence of your passage.

Pope John XXIII

Summary

This topic helps the students understand that human development has many dimensions — physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual. The students explore each of these dimensions, and the development and changes that occur as people progress in their life journeys through infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The topic provides

the students with an opportunity to look at their own development and their goals for growth in all these dimensions in the coming years.

Main Ideas

- Human lives are something like journeys. Each person grows, develops, and changes along the way.
- Human development has five important dimensions: physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual.
- Each life journey is unique. Some people develop quickly in one dimension or another, and others more slowly.
- God is always with us on our journeys. We ask God to guide us along the way.

Family Participation

- At school, the students completed a sheet about their development in the five areas — physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, and wrote some goals for these areas. You might ask your child about these goals.
- Day-to-day family life involves a lot of challenges and pressures, and time for reflection is rare. But it is important to take a few minutes here and there to think about your child's growth as a well-balanced person, one who is developing in all areas. Some thoughts on each of the five areas you may want to consider are:

Physical: Are there regular opportunities for physical activity, for example, outside play, team sports, bike riding, hiking, swimming, and skating? For many North American children, activities like watching television, playing video games, or using a home computer have taken the place of outside play and sports. Creating a balance between active and passive activities is important for children's physical development.

Emotional: Is your child growing in the ability to handle frustrations and disappointments? Is your child more aware of other people's needs and feelings, and more sensitive to them? These are both indications of greater emotional maturity. You may also notice, especially if your child is a girl, some new signs of moodiness and sensitivity, which are most likely related to the onset of puberty.

Social: Does your child have one or two good friends? Is he or she able to handle normal friendship difficulties without too much difficulty? Friendship becomes

increasingly important around this age, and provides important lessons in loyalty, cooperation, and sensitivity to the feelings of others.

Intellectual: Some signs of intellectual growth are: deeper and more sustained concentration; desire to explore areas of special interest; enjoyment of challenges; and the ability to look ahead and plan more carefully. Children thrive intellectually when they are exposed to a variety of experiences, and are encouraged to pursue their interests and solve problems as independently as possible.

Spiritual: Spiritual growth in children is strongly influenced by their families. In his writing, Pope John Paul II referred to the family as the “domestic church.” It is in the home that children first hear the name of God and of Jesus. It is also in the home that they learn to pray — bedtime prayers, grace before meals, finding time to share a reading from the bible, or the lighting of the Advent wreath as part of the preparations leading up to Christmas. A Catholic school can contribute to the spiritual growth of children, but cannot replace the influence of the family. In particular, children’s participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the heart of our faith, depends on the presence of their families.

- As children grow and develop, they need to be offered encouragement and new responsibilities. At the same time, it’s important not to rush them. They do need room to make more decisions, and, in the process, to make some mistakes. But their mistakes must be small ones from which they can learn. For example, some children this age take on too many activities and discover they can’t manage their schedules. This is a situation that a child can learn from without serious harm.
- There are many pressures on children to grow up too fast. In particular, some television shows, movies, advertisements, and music videos tend to reflect and promote a highly sexualized culture. You will want to be careful about your child’s exposure to these influences, and insist on standards and rules in this area. This is not easy to do, but it is worth the effort. Most importantly, encourage your child to develop many interests and hobbies, to participate in team sports and interest clubs, and to keep busy and active.

Topic 5 — The End of the Journey

Remember our brothers and sisters who have gone to their rest in the hope

of rising again; bring them and all the departed into the light of your presence.

Eucharistic Prayer II

Summary

This topic continues the image of a life journey, and explores the end of the journey on earth. A story about the death of an elderly man provides an opportunity for the teacher and students to discuss the customs with which we mark the significance of death, and the support of the faith of the Christian community in a time of sorrow.

Main Ideas

- It is a difficult time for people when someone they love dies. They feel very sad.
- People who have died are with God, and they continue to love us and pray for us, and we continue to love them and pray for them.
- We try to be a good friend to those who are sad because someone they love has died.

Family Participation

- You and your child might like to read together the story, “A Prayer for Thomas Howard,” which you will find at the end of this theme. What does your child think about the story? Does he or she have any questions?
- It is natural for children to be curious about death, and, at times, frightened by it. It’s important to answer their questions, and to reassure them that most people die after a long life. In some cultures, children accompany their parents to all of the events that occur at the time of a death. In others, however, people may be adults before they enter a funeral home or go to a funeral. If you are going to a funeral, you may want to take your child with you to help him or her understand what happens. It is best for children to be introduced to this experience when it does not involve someone with whom they were very close.
- This topic provides you with an opportunity to talk to your child about our Christian beliefs about death. Physical death is a natural end to human life, but the spirit (or soul) does not die. We return to God, who made us. We believe that at the end of the world our bodies will rise again in glory and there will be no more suffering or unhappiness. We are sad when the people we love die because it is hard to say goodbye. But we also rejoice

because we remember Christ's promise: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will never die." We know that death is not the end and that we will be together again.

- It is also important to teach our children that death is not the end of human love. We go on loving those who have died, and they continue to love us. We pray for all who have died, and we ask them to pray for us.
- These are some of the questions children may ask about death and about the customs that are associated with it.

Why do people die?

Everything that lives eventually dies. Most people don't die until they're quite old. Sometimes, and this does not happen very often, people die at a younger age because of a serious illness or a bad accident. After death, God offers us the beginning of a new life. We know this because Jesus promised us. We miss those who have died, but we can be sure that we will see them again.

What is a funeral home (funeral parlour)?

A funeral home is a place in which the bodies of those who have died are prepared for burial. Most people in North America use the services of funeral homes. (Other cultures have different customs when people die.) Once the body is prepared, it is placed in a coffin and moved to a room where people can gather to begin the process of saying goodbye. Visiting the funeral home (a visitation) gives people who knew the person an opportunity to express their sympathy to the family, and to share memories of the person. The people who have gathered also pray for the person and the family. A gathering before a funeral is sometimes called a wake.

What is a funeral mass?

When people die, there is almost always a special ceremony for them called a funeral. Catholics have a funeral mass, and we pray for the person who has died and for the family members and friends of that person. We gather together to express our faith in the promise of Jesus that death is not the end for us, but that God offers us the beginning of a new life. We ask God to welcome the person who has died and to comfort those who are left behind. At the end of the funeral mass, the coffin is taken to the cemetery, where the body in the coffin is buried in the ground. Instead of burial

of the body, some people wish to be cremated, which means the body is taken away after the funeral mass and burned. Most often, the remaining ashes are placed in an urn and kept in a special place in the cemetery. Many people, including children, find it healing to visit the cemetery and bring flowers to the final resting place of family members and close friends.

How can you help people when they're sad because someone they loved has died?

You can pray for them and for the person who died. You can spend time with them and listen to them. They might not want to talk about what happened, but that doesn't mean that they don't need a good friend who cares about them.

Topic 6 — We are Connected

Every life is a profession of faith, and exercises an inevitable and silent influence.

Henri Amiel

Summary

This topic helps the students understand the lasting and positive influence that people can have on the lives of others. The students share the results of their interviews at home about the people who had an important influence of their family members. They also explore an example of people who were important influences in the lives of Joseph's parents, and the connection that Joseph has to these people through his parents.

Main Ideas

- Many people have a positive influence in our lives, especially those who touched the lives of our family members
- We are connected to the people who affected the lives of our family members because their influence is passed on to us.
- People who lived long before we were born can influence and inspire us by their example, their interests, and their talents.

Family Participation

- Before the teacher and students explore this topic, your child will be bringing home a sheet to be completed with your help. The students have been asked to interview an adult

family member (or an adult who is a close family friend) about some of the people who have had a strong and good influence on the person's life, for example, an older relative, a family friend, or a teacher. This assignment gives you the opportunity to talk about the people who have helped to make you the person you are.

- After the topic has been completed and the students have shared what they learned in class, you could ask your child what some of the other students say about the important people in the lives of their family members.
- Parents are the strongest influences on their children's lives. Years from now, when they are adults, they will still recall the words and actions of their parents. Parents sometimes feel that children do not appreciate them or are unaware of the sacrifices that are made. But the point of being a parent is not to be appreciated by children, but to raise them to be strong and good people who will offer to others the gift of selfless love.
- One of the ideas in this topic is the important influence of people who may have died many years ago — writers, composers, artists, saints, missionaries, and inventors. Many of these people have continued to inspire others, long after their deaths.

Heroes and heroines are big part of children's lives, and should be worthy of their admiration. It's important to expose children to the lives of people who are examples of courage, talent, intelligence, holiness, and imagination. There are many biographies written for children, as well as television programs, internet sites, and movies that introduce new generations to a great variety of inspiring people from the past.

Theme One Stories and Poems

Topic 2: This is the story of Paul, who did something wrong and was afraid to go home.

Mr. Kostas's Store

For a moment, Paul thought he might be sick. He stood outside the little store and swallowed hard. Why had he done it? How had he gotten himself into such a mess? And worst of all, what was his dad going to say?

Mr. Kostas, the store owner, had been very angry. "Give me the magazine you have under your jacket," he said, as Paul was about to leave the store.

"I'm sorry," Paul had stammered.

"I don't want you in my store again if you're going to steal from me. What's

your father going to say about this?"

"Oh, please don't tell him," Paul had pleaded. Paul knew that his dad usually stopped at the store for milk or bread or just a quick chat on his way home from work. Mr. Kostas and his dad enjoyed chatting.

Paul walked home slowly. He saw his brother's bike in the driveway, but he didn't want to talk to anyone so he slipped in the side door and went straight to his room. He still felt sick. His dad was going to be very angry. He heard the front door open. It was his stepmother, Kate, and his little sister, and they both called to see if he was home. Paul didn't answer.

His dad would be home soon. "Mr. Kostas is telling him right now," he thought. "What am I going to do?"

Paul tiptoed down the stairs, opened the side door very quietly, and went out. He didn't know where he was going, but he started walking.

He walked for a long time, and then he sat in the park, watching some kids play. But it wasn't long before they left, and there was no one in the park except Paul. It was getting dark and cold. "I can't stay here all night," he thought, "but I can't go home." Finally, he decided to go to his friend John's house.

"Paul," John's mother cried when she opened the door. "Are you all right? Your parents are looking for you. They've been calling and calling to see if John knew where you were. Come in and I'll call them right away."

In a few minutes, Paul's dad drove up. "Paul, are you all right? Where have you been?" His dad hugged Paul hard. "I've never been so scared," he said.

Paul couldn't say anything. He just looked at his dad. They got into the car together.

"What happened, Paul?" his dad asked.

"Didn't Mr. Kostas tell you?"

"Yes, he did, but I'd like you to tell me," his dad answered.

Paul told his dad the whole story. "I'm really sorry, Dad. It was just a stupid car magazine, and I know it was wrong."

"Mr. Kostas is the person who needs to hear that," his dad said. "He's the

one you've done wrong to."

"I know, Dad. What can I do? I told him I was sorry."

"I think he needs to hear your apology when he's not so upset. And perhaps you could offer to do some work around the store," his father suggested.

"He probably wouldn't want me," Paul muttered.

"I think he might," his dad said. "You also need to talk to Father Curtis about what happened next time you go to confession."

"I will, Dad," Paul said. "I wish it had never happened."

"I know you do. Now . . . about your running away."

Paul looked down. "I thought you and Kate would be angry."

"I don't think angry is the right word," his dad said. "We're upset and we're disappointed. But that doesn't mean we don't love you. Don't you know that? We were so frightened when we couldn't find you."

"I was scared too," Paul whispered.

His father put his hand on Paul's shoulder. "You did something wrong," he said. "We need to talk about what happened. But you are always my son, and no matter what, I love you. Don't ever run away again."

Paul leaned his head against his father's shoulder. "I won't, Dad. Let's go home."

* * * * *

Topic 5: This is a story about Sarah and the death of one of her grandmother's friends.

A Prayer for Thomas Howard

There was no school, because the teachers were at a meeting. Sarah was looking forward to spending the day with her grandmother while her mother was at work.

When Sarah arrived at the apartment, her grandmother was on the telephone.

"Hi, dear," her grandmother said when she got off the phone. "I'm glad you're here. I just got such sad news."

"What happened?" Sarah asked.

“Tom — Mrs. Howard’s husband died last night.”

“He’s been sick for a long time, hasn’t he?” Sarah asked.

“Yes. It’s been a hard time for him and for Connie,” her grandmother said, and she wiped her eyes.

Sarah knew that Connie Howard was one of her grandmother’s best friends. “Are you really sad, Grandma?” she asked.

“Yes, I’m sad,” her grandmother said, “mainly for Connie, but also because I will miss him. It’s hard to say goodbye to old friends. But when I visited him in the hospital last week, I could see that he wasn’t going to live much longer.”

“He was pretty old, wasn’t he, Grandma?” Sarah asked.

“I guess eighty-one sounds very old to you, but that’s only 10 years older than I am.”

Sarah was quiet. It was hard to imagine her grandmother dying.

“Don’t look so sad,” her grandmother said and she gave Sarah a hug. “I don’t plan to die for a long time. I want to see you all grown up. Now, come and help me with some cooking. I want to bring some food over to Connie’s.”

Sarah and her grandmother worked silently in the tiny kitchen.

“You’re very quiet,” her grandmother said.

“I was just wondering,” Sarah answered. “Grandma, why do people have to die?”

“I know you like words,” her grandmother said, “so here’s one I don’t think you know — *mortal*. Human beings are mortal, which means that we all die eventually. But after we die God offers us the gift of new life forever.”

Sarah listened to her grandmother. “It’s very hard to understand,” she said.

“It is,” her grandmother agreed. “It’s a mystery. But we know, because God promised, that death is not the end for people.”

“Mrs. Howard is going to be very sad,” Sarah said.

“She is,” her grandmother said, and she sighed. “But she has children and grandchildren who love her. And she has good friends. We’ll all try to help her.”

“Grandma, where is Mr. Howard right now? I mean, what do they do after someone dies?”

“Well, he died late last night. Probably this morning his body was moved to a funeral home.”

“Then what happens?”

“People at the funeral home will prepare his body, and then starting tomorrow afternoon people can visit the family there.”

“Is it scary at the funeral home,” Sarah asked.

“No, it’s not scary. It’s a special time to say good-bye and be with the family. When I go tomorrow, Connie and I will talk about Tom, and all the things we did together. We’ll cry, but we’ll also laugh when we remember all the fun we had. And we’ll pray for him and his family.”

“You’ll laugh?” Sarah said, and she looked confused. “I didn’t go to the funeral home when Sabrina’s big sister died, but Mom did. She said it was very sad. I don’t think anyone laughed.”

“It’s very different, Sarah. Tom had lived for many years, and had a good life. He loved his family, and he enjoyed the work he did. I think he’d be pleased to hear people laughing at the funeral home. But Sabrina’s sister was young. Her family loved her and wanted to see her grow up. That’s a huge sadness.”

“Sometimes, Sabrina’s still really sad,” Sarah said, “and I don’t know what to say.”

“You don’t have to say anything,” her grandmother answered. “Just try to be a good friend when she’s sad and when she’s happy. If she wants to talk about her sister, she will, and you can listen. You can also pray for her and her sister, and for her family.”

“I’ll try,” Sarah said. “I want to be a good friend.”

“I know you do,” her grandmother said. “Now, let’s get these cookies out before they burn.”

Sarah and her grandmother had some lunch together, and tried a few of the cookies.

“I think these are from the batch you made,” her grandmother said.

“They’re really good, Sarah.”

“Will you go to Mr. Howard’s funeral, Grandma?”

“Of course. It will probably be on Saturday.”

“Could I go with you?”

“If it’s all right with your mother. You’ve never been to a funeral before, have you?”

“No, but I’d like to go with you,” Sarah answered.

• • •

Sarah did go with her grandmother to the funeral mass for Mr. Howard. She listened to the prayers that were said, and she was glad she had come. But she felt sad for Mrs. Howard.

As she left the church, she held onto her grandmother’s hand tightly. Her grandmother stopped to give Mrs. Howard a hug.

“You’re getting so grownup,” Mrs. Howard said to Sarah. “I’m glad you came.

Sarah wasn’t sure what to say. “I’ll say a prayer for Mr. Howard,” she said in a soft voice.

“Thank you. And maybe you’ll say one for me too,” Mrs. Howard answered.

“I will,” Sarah promised.

* * * * *