

What are some ways that Christians can help those who have less?

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the students should be able to

- explain that Christ calls all Christians to help those who have less.
- identify the ways some Christians devote their lives to caring for people who have less.
- state that the role of the deacon is to help with the ministry of service and assist at liturgical services.

For the Catechist

Concern for the human needs of others is a characteristic of the Church. Some Christians have helped on a one-to-one basis while others have contributed to establish hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged or destitute and similar agencies throughout the history of the Church. Many bishops and even patriarchs were chosen from among the directors of its charitable institutions. Saint Andrew of Crete, for example, was a deacon in charge of an orphanage near Constantinople when he was chosen as Archbishop of Crete. It was common for Byzantine preachers to point out that the Son of God became man in His love for all of us. Our Church Fathers tell us that by exercising love for persons on our own level, we imitate God's love and are divinized in turn.

The theme for this lesson is taken from the following Scripture: "If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth" (I John 3:17-18). Jesus tells us if we are able to help, we must if we call ourselves Christian. That is the emphasis for this lesson—one way our love of God can be lived out is through our love and service to each other, the foundation for the Church's charitable works.

Materials Needed

Opening and Closing Prayers: Prayer in student book

Review: Note cards from last lessons

Introduction: Paper for each group and pencils

The Message: New Testament, poster board, construction paper, pens, markers, glue

Application: Pens and pencils, note cards

Icons and Pictures

Icon Packet II: The Good Samaritan

Connections

1. Opening Prayer (2 minutes)

Have the students gather before the icon and stand silently for a few seconds. Then make the sign of the cross. Continue with the prayer for those in need—in the student book, page 85.

2. Review (*Church Leaders*) (2 minute)

Use the note cards from the last lesson. Place the cards with the definitions facing up. Tell the students to stand by one of the cards that they know the answer. When you go by the card, tell them to say the answer. Tell them they may check with each other before you get there.

3. Introduction (5 minutes)

Materials: paper and pencils.

Write the word *disaster* on the board or on a paper. Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask the students to write a situation that would create a disaster for the town or city in which you live. Pass the paper to someone else in class, and that person lists two problems that would be the result. Pass the paper to another person and tell the students to list two things they would hope they would have with them if this disaster did occur. Pass the paper to another person, and take turns reading the answers aloud.

Ask the following:

- *Are you surprised by the answers?*
- *Which answer do you wish you would have said?*
- *If we were in this situation for real, do you think we would remember to take what we think is most important? Why or why not?*

Help the students realize that a disaster could cause us to lose everything we have in a very short time.

Connect this idea to the fact that some people have much less than we do. We need to help by sharing our time, money, and talent—just as we would want help if something happened to us.

Notes for the lesson:

(Use this space to write helpful hints to use each year)

5. Deacons

(3 minutes)

a) Have the students read this section. If the question arises, share with them the information about women deacons included in the Background Information on this page.

b) If there is a deacon in the parish, ask the students to tell what they see the deacon doing in their church.

Supplemental activity:

Ask the students to write a thank you note to the deacon of their church—if there is a deacon. Thank him for helping those who need help and for helping your priest with some of the liturgical services.

Background Reading:

(Women deacons)

"As the epistle notes, the early Church also had women deacons. By the fourth century this order was dying out in the West, but was preserved in the East. As the eighth-century Byzantine prayer for the ordination of a deaconess affirmed, the Lord ' . . . bestowed grace and the coming of Your Holy Spirit not to men alone but also to women.' They assisted in the baptism of women and children, maintained the women's section of the church and served in orphanages. In a society which would not permit women private access to men outside their own family, deaconesses doubtless exercised an important role of pastoral ministry in homes as well, such as visiting the sick. With the decline in adult baptisms, the need for women deacons lessened and the order seems to have died out in the Eastern Churches during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Nuns and priests' wives assumed many of the deaconess' responsibilities" (ID 113).

6. Blessed are they...

(3 minutes)

This unit includes stories about people from the 20th and 21 st centuries to help the children realize that people are living the way Jesus taught them in the Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" is the theme for this week's lesson.

a) Read the story as a group or silently. Also, consider reading the story to the students as they follow—children are never too old to listen to a good story.

b) Ask: *Do any of you boys think you would want to become a deacon some day? Why or why not?*

Deacons
In the Acts of the Apostles, we read how the early Christians combined all their money and goods and took care of each other. Eventually, the Apostles, who were busy preaching, needed help to give out what was necessary for everyone to live. We read that they chose assistants who came to be known as deacons. In the early Church the office of deacon was established to encourage and direct the local parish's charitable works. Saint Stephen, the first martyr, was also one of the first deacons.

In our Church today we have deacons who are the ministers of service in the church community. Also, they assist the priest at liturgical services.

Through the Holy Spirit, the Church has been given special ministries in which people show their love for Him by devoting their lives to caring for people in need. There are communities in the Church of religious brothers, sisters, and laypeople devoted to caring for the sick, the elderly or children without families. They give everything for the service of others.

Blessed are they . . .
"I have been in prison for eighteen years, and I haven't done anything wrong!"

This is how Deacon George Yany jokes about his work visiting inmates in Rhode Island jails and prisons. Since he retired from business eighteen years ago, Deacon George devotes his time to working with prisoners and youth, both in the community and in the Church.

Deacon George is also the director of NAMY, the National Association of Melkite Youth, the Eparchy of Newton's teen ministry program. He organizes retreats for teens and an annual Youth convention for his Church.

Deacon George is also active in his parish, St. Basil the Great in Lincoln, Rhode Island. He directs the religious education program there, supervising the activities of over 160 students. He also assists the priest at the Divine Liturgy and other services of the parish.

Before he retired, Deacon George would put in a regular work day and serve as deacon in his free time. He would visit the sick of the parish regularly and take part in other activities. Now that he is retired, Deacon George says he spends as much time as he can ministering to God's people.

"Where do I find the time and energy?" he asks. "I don't know, but God seems to give me the time and strength when I need it. He gave me an understanding wife who shares my ministry, and He gave me people to serve. What more can I ask for?"

From the Beatitudes
*Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall be shown mercy.*

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7. We Are All Called to Serve (2 minutes)

a) Read this section aloud and ask the students if they know about charitable activities in the parish. Be prepared to tell them what is done in your parish to help those in need.

b) For the "How could you, your class or ..." section, have the children brainstorm for ideas. Some charitable programs encourage children to observe and/or participate in age-appropriate activities such as walkathons for charity or prayer vigils and memorials for those who have suffered. Some nursing homes welcome children visitors to read to patients or show their pets. Organize a group to do so, if possible.

8. Prayer for Those in Need (2 minutes)

This prayer will be used for the opening and closing prayer for this lesson, and it can be read again at this time.

Supplementary Activity:

Have the students look up the "Social Service" listing in the Yellow Pages. List the area agencies that help those in need. Have each student call one of these agencies and inquire as to how it helps. Next week have them share the information.

9. "Let us remember that..." (2 minutes)

(This section is on page 87.) Let the children read this section silently. Have the students turn to Matthew 25:35-40 to reread the scriptural passage.

Supplementary Activity:

Have the students make a note card for these words to be used for review.

Suggested Family

Activity: Encourage the children to tell their family about ways that they as a family can help other people.

Background Reading (Other Ministries)

"Within either life-style, all are called to various forms of 'ministry,' ways in which we serve the community of the Church and the world. The Church is 'made up of interdependent ministries. We all serve one another, thus building up the Body of Christ. Some are 'gifts,' charisms given by the Spirit to a person for the good of others. They include time, talents and treasures entrusted to us by God to be used in service to others" (LLIII 25).

"By virtue of their monastic calling, religious have a special mandate for evangelization and catechesis. Many orders and congregations in our Church have a special charism for service to the Word of God and for education in the faith by their living example.

"It is precisely those who are consecrated to God who are to witness by their lives, even among non-Christians, to the presence of a Christ who is pure, poor, obedient, and dedicated to prayer and mission" (UCD 53).

We Are All Called to Serve
Every Christian is called to help those in need as best as he or she can. We can all give something of our time, energy, or belongings to those who have less.

There are many ways that we can help other people. Not everyone has enough food or clothing. This is why many churches collect food and clothing for the needy. Some churches have pantries where people can get canned goods or clothing they could not afford. Other churches serve cooked meals to the homeless.

There are elderly or disabled people who can no longer make their own meals. Volunteers in programs like "Meals on Wheels" prepare and deliver hot meals or groceries every day to the homes of those who need them. One senior citizen, receiving these daily deliveries, said, "I spent my whole life cooking for other people. I am so happy that someone is remembering to cook for me."

Some churches run after-school programs. Church members volunteer to help school children with their homework or tutor them in subjects where they need extra help. Other people volunteer to run recreation programs so that young people will have something good to do in their free time.

High school students often volunteer in hospitals and nursing homes. They may distribute mail or deliver flowers, leaving the nurses free to care for the sick.

Prayer for Those in Need
Remember all your people, O Lord our God: keep all marriages in peace and harmony; nourish the infants, instruct the young people and console the elderly, comfort the distressed, and bring home the scattered. Free those disturbed in spirit. Guide the travelers. Defend the widows. Shield the orphans. Preserve the prisoners. Heal the sick. Remember those facing trial, those in exile, and those troubled in any way. And remember all of us, O Lord, our God—You who have given us everything we have.
From the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil

We can all help others, but many times we do not notice other people's needs. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you answer the following questions:

How could you, your class, or your family help . . .

- a lonely person in your neighborhood? _____
- a hungry person? _____
- a family whose children need clothing? _____
- parents who cannot afford to buy Christmas gifts for their children? _____

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Application

10. Heroes of Eastern Christianity

(15 minutes)

This section includes stories about many courageous Christians. The student book has two of the stories, and the teacher's manual has other stories. Photocopy the additional stories if you need them.

The information from these pages will be used for the "Action Plan" page. Also, the details can be used to create a presentation to be shown at the end of the class or during a final project that is part of lesson 22.

First, have the students read one story. If there are enough students, have all the stories read by someone or by groups. The following are suggestions on ways to present the information:

1. Have the students present a summary of the details while another student displays the icon of the saint.
2. Have the students complete a biographical sketch of the saint and read that to the students.
3. Act out a short skit that shows one aspect of the saint's life.
4. Write a newspaper article that reports one story about the saint.
5. Write a television newscast story complete with details about the scenes and dialogue.
6. Have the students keep a journal of saints.

After they have read the information, let them write answers for the following in the journal (one student can write all the answers or it can be passed around the group for responses):

- For what do you think this saint would want to be remembered?
- What would you ask him or her if you had the chance? What do you think would be the answer?
- If you could join this saint for a few years, what part of his or her life would you pick? Why did you make that choice?

Optional Activities

Have the students read all the saints' information. Have them work in groups and write a script for a "Who Am I?" program. Present the program at the end of this lesson or the end of the unit.

or

List four facts about one saint and write them on a note card. Write the name of the saint on the other side. Complete cards for all the saints in this lesson. Collect these cards to be used as review for future lessons.

Heroes of Eastern Christianity

Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker
Jesus said, "When you give anything to someone, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." By this He meant to do it quietly and don't make a show of it before anyone. Saint Nicholas of Myra was one person who certainly took these words of Christ and followed them in whatever he did.

Nicholas was born about the year 275 in the city of Myra which is in modern-day Turkey. His uncle was the Bishop of Myra and he provided his nephew with a fine education. Eventually Nicholas became a priest and in time took his uncle's place as bishop.

One of the most famous stories told about Saint Nicholas shows his devotion to secret acts of charity. It is said that there was a man who was so poor that he decided to sell his three daughters into slavery. Nicholas heard about it and wanted to help the man. He did not want to do it publicly, so he came to the man's house one night and left a bag of money where the father would find it.

He did this discreetly, the gifts and his three daughters and got the

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Saint Nicholas

tried to show the great love he had for the people of his Church. He was a bishop close to his people and serves as a model and patron for today's hierarchs and priests.

Because of his famous generosity, Nicholas is the holiday gift-giver in many countries. In Europe he is called Saint Nicholas and is shown wearing bishop's vestments. The American version, Santa Claus, is also

Saint Samson the Hospitable
Samson lived in Constantinople during the fifth century. He was a physician who devoted his time to serving the city's poor. He was so devoted to these poor sick people that he turned his own home into a clinic where they could come for treatment free of charge. He was not content to simply offer his patients medical care; he also provided them with food and lodging when it was necessary. Samson's Christian spirit was so well known and respected that the patriarch ordained him a priest some years after he had practiced as a physician.

Although Samson worked chiefly with the poor, he was known and respected by the rich and powerful people as well. When the Byzantine Emperor became ill, Samson was one of the physicians called to treat him. He was the only one to do the emperor any good, and the emperor wanted to reward him. Samson said that the best reward the emperor could give would be to establish a new clinic where the poor could get the help they needed.

The emperor agreed and built the clinic. Then he put Samson in charge of it. Here Samson cared for the many poor and homeless people who came to the imperial

city in need of medical help. With the emperor's support, he was able to do for a great number what he had tried to do before with his own limited resources. Samson's free clinic became the largest in the Empire and served the people of Constantinople for 600 years.

Because Samson had first opened his own home to the needy poor, the people of Constantinople began calling him "The Hospitable."

His feast day is commemorated on June 27th.

Let us remember that . . .

Deacon is the first of the three ranks of the Mystery of Holy Orders. The word deacon means minister or servant, and the deacon's role is to minister to the needs of the Church. The deacon usually directs the Church's charitable works. He also ministers at the altar in the Divine Services.

Charity literally means love. We usually understand it to mean things done out of love for people who need our help. The most common works of charity are feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty, visiting the sick and imprisoned, sheltering the homeless, burying the dead (Matthew 25:35-40). These are also called Corporal or Physical Works of Mercy.

Often an organization dedicated to helping those in need may be called a charity. Thus people are encouraged to give to "their favorite charity."

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11. Action Plan

(15 minutes)

a) Have the students complete the section on shepherds and teachers. Remember that there are two additional pages of information about shepherds and teachers at the end of this lesson in this teacher's manual.

b) Use the remaining time to work on the final group project. Have the students get together in their groups and brainstorm about their project.

12. Summary

(4 minutes)

Have the students divide into groups of four. Reread the **Gospel of Matthew 25:35-40**.

Have the students write a list of the ways Jesus said He was served. Brainstorm on ways that we can help with each one.

Share the answers in class and consider planning a class project that could address one of the ways. Some suggestions are a clothing drive, a food drive, and/or visiting the ill of the parish.

13. Closing Prayer

(1 minute)

"O Lord, remember..."
(Prayer page)

Action Plan

Heroes of Eastern Christianity

Read the life story of one of the bishops, and complete the outline on this page. As you write the details about this courageous Christian, think about his choices that show us how to live our life for Jesus Christ.

_____, Shepherd and Teacher

A. He lived in the _____ century.

B. Three important facts about his life:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. Something he wrote or said: _____

D. This hierarch is best known for _____

Now work on the final project that will be presented at the end of this unit. Last week you decided on the person you want to present. This week brainstorm on what you can do for your presentation. At the bottom of this page is a list of possibilities. By the end of class, decide how you will present your information. Next week you will begin writing the words you will say and organizing the material you need for the project.

Some ideas that you might want to consider for your visual presentation about a bishop:

1. Make a drawing, icon, mosaic, or stained-glass window of the person.	5. Make a visual representation of something concerning his life, work, or death.
2. Draw a map of the place where he lived.	6. Make a model of some aspect of his life.
3. Make a title banner, which should include his name.	7. Write a poem, song, riddle, or news story about him.
4. Letter one or two of his sayings on colored paper.	8. Create a play that acts out some action from his life.

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Heroes of Eastern Christianity

(Part 2)

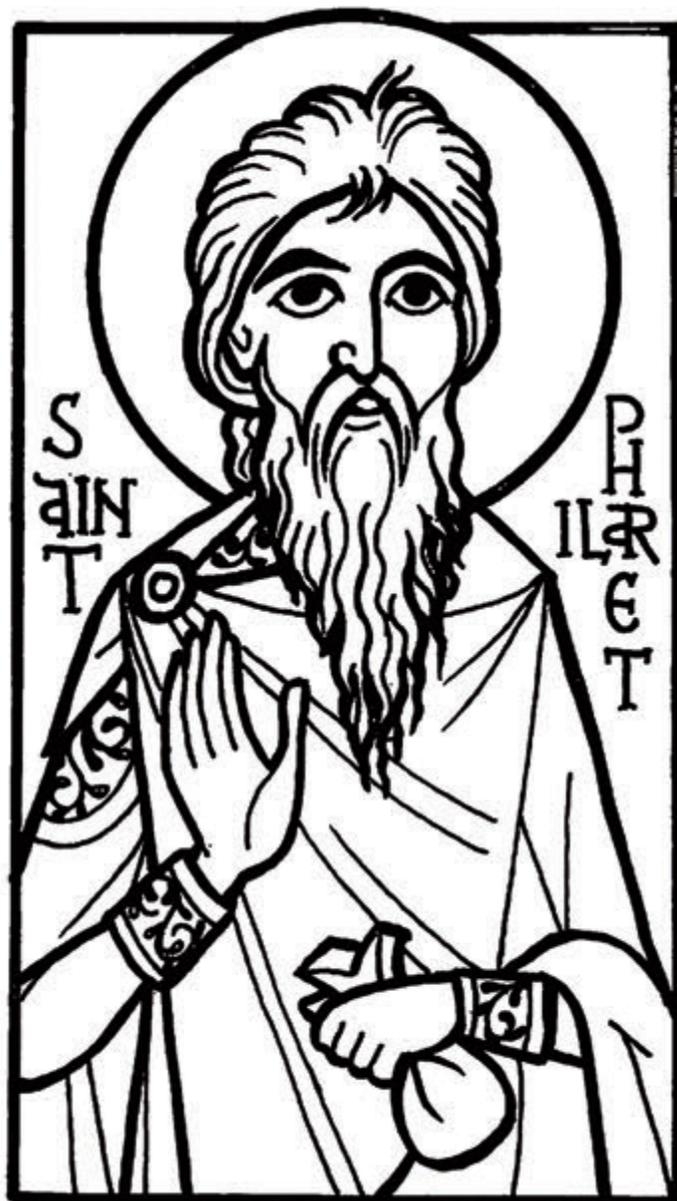
Saint Philaret the Almsgiver

While many people give their lives to works of charity by serving in hospitals or similar places of public service, others give of themselves and their goods in other ways. Saint Philaret was one of these people.

Philaret was a rich farmer living in what is today Turkey. He lived in the eighth century. He had a large estate with much land with rich crops and abundant livestock. But Philaret was different from most rich men. Every day he opened his house to the poor, feeding the hungry or giving clothes and shelter to those in need. Everyone in the Byzantine Empire seemed to know of Philaret's love for everyone because people came from near and far to receive of his generosity.

Philaret's wife and children became increasingly angry at him when they saw his wealth diminishing. They called him a fool for giving away his wealth; but Philaret told them to be calm. They had more than enough, he said, for God was with them.

Philaret's fortune was restored when one of his granddaughters married the emperor. The entire family was brought to Constantinople where they lived in luxury. Philaret was given a title, even though he objected. As a nobleman he was just as generous as before, and everyone was amazed at his unselfishness.



When Philaret was dying, he called all his relatives together to bid them goodbye, and he gave them this advice:

"You know my way of life very well, my most beloved children—how I shared what I had worked for. You remember the riches I had at first and the poverty which came to me from God. Again you see this final wealth which the Lord has sent me. Do as I have done if you want to be saved. Do not worry about riches: give everything to the poor. In that way you will be sending it ahead of you to that world and you will find it there when you come."

His feast day is celebrated on December 1st.

Heroes of Eastern Christianity

(Part 2)

Mother Theresa of Calcutta

Mother Teresa was born in 1910 to Albanian parents living in Yugoslavia, where her father was a shopkeeper. Throughout her youth she felt called to the religious life. At the age of 18 she entered a community of nuns. Her community sent her to India where she worked for years as a high school teacher and principal.

Then in 1946 she felt that she was being summoned by God to work for the poor in the slums of her city, Calcutta. She went out with less than two dollars and began collecting some of the many abandoned children so commonly found in slum areas of India. She took care of their health needs and taught them underneath a tree. It was not long before others began to gather around her to help and Mother Teresa founded a convent of her own, dedicated to the care of the poor.

Today there are over one thousand members in this community and they have houses wherever there are people in need. Following Mother Teresa's example, they beg for what they need: food, clothing, equipment. The sisters each have two dresses and a few other personal items—that is all. They live like the poor so that they might understand their plight.

Her first large-scale project was a home for the dying poor. One day Mother Teresa saw an old woman, bitten by rats and ants, dying in the street. She picked her up and took her to a hospital, but the hospital refused to take care of the woman. So Mother Teresa refused to leave the building until the dying woman was given care.



Then she went to the city officials and asked for a shelter where the poor could die in dignity. They offered her an unused building, and the next day she and some of the other sisters gathered up other sick people from the streets and moved them into the shelter. Since that day, over 3,000 people have been given care in this home.

Mother Teresa's community runs 60 schools, 54 leprosy treatment centers, 20 orphanages, 23 homes for the dying in 35 cities and towns in India and other countries: the Middle East, Vietnam, Africa, Bangladesh, and the United States. She had been honored by the Indian government, by the pope, and by countries all over the world. But Mother Teresa still owned nothing except her dresses, her sandals, a sweater, and a few other small items.

Mother Teresa believed we have much to learn from the poor people for whom she cared. *"I am anxious for people to know the greatness of the poor," she says. "I once went to a Hindu family which had been starving and brought them some rice. Before I knew it, the mother had divided it and given half to the Muslim family next door. She said, 'They are just as hungry as we are.' I believe we need the poor just as much as they need us. We are the better for being in contact with them."*

Mother Teresa died in 1999.