

Objectives

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

- identify the ways many people are suffering in the world.
- recognize that they can help make the world a better place for all people.
- accept their responsibility to defend those who need to be defended.

For the Catechist

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are related to each other. That means we should care about everyone the same way we care about our own family members. Just as we would defend a family member who needs help, we are to defend the weak. Jesus Christ expects us to be concerned about everyone's situation. Sometimes we find it hard to relate to people who need help because we think about our own wants rather than the needs of others. With God's help, we can learn to become more active Christians and to be more involved in defending the weak.

In the New Testament, we see Jesus walking with the people who need His help. He is our example as to how involved we must get. Many of us do feel actively involved because we make a yearly or possibly a monthly donation to a charitable organization—at least we are helping. But as Christians we are expected to do more. We are expected to become personally involved with individuals who need our help. We can do that by joining an outreach program that offers tutoring to the illiterate or by marching in the Right-to-Life March that is held in Washington, D.C. every January. One way to decide on how to get involved is to think about what would you want someone to do for you if you were in that situation. That is what is expected of us as Christians.

This is the first lesson on social justice that is included in the *God With Us* series, but this is not the first time the children have heard that they need to be concerned about others. The first time they heard the New Commandment, "love one another" (John 13:34), they learned that God expects us to take care of each other. This lesson teaches the students some ways people are showing their love by defending the weak.

Materials Needed

Opening and Closing Prayers: The Lord's Prayer

Introduction: Large cardboard box

The Message: New Testament, pencils or pens, note cards

Application: Construction paper, pencils or pens, and any other materials for projects.

Icons and Pictures

Come Bless the Lord: Christ the Teacher

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. Pray the Lord's Prayer.

2. Review (*Elders*) (2 minutes)

Ask: *Define the following:*

- *discernment* (senses the truth and needs and wants of people)
- *spiritual guide* (able to guide people in their spiritual life)
- *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (helps which the Spirit gives to believers to help them live a Christian life)

[If the class did the mobile on the gifts, review the information on the poster.]

3. Introduction (4 minutes)

Tell the students who are wearing blue or who have blue eyes to sit in the back of the room. Do not answer any questions as to why. Just tell them because they are wearing blue.

Write the words GOD WITH US vertically on the board.

G
O
D . . . and so on

Ask the students to help you make a poem by writing words or phrases next to the letters. Tell them this can be called an acrostic poem. **Do not call on anyone who was wearing blue—even if they raise their hands.** After you complete the poem, ask if they were upset that you ignored one group of students. Let them share their reactions. Ask:

Did any of you want to help them? Invite the students in the back to join the group for the rest of the lesson.

Connect this activity to the concept that some people are forgotten in our society. Turn to the lesson that begins with a discussion of our respect for all creation.

Notes for the lesson:

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

Possible poem: Going to church
Often even on holy
Days
Will help
In our saying
The prayers
Honoring God and in our
Understanding of
Salvation.

Alternate: Have a big cardboard box in the room. Tell the children this is their new home. Ask: How would you fix it? Remind the students that some people do call a cardboard box their home.

The Message

4. Problems (4 minutes)

- a) Have the students read the first paragraph.
- b) Ask for students to share their answers about bullies. Do not pass judgment on their honest answers, but do encourage them to offer help.
- c) Have the students read the next paragraph.
Ask: *What does the word prejudice mean?* (Judging someone based on what you heard or think rather than what is true)
- d) Ask the students to read together aloud the list of disadvantaged people. Ask: *Are you surprised by any of the categories we read? Did you think about people without an education being disadvantaged?*

Supplementary Activity:

Write the question for this lesson on the board or on a poster board:
What are some ways we can defend the weak? Write the following answers when they are read in the text:

1. Help at centers or places where people are trying to improve their situation.
2. Pray for all people to be treated fairly.
3. Share what we have—our money, goods, and time.
4. Work for peace.

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Those Who Defend the Weak

How can we defend the weak?



Problems
Have you ever seen anyone at your school or in your neighborhood bullying someone else? Bullies always seem to find people who are weaker than they are and take advantage of them. If a person is physically weak, not very smart, dresses differently or can't speak English well, someone will make fun of them, try to hurt them or cheat them. What would you do if someone was bullying one of your friends?

There are always people who will take advantage of those who are different. They may believe that different people are really not as good as they are. Some people think that one race or nationality is better than

another. They are prejudiced against other races or people from other countries. Others are simply greedy. They want to make money at the expense of the weak. They make others slaves or pay them much less than they deserve for long hours of work.

Who are the disadvantaged people in our world? There are many—

- **Children**, especially the unborn. They are helpless before such evils as child abuse or abortion.
- **The poor**, such as the homeless.
- **The severely disabled** and the mentally ill.
- **People without education**. They have no skills to earn a decent living.

We Are God's People Grade 5 Unit 3: Many Gifts, One Giver 113

Background Reading:

(Our Neighbor)

[The following is taken from the 19th century Russian tale, *The Pilgrim Continues His Way*. After the pilgrim confesses his sins, the priest goes on to explain that the trivialities said in confession did not address the root causes of sin—one of which is that we do not love our neighbor. An abridged version of the priest's answer follows:]

"I do not love my neighbor. Not only because I am not ready to lay down my life for the good of my neighbor, according to the Gospel, but I will not even sacrifice my peace and happiness for his good... If I loved my neighbor as myself, as the Gospel commands, then his misfortune would grieve me also and his prosperity would bring me great joy. But on the contrary, I listen with curiosity to accounts of my neighbor's misfortunes and... I seem to find satisfaction in them... My neighbor's welfare, honor and happiness do not delight me as my own; I am either completely indifferent to them or I am jealous or envious" (LLIII 92-93).

4. Problems (continued)

(5 minutes)

a) Read the first paragraph and the Scripture. Ask for two volunteers to read the Scripture: one person reads the narration and the other reads the dialogue.

b) Allow the students time to answer the questions in their books before you discuss the answers.

Supplemental Activity:

Arrange the students in two groups. One group acts out the parable the way it is written. The other group acts out what Jesus expects us to do. (The same scene two ways)

5. Ways to Help

(5 minutes)

a) Continue the reading of the next paragraph. Ask the students to list on the board or on paper the different ways that people can help. (Teach reading and writing skills, be nice to new people, become friends with people who are alone)

b) Continue the rest of the reading aloud.

Supplemental Activity:

Arrange to have the students volunteer in a soup kitchen for a few hours. Invite the parents to join you.

c) Read the last paragraph aloud again. Organize the students in groups and let them answer the questions. Tell each group to think of a situation in school or somewhere else that would require them to help someone or some group. Allow time to share these situations with the class.

Supplemental Activity:

Organize a clothing drive or collect school items to send to children in another country. Check with your priest about places to which you can send the items. Remember that you will have to collect money for the mailing costs.

Background Reading:

(An Active Role in the Church)

"As persons grow in their appreciation of the Church's life, they generally seek a more active role in it... participating in food drives or fund-raising activities for worthy courses. This may develop into an interest in full-time ministry in the Church. For true growth to occur, however, their perception must develop from seeing service as a succession of tasks to be performed in the best way possible to a realization of our call to be the stewards, priests, and prophets of creation. We come to see that our interests, abilities and talents are not the fruit of our own self-development, but are gifts of God given to the entire Community through us and that we must render accounts to Him for what we do with His gifts" (ID 82).



It is always easy to take advantage of people who are powerless. Jesus told a parable about someone who took advantage of another. Read the story in **Matthew 18: 23-35**. How did the king treat the first servant?

He forgave the loan.

What did that man do to his fellow-servant?

He put him in prison.

What did the other servants do about it?

They reported everything to their master.

Ways to Help
There may be people who take advantage of others but there are also people who devote themselves to defending the weakest. They may combat prejudice or honor the memory of those who suffered in the past. They may help the poor find homes or develop skills. They may help people learn to speak English and learn the ways of our country. They may work to get new laws passed to protect people from the greedy.

Sometimes whole countries may become oppressors of other countries or nationalities. We know that in the last century there have been massacres of Armenians, Ukrainians and Jews. People have learned to hate those of other nationalities and sometimes war is the result.

Every day there are newspaper and television stories about people who have been affected by war. Some people, who have to leave their home in a hurry before it is destroyed, leave everything they own and walk for miles just to stay alive.

If your friends are fighting, you would try to help them make up. In the world, too, there are people who try to bring enemies together to make peace. They work for peace among peoples and countries. That is not easy, but it is the work of God.

Are you the kind of person who will bully others? Or will you stand by and do nothing? Or will you respect and defend those who are being oppressed? Remember Jesus' words, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

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6. Blessed are they...

(8 minutes)

This unit includes stories about people from the 20th and 21st centuries to help the children realize that people are living the way Jesus taught them in the Sermon on the Mount.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" 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 the following:

- *What do you think would be the most difficult part of helping the homeless as Trevor did? (Keeping safe, talking to people I do not know, not getting discouraged)*
- *Why is it important to recognize the traditions of other people? (We are telling them that we think they are important.)*

Blessed are they . . .

Can students in a school like yours defend the weak?

Here are some stories about young people who do the following:

Help the homeless—One cold December night in 1983, eleven-year-old Trevor Ferrell saw a television newscast about people living on the streets in Philadelphia. Trevor pleaded with his parents to take him downtown to see for himself. He gave his own pillow and blanket to the first homeless person he saw.

Trevor and his family began taking food and clothing to the homeless every week. Before long, others from their church started to help. Reporters heard about Trevor and soon people from all over the area wanted to get involved.

The next year a building was donated to help house the homeless. They named it "Trevor's Place." In 1991 another residence called "Trevor's Next Door" was opened. In the years that followed a program called "Trevor's Campaign for the Homeless" became an important help to hundreds of homeless in Philadelphia.

Over twenty years later, Trevor—now married with two children of his own—is still helping those in need. He runs a thrift shop where some of his customers have told Trevor that twenty years ago he fed them when they were homeless.



Work for Peace—There are not many Christians in Pakistan. Many of them have been persecuted and their churches destroyed. In Lahore's Saint Lawrence Grammar School, though, children are learning to respect each other's beliefs and work for peace.

Every year Muslims observe a month-long period of fasting called Ramadan, which prepares for an important feast day in their religion. In 2003 the Christian students at Saint Lawrence decided to host a special festive celebration for the Muslim students on this feast.

This year the Muslim students decided to do something similar. They agreed to share the Christian's Lenten fast for one day to show their respect for their classmates' faith. One of the Muslim students, Azam Khan, spoke at an assembly that day: "Our dream is to send a message of peace and reconciliation to all people." Another student, Tariq Faiza, representing the Christian students, said that they wanted to keep working side-by-side with the Muslims in a spirit of mutual respect. The story of their action was aired on television and heard all over the world.

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Application

8. Heroes of Eastern Christianity (15 minutes)

This section includes stories about many courageous Christians. For this lesson, the student book has two stories, and there are no additional ones in the teacher's manual.

The information from these pages may be used for the "Action Plan" page. Also, the details may 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 or the picture of the person.
2. Have the students complete a biographical sketch about Blessed New-martyr Emilian Kovch or about Father Chacour and read that to the students.
3. Act out a short skit that shows one aspect of the person's life.
4. Write a newspaper article that reports one story one of the stories.

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?

[See page 222 for a worksheet that can be used for the journal. Students may want to include Father Chacour in their journal even though he is not a saint. Adapt the questions accordingly.]

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.



8. Action Plan

(10 minutes)

Materials: Pens, markers, paint and brushes, poster board, construction paper, and any other materials that the students have told you that they need.

For this lesson, the students are completing their project for the final presentation in Lesson 22. Encourage them to write an interesting beginning for the project—help them avoid just reading a report.

9. Summary

(3 minutes)

Materials: Construction paper, markers and pens

Have the students work in groups. Give each group construction paper. On the top write: **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."**

Have each group go back to the lesson and make a list of ways people can bring peace into the world for individual, for groups, and for countries.

11. Closing Prayer

(2 minutes)

Pray the Lord's Prayer

Supplemental Activity

At the end of this lesson is an invitation that could be used to invite parents and family members to the presentation in Lesson 22. Send it home with the students or have the students address an envelope to their parents and mail the invitation.

Action Plan

Heroes of Eastern Christianity

Read the life story of one of these courageous Christians who defend the weak. As you work in groups to find the details to complete this page, think about the choices he made and the way his life reflects the life of Jesus Christ.

_____, Defender of the Weak

A. He lived in the _____ century.

B. Three important facts about his life:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. Something he said that impressed you: _____

D. This defender is best known for _____

Complete the write-up for your final project that will be presented in Lesson 22. Think of a way to start your description of your hero so that everyone will want to listen to your details and look at your project. Remember—your project will help many people realize how courageous these heroes of the Church really were!

The following are some suggestions to help you get started:

1. Have the birth and/or death dates written on the board. Remind everyone how long ago that was.
2. Include some details and one story from the information on your courageous Christian. You do not have enough time to say everything so include what you think is interesting.
3. Write a brief description of your project on the lines below. Include a brief outline that shows the order for your details.

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**Please Join Us—
Meet the Heroes of Eastern Christianity**

Who:

When:

Where:

Why: To hear the stories and see the presentations about the courageous heroes of Eastern Christianity!

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