

STUDY GUIDE

WEEK 1

Imelda Lambertini is born.

Read Aloud - Chapter 1 – *Patron Saint of First Communicants*

Questions/Talking Points:

1. When and where does this story take place?
2. What does Peter feel brought John, the baker's son, back home?
3. Why does Peter start out to see Donna Castora?
4. Why were the castle bells ringing?

Answer Key:

1. The story of Blessed Imelda takes place in Bologna, a city in northern Italy, beginning in the year of her birth, 1322.
2. Peter felt that John's son returned home "only because of prayer."
3. Peter starts out to see Donna Castora to thank her for her prayers for Phillip and tell her that Phillip has come back. However, he does not get to tell her due to the excitement of the birth of Donna's child.
4. The castle bells were ringing to celebrate the birth of the Lambertini's daughter. Peter stated that, according to common custom, the bells were usually only rung if the new child was a boy.

Growing in Holiness:

Peter and John talk about how many of us fail to thank God for His countless blessings. Our prayers of petition are ardently recited, but we often times forget to thank God for granting our requests. Remember to thank God each day for His many blessings. If possible, go each day – if only for several minutes - to thank Him before the Blessed Sacrament. Spend extra time after receiving Holy Communion to thank God for the great gift of His Son.

Remember the great gift Jesus has given us – the gift of himself. He is truly present in every tabernacle of every Catholic Church. Be sure to acknowledge His Presence when you walk or drive by a Catholic Church – pray the Sign of the Cross and say a short prayer such as "My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the most Blessed Sacrament."

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WEEK 2

Donna Castora dreams of St. Dominic.

Read Aloud - Chapter 2 – *Patron Saint of First Communicants*

Questions/Talking Points:

1. How did the Lambertini's celebrate the birth of their daughter?
2. What was Donna Castora's dream and what did she feel it meant?
3. What did Donna Castora's brother, the archbishop, advise about the dream?

Answer Key:

1. The Lambertini's celebrated the birth of their daughter by providing free food and wine to all.
2. Donna Castora dreamed that she had met St. Dominic and that he had given her a special smile and blessing. She felt that great things were in store for Imelda.
3. Donna Castora's brother, the archbishop, advised her that some dreams are sent for a special purpose but that she must not read too much into the dream.

Growing in Holiness:

“Every child born into the world is given the grace to become a saint. Castora, you must teach little Imelda this truth and help her to use the graces God gives her.” (page 21) Pray daily for more graces to persevere in the spiritual life. Be aware each moment of the graces and opportunities for grace that God offers you. Receive Holy Communion as often as possible.

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WEEK 3

Imelda Lambertini longs for our Lord.

Read Aloud - Chapter 3 – *Patron Saint of First Communicants*

Questions/Talking Points:

1. What are some of the gifts that God had bestowed upon Imelda?
2. What did Imelda want as a present for her fifth birthday? Why was she not to get it?
3. What was Imelda's favorite gift of all the presents received?

Answer Key:

1. Some of the gifts that God had bestowed upon Imelda included physical beauty, a quick mind, and an unselfish spirit. She loved to make others happy.
2. For her fifth birthday, Imelda wished to receive our Lord in Holy Communion "just like grownup people do." Her parents were unable to grant this wish as Church regulations at that time required a child be fourteen years old to receive Holy Communion. This rule was changed to the age of seven by Pope Pius X in 1910.
3. Of all the gifts she received, Imelda's favorite was the pearl rosary given to Imelda by her mother.

Growing in Holiness:

Imelda was the daughter of very wealthy parents. Notice her plush surroundings and lavish gifts. Yet her favorite birthday gift was a rosary given to her by her mother. With all the extravagance around her, she still put much importance on Godly things. Re-evaluate your priorities. What are your feelings about presents? What value do you place on religious or spiritual gifts? Where do you spend your money and your time? Are you trying to accumulate worldly possessions or heavenly treasures? What adjustments do you need to make in your life in order to imitate Imelda more closely?

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WEEK 4

Imelda Lambertini shares her knowledge of the Dominican Order.

Read Aloud - Chapter 4 – *Patron Saint of First Communicants*

Questions/Talking Points:

1. Who were Imelda's imaginary companions?
2. What was Imelda's attitude toward the required wait for Holy Communion?
3. Why was Beatrice uneasy over Imelda's account of the Dominican Order?
4. What was Imelda's daily prayer for her friend Peter, the basket-maker?
5. List two wishes Imelda expresses while visiting the Convent of St. Agnes.

Answer Key:

1. Tarcisius and St. Agnes were Imelda's imaginary companions. She often asked them to help her love God as He wishes to be loved.
2. By the time she was nine, Imelda's attitude toward receiving Holy Communion was one of patient resignation. She felt God had a reason for making her wait to receive Him, and she tried to be satisfied in waiting as He wished.
3. Beatrice was uneasy over Imelda's account of the Dominican saints as she felt such deep thoughts were far beyond Imelda's years
4. Imelda prayed daily that God would give Peter back his sight.
5. During her visit to the Sisters of St. Agnes Convent, Imelda wished that she had known Blessed Diana and that she could love our Lord as the sisters did.

Growing in Holiness:

Imelda had great trust in God's care for her: "The best thing to do was to bear the disappointment bravely and trust that He would let everything turn to good." (page 37) Think about the last disappointment you had. What was your attitude? What do you think you could do differently in order to mimic more closely the attitude of Imelda? How disappointed are you when you are unable to receive Holy Communion?

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WEEK 5

Imelda Lambertini joins the Convent of St. Mary Magdalen.

Read Aloud - Chapter 5 – *Patron Saint of First Communicants*

Questions/Talking Points:

1. What convent to Imelda enter as a religious? How old was she?
2. As she gave herself to God and received the habit, for what did she ask?
3. List some of the virtues Imelda was expected to acquire as a novice.
4. What was Imelda's new duty in the convent?

Answer Key:

1. Imelda entered the Dominican convent of St. Mary Magdalen in Bologna, Italy, at the age of nine.
2. As she gave herself to God's service and received the Dominican habit, Imelda asked for "God's mercy and your" (the superior's). (page 54)
3. Some of the virtues Imelda was expected to acquire as a novice included obedience and humility. She needed to be willing to act as a servant to others and to bear all trials.
4. In the convent Imelda was assigned charge of the poor who came to the monastery for food.

Growing in Holiness:

"Peter, I do pray for you," she said gently. "Every day. You know that. But I fear I can never pray for you or anyone as I really wish." (page 58) And "When will they let me pray for people as I really want to pray?" (page 58) Imelda is crying out to receive Holy Communion so that she may pray for people in a better way – with the Lord in her heart. Remember each time you receive the Eucharist to ask that the graces obtained with reception be applied to specific intentions. This can be done for each act you do – each prayer you make – but the graces of the Eucharist are infinite whereas the graces we can obtain for the recitation of the rosary, for example, are limited. Remember each loved one, each "cause" (peace in our world, and end to abortion, etc.), your own spiritual needs, the intentions of the Holy Father, and those for whom you have promised to pray. Ask your guardian angel to help you remember those you have promised to pray for – or to have you angel offer those intentions in prayer for you.

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WEEK 6

Our Lord comes to Imelda Lambertini in an unexpected way.

Read Aloud - Chapter 6 – *Patron Saint of First Communicants*

Questions/Talking Points:

1. What was preventing Imelda from receiving Communion at the age of eleven?
2. What did Imelda state as the requirements for receiving Holy Communion?
3. What reason did the nuns give for Imelda's tears after Mass on the vigil of the feast of Ascension? What was the real reason for her tears?
4. What is "The Miracle" of this chapter?

Answer Key:

1. The tradition of the Church (Church rule) during the fourteenth century was that children must be fourteen years of age to receive Holy Communion.
2. Imelda states that neither the angels nor saints in heaven can receive Holy Communion; but anyone who has the True Faith and keeps the Commandments (is in the state of grace) may receive our Lord in the Eucharist.
3. Several of the nuns believed that Imelda was crying as the spring weather was causing her to be homesick. The real reason for her tears, however, was that she was disappointed about the continued delay in receiving our Lord in Holy Communion.
4. This chapter's miracle is the presence of a consecrated Host floating above Imelda's head. This Host, accompanied by a strange light and a marvelous fragrance of flowers, had moved from above the altar, through the cloister grating, and across the chapel to rest above Imelda's head.

Growing in Holiness:

Our Lord came to Imelda in a miraculous way. Remember that each time He comes to us in Holy Communion, it too is a miracle. Common bread and wine become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, becomes physically present in each of us. As the Trinity is three Persons in one God, we also receive God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in each Communion. Never forget or grow accustomed to this awesome fact! If we all truly knew and understood this in our minds and hearts, would we ever get off our knees after Holy Communion?

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WEEK 7

Imelda Lambertini's dream comes true.

Read Aloud - Chapter 7 – *Patron Saint of First Communicants*

Questions/Talking Points:

1. How long did the nuns remain in thanksgiving after the miracle of the floating Host?
2. After seeing Imelda, how did the Prioress describe Holy Communion?
3. What was the reaction of Imelda's parents when they learned of her death?
4. What was the first miracle attributed to Imelda's intercession after her death?

Answer Key:

1. The nuns remained in humble thanksgiving for more than an hour after witnessing the miracle of the floating Host.
2. After leaving Imelda in the chapel, the Prioress described Holy Communion as the greatest privilege in the world – a proof, if one were needed, of God's immense love for all mankind.
3. Due to the intercession of Imelda, her parents came to the convent after her death, dry-eyed and calm. While grieving, they accepted God's will with eagerness and trust, without question or complaint.
4. The first miracle attributed to the intercession of Imelda after her death was the return of vision to the blind basket-maker, Peter.

Growing in Holiness:

“We can only love what we know...and so we ought to do all we can to know God. Then it will be very easy to love Him and to do His Will.” (page 76-77) Spend more time in front of a crucifix and in front of the Blessed Sacrament meditating on God's great love for you. When we spend more time with someone we love, our love increases. And with our human nature, we more easily love Someone when we realize how much He loves us. Be sure to meditate on Jesus' great love for you after receiving Him in Holy Communion. As the structure of the Mass does not allow an adequate thanksgiving to be made before Mass is completed, remain in thanksgiving after Mass for several minutes. Remember that the nuns in this chapter remained in humble thanksgiving for over an hour.