

LESSON 31: We Are All Connected

AIM

To help children recognize the presence of God in others, especially those who are close to them. (3.2.5)

OUTCOME

Learners appreciate and fosters ways of relating to God and others.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 Draw the children's attention to **the shape of a bicycle wheel**. Point out how the spokes start off some distance from each other, but all come closer and closer as they converge on the hub of the wheel. This graphically shows our connection with each other



and with our Creator. The hub of the wheel represents God. We are the spokes. The closer we get to God, the closer we get to one another. This works the other way round too, because as we get closer to one another, we get closer to God. When we are feeling really loving towards someone, we are kind, generous and thoughtful. When we are uncaring or angry and hateful toward someone, we put ourselves farther away from an awareness of God. We can see (point to the rim of the wheel) that the farther we are from one another, the farther we are from showing an

awareness of God's qualities in others.

Ask children for examples of how people separate themselves from one another, such as blaming, name-calling or not being honest. Explain that this is why forgiveness is such an important step in healing our relationships. Such feeling separate us from others and thus from God, who is total, unconditional love.

- 2 The **sun** is a very powerful and effective symbol. It is the source of life. We do not have to touch it to be able to feel and see its presence. Just like the wheel, the rays of the sun converge, as they are closer to its source. Draw a large warmly coloured sun on the board. Write God in the centre. Draw the rays and place people figures along them. Explain that this is how we know or feel God's presence in our lives: we feel it through other people, just as we experience the light and warmth of the sun through its rays. We can recognize and appreciate God's love for us through the gifts that we experience in other people. This is what draws us closer to God. Conversely, the more we become aware of these gifts, the closer we will feel to God and other people.
- 3 Ask the children to draw a sun as you did in LEARNING ACTIVITY 2 and to name the rays after people in their lives. Ask them to list around their sun the ways in which they experience the warmth of **God's love through other people** in their lives. Start with examples like harmony, happiness, laughter, peace, order, trust, belief, kindness, forgiveness.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bicycle wheel or illustration thereof (1)
- * Sun drawing (2)
- * Some beads and a piece of thread for each child (4)
- * Bible (6)
- * Story of St Martin of Tours (6) ⇨
- * Story: *Jan the Orphan* GRADE 2 LESSON 10 (8) ⇨

- 4 We are all connected:** Give each child a piece of string. Tell them that this string represents God. Have the children choose (or make from papier mâché) beads to represent the different people in their lives, for example parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, and friends. Each bead or button should have a different look and feel, just as each person does. But explain that it is important to look beyond the bead's colour and shape or beyond people's different appearances and personalities and to know that way inside, at the centre or core of us, we are all the same. The core is perfect and is the most important part of us. If we look at people as if they are like the beads of different colours and shapes, we can feel very different and separate from others. But if we remember that the cord of God's Spirit connects us all, we can feel close to others. We can choose to look for the centre of perfection in people, rather than just looking at the outside person.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 5 Strength Bombardment:** It is important that each child gets a turn, so with a big class it may be wise to continue the activity over a period of time, or divide the class into groups. One person is singled out and each member of the class tells one strength of this person. Somebody may write down the strengths and give it to the person at the end. Move on to the next person until every member of the class has been "bombarded" with his/her strengths.
- 6 When did we see you?** Jesus tells us that when we are of service to others, we are actually serving him [Matthew 25:37]. The story of St Martin of Tours (feast day - 11 November) illustrates this dramatically. When Martin, at eighteen, was stationed at Amiens in France as a soldier, he was making his rounds one cold winter evening. He saw a poor, naked beggar. Having nothing with him but his cloak, he cut it in two, wrapping half around the frozen beggar. That night in a dream, Martin saw that it was Christ whom he had clothed.
- 7 God's presence for others:** A Christian is called to be, as Jesus was, God's presence for others. At Christmastime we celebrate the event of God coming to be with us as a human being. In the person of Jesus God's presence became visible.
- 8 Jan the Orphan:** This touching Christmas story tells a similar tale to the one about St Martin. You can find it in the worksheet for GRADE 2 LESSON 10. ⇨

LESSON 32: Connected to the Source

AIM

To help children understand the idea of devotion – to God in particular, and to Mary and the saints. (4.1.5, 4.1.8)

OUTCOME

Learners understand what it means to be devoted to someone else.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **Affection and Fun:** Talk about the importance of these two experiences. This is how we communicate best with our pets. Elaborate on how dogs become absolutely devoted in return for a little of our affection. Encourage children to tell what their pets like best: a tummy tickle? ear scratching? a biscuit? Talk about how playing with our pets creates a very strong bond with them. Compare this to games played with loved family members. Fun and affection help us to make strong, warm connections of love and care.
- 2 **Belonging to a Family:** Talk about different kinds of family. Some families may have two members while others may have many members. Often people who belong to the same family live together. They share with each other and they help each other. Sometimes members of a family live far away from each other, but they keep in touch by visits, phone, E mail or letters. Families share happy times, such as birthdays, weddings, graduations and baptisms. They also share sad times such as sickness and death. Point out that we are sad when family members die. We are sad because they are not with us anymore. We are sad because we cannot share everyday experiences with them. But the memory of these people is kept alive by those who love them. People who have died are still part of our family.
- 3 **Keeping connected to the Source:** Point to the outlet where the lamp is plugged in. The outlet is the source of the power that lights up the lamp. The cord is the connection to the source, but the cord will not help the lamp light up unless we switch the lamp on. That is our choice.

Similarly, God will not be able to light up our lives unless we remain plugged in and switched on. We need to be devoted to God, not just plugged in now and again, but continually. Demonstrate initially with a 60-watt globe. This will give a weaker reflection of God's energy. If we want to be a really powerful light in our world, we need to get rid of anything which makes it difficult for God's light to shine in us - resentment, jealousy, envy, and so on. Spending time with God, being devoted to God and the Kingdom, we are transformed into a more powerful lamp. Demonstrate with a 100-watt globe. Go back to the plug in the outlet. Remind them that they are always connected to God, the source, but they have the choice (the switch) as to how much of God's love they allow in. (If you don't have a lamp, draw a picture or use a poster.)

- 4 **Belonging to God's Family:** Talk about the role of Mary in the Church. She was literally the God-bearer. Through her, Jesus the Son of God became human like ourselves. Mary



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Pictures of pet animals (1)
- * A small table lamp without the shade, an extension cord, a 60-watt and a 100-watt globe (2)
- * Drawing materials (5)
- * A loosely woven piece of fabric (6)
- * Lives of the saints (7)(8)
- * Bible (9)

was so filled with the power and energy of the Holy Spirit that she was able to say ‘Yes’ to God even when she did not clearly understand what God was asking.

There are many other God-bearers in church history, people who loyally devoted their energy to God in a consistent and active way. The church honours these men and women by canonizing them or naming them saints. A special day is often set aside to remember them in the church calendar. This is called a saint’s feast day and we remember them particularly in the celebration of Mass that day. We all need the help of others. So in the Catholic Church we pray to the saints and ask them to help us in our faith and in our devotion to God.

- 5 It is sometimes said that we are all saints – with a small s. Those people who have led such good lives that they have been canonized are the Saints with a capital S. **We are all God-bearers** for each other. We all carry the light of Christ within us. Ask the learners to draw a picture of the kind of light that they are in their world - to their family, their school, their friends, and their community. Ask: Are you a candle, giving a warm, comforting light against the darkness? Are you like a lantern, able to be carried around to spread the light? Are you one of the lamps that we demonstrated? Draw a picture of the kind of light that you are, naming the rays of light that you send to other people.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 **A piece of woven cloth:** You need a loosely woven piece of fabric about 10cm square or larger. One edge should be hemmed and the opposite end frayed or unravelled a bit. The hem represents prayer, especially early Morning Prayer. The fabric is our day, and the unraveled edge of the fabric represents the troubles and mistakes that can occur in our day. The children can give examples of a day that is full of mishaps.
- 7 The children find out whether their name is the same as one of the saints. They write something about **‘my patron saint’**.
- 8 Instead of exploring patron saints, the children could research the stories of some **December saints**. December is the time of Advent in the Church.

December 3	St Francis Xavier
December 7	St Ambrose
December 8	Mary’s Immaculate Conception
December 13	St Lucy
December 26	St Stephen
December 27	St John the Apostle
- 9 Some useful **Bible references:** [Psalm 23]; [Matthew 5:1-12]; [Luke 1: 35-56].