



# The Garden of Good Choices



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Every afternoon, Leo and Rosa helped their grandmother in her backyard, where the fence was painted sky-blue, and the garden beds were shaped like big, gentle waves. This wasn't an ordinary garden. Each plant had a wooden sign tied with twine: TRUTH TREE, KINDNESS ROSES, PEACE LILIES, and PATIENCE PUMPKINS. Grandma called it "the Garden of Good Choices."

"Plants listen," Grandma liked to say. "Not to our mouths, mostly to our hearts."

Along the far edge grew pesky weeds that Grandma named the Almost-Okay Vines. They looked thin and harmless, but they loved to whisper. When Leo reached for the watering can, the vines hissed, "If you forget a chore, just say you did it. It's easier." When Rosa frowned at her brother, they murmured, "Roll your eyes. It won't hurt."

One windy day, Leo accidentally knocked over a pot. The crash was loud. Rosa jumped. Grandma peeked out the kitchen door. Leo's cheeks burned, and before he could think, he blurted, "Rosa did it!"

Rosa's eyes got wide. She didn't yell, but her face looked like a wilted leaf. Grandma didn't scold. She simply walked to the Truth Tree. Its leaves, usually shiny, had curled at the edges like they were thirsty.

Grandma sat with them on the warm steppingstones. "Let's do the first thing our

family does when our hearts get tangled," she said. "We pray."

They bowed their heads. Grandma prayed slowly, "Jesus, you love truth. Help our hearts match our words. Help us choose *love* before we choose *easy*."

Leo swallowed hard. In the quiet, the Almost-Okay Vines seemed louder. "It's too late," they whispered. "Don't admit it."

Leo squeezed his hands. "Jesus, help me," he whispered, then took a breath. "Grandma... I did it. I blamed Rosa because I was scared."

Grandma nodded, and Rosa exhaled like she'd been holding her breath. "Thank you for telling the truth," she said.

The next morning, a new green sprout appeared at the base of the Truth Tree. Grandma smiled. "That's what Jesus meant," she told them while they watered. "Doing good isn't only about looking good on the outside. It starts inside. Prayer helps our inside grow strong."

That week, they practiced "pause-prayer." Before speaking, they stopped, whispered, "Jesus, guide my words," and then spoke simply: *yes, no, I'm sorry, I can help*. The garden grew because the weeds vanished, and more because Leo and Rosa learned how to pull them out early, with prayer.

*Growing in Prayer with Jesus Series; Inspired by Matthew 5:20–22a, 27–28, 33–34a, 37 – The Heart of the Law.*



**The Institute for Catholic Formation**

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