

LESSON 11: Believing in God

AIM

To help the children reflect on the gift of faith (2.1.7, *10.1*)

OUTCOME

Learners understand what it means to have faith in God.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 Brainstorm the idea of **faith** as a human quality, asking the learners for one-word responses. Words likely to come up are: religion, belief, trust, confidence, reliance, surety, fidelity. Invite the learners in pairs to formulate a definition of faith. See below under **TO REMEMBER** ⇒

- 2 Can we see **faith in action** in everyday human life? Ask the learners to supply some examples from their own lives.

- 3 The **story of Tumelo** will illustrate.

There was once a little boy, called Tumelo, who lived in a block of flats. Tumelo often had to be alone at home after school. Both his parents worked and came home very late. One day while Tumelo was in his room doing his homework, the building caught fire. But Tumelo did not realise it until he heard the alarms of the fire brigade ringing outside the building. He had been so engrossed in his work that he had not even smelt the smoke!


He tried to go to the door but the handle was too hot for him to touch. He was trapped! He went to the window but could not see a thing because of the smoke. The firemen tried to call out to him to jump out of the window, but he refused. Fortunately, his father had just arrived from work, and he realised what was happening when he saw smoke pouring out of his own window. He called to Tumelo. Only when Tumelo heard his father's voice did he decide to jump. He knew that his father would not let him jump to his death.

(Source unknown)

- 4 **Discuss the story.** Tumelo was saved because he knew that his father was telling him the truth. He had faith in his father. He was not able to jump at the firemen's command because he was not sure that he could trust them. But his father's voice was reassuring to him even when he could not see him.
 - 5 **Faith in God:** Invite the learners now to apply the thoughts of the lesson to faith in God. We cannot have faith in a God we do not know. But God reaches out to us with the gift of faith which enables us to hear his word and to trust it. This gift enables us to live like God. God indeed is the Faithful One [Deuteronomy 7:9]. By faith, we trust in God and commit ourselves to God in response to his promises.
 - 6 **Theological virtues:** Faith is one of the three virtues that God gives us so that we can share in the divine life. The other two are hope and love.
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WHAT YOU NEED

- * Story of Tumelo (3) ⇒
- *  Nicene Creed (see LESSON 4) (7) ⇒
- * Bibles (8)(9)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 7 **Faith and belief:** Let the children revisit the Creed in LESSON 4. Because the Church has faith in the Word of God, it holds the beliefs expressed in the Creed to be true. ⇒
- 8 Many a good **story in the Bible** illustrates the quality of faith. For example, the story of Abraham and his willingness to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Abraham knew that Isaac was to be the one who would father a child to fulfill God's promise of a large nation, but he did not doubt or question the request he thought God was making of him. He trusted God and God remained faithful to him. [Genesis 22:1-14].
- 9 The learners could write a **personal creed**, or a personal version of Psalm 136, mentioning the things that God has done for them.

TO REMEMBER

Faith is the ability to trust and have confidence in another.

A belief is something we hold to be true because, without knowing it ourselves, we trust the one who has told us about it.

Virtues are the abilities we develop in order to live well and do good.

LESSON 12: Covenant

AIM

To give the learners an opportunity to reflect on the idea of a covenant relationship, and to encourage them to respond to God's invitation to live in such a relationship (2.2.9, 2.4.8)

OUTCOME

Learners understand and value the idea of a covenant.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 The learners should be familiar with the idea of a covenant. Challenge them to write a short **definition**. After sharing and time for clarifying the idea, you could offer a more technical definition given below. **TO REMEMBER** ⇒
- 2 Invite the learners to call to mind any times they have made a covenant-like **agreement with someone**, making a promise to another person as long as the other keeps their side of the agreement. An example would be: "I'll let you ride my bicycle if you share your chocolate with me."
- 3 The most significant covenant most people make in their lives is the taking of **vows at marriage**. Invite the learners to share any experience of weddings they have attended and to read the vows formula. ⇒
- 4 Read the **prayers of two saints**, Ignatius of Loyola and Thérèse of Lisieux, given below. Discuss how these prayers reflect a covenant of love between these saints and God. ⇒
- 5 Invite the learners to adapt the marriage vows formula to the wording of a **personal covenant** between themselves and God. Explain however that we cannot bargain with God, since this is not a covenant between equals. Our covenant should be a response to God's invitation therefore, and be based on the promises God has made to us. ⇒



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Definition of covenant (1)
⇒
- * Marriage vows (3) ⇒
- * Prayers (4) ⇒
- * Marriage vows (5) ⇒
- * Bibles (6)(7)
- * 🎵 *Like a Sunflower, Take My Hands* or *Here I Am, Lord* (8)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 The **story of Ruth** reflects a covenant of faithfulness between her and Naomi [Ruth 1].
- 7 Discuss how the Eucharist became the new covenant of the heart. Read Mark 14: 22-24. The **New Covenant** that Jesus established was to be the final covenant between God and humanity. This is celebrated at every Mass in the Christian world.
- 8 **Sing:** *Like a Sunflower, Take My Hands*; or *Here I Am, Lord*

TO REMEMBER

A covenant is a binding agreement between two people or groups, made and sealed with a special ceremony, which binds the people to keep their promises.

MATERIALS

MARRIAGE VOWS

I,, take you,, to be my wife.

I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health.

I will love you and honour you all the days of my life.

I,, take you,, to be my husband.

I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health.

I will love you and honour you all the days of my life.

PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS

O my God, I ask of you for myself and for those whom I hold dear the grace to fulfil perfectly your holy will, to accept for love of you the joys and sufferings of this passing life, so that we may one day be united in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

(Thérèse of Lisieux)

Lord, I freely yield all my freedom to you. Take my memory, my intellect, and my entire will. You have given me anything I am or have; I give it all back to you to stand under your will alone. Your love and your grace are enough for me; I shall ask for nothing more.

(Ignatius of Loyola)

(M Basil Pennington. *Pocket Book of Saints*. Doubleday Image Books. 1986)

LESSON 13: God's Will

AIM

To help learners understand what is meant when we speak of God's will and to develop trust in God. (3.2.8 3.2.9)

OUTCOME

Learners understand what it means to do God's will.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (3)(6) (10)(11)
- * *♫ Father I Place into Your Hands* (6)
- * Pieces of cloth to blindfold learners (9)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **I wish for you:** Ask learners to think about each one of the members of their family. To think of each one individually, their likes and dislikes, the kind of people they are, what their dreams, goals and desires are, and finally what they would like or hope for them to achieve in their lives: for example I wish that my brother/sister achieves his/her dream of becoming a teacher/doctor/artist. Explain that this deep desire we have for them is what we will for them, and this will is for them to be happy, successful, and loving.
- 2 **God's Will:** Ask learners to discuss what they think God's will is for us human beings. Give them time to discuss and jot down some of their answers on the board. Explain that God's will is that we become who we are made to be - God's loving children, who take care of one another and the world in which we live. Or we could say that God's will is that we tune our wills with hers. We see God as the loving parent, companion, and guide in our lives. We know that God loves us unconditionally; therefore we know that God's will for us is to be happy.
- 3 **Doing God's Will:** We realise that for us to achieve this happiness we need to do what is right and loving. Discuss the difference between being truly happy and the worldly meaning of happiness.

Jesus tells us that living the Kingdom of God is to do God's will here and now. People think that having money or lots of things will make one happy. Jesus taught that true happiness comes from doing the will of God. We do God's will when:

- we live the Beatitudes (the Be-happy attitudes);
 - we practice the virtues of Faith, Hope and Love;
 - we take care of the spiritual and physical needs of those around us (Works of Mercy);
 - we trust God, believing in the truth of his Word.
- 4 **Trust in God:** Throughout the New Testament we see how Jesus, time and time again, spoke of God's promises to us, that if we do what she asks we'll be greatly rewarded. Invite learners to read Luke 6: 32-38. This passage illustrates clearly what is said before. Believing in God's promises can be compared with the driver who lets in the clutch, and moves forward when the traffic light turns green, believing that the other lights have turned red, and that cross traffic will come to a halt: he acts in faith and hope.
 - 5 **Mother Teresa** left the security and comfort of her life in the convent to look after the poor and rejected. Although she was just one person and there were millions of poor people, she trusted in God's love and protection. She knew that with God at her side she could do anything. Soon after other women followed her example and joined her. They had no funds to provide for their needs, all they had was faith and trust that God would

provide - and she did, and always will. Today hundreds of women who trust God completely have dedicated their lives to doing Mother Teresa's work of loving and caring for the poor and destitute. Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Prize for her heroic work.

- 6 **People who placed their trust in God:** Divide the learners into groups. Ask the groups to make lists of people they know or have heard about who, like Mother Teresa trusted God. They write down the names, and alongside how the person showed his/her trust. Groups later share with the whole class.
- 7 **Listening to God:** Conclude the lesson by reading Luke 6:46-49 or Matthew 7:21-27. Invite learners to think of how we talk about our trust in God and how we prove it in our actions. Lead them in prayer asking God to strengthen their faith and trust in her. "Whatever is in the heart overflows into speech". In what ways is God asking for their trust in her today? End the prayer time reciting together the *Lord's Prayer* and singing: *Father I Place into Your Hands*.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 8 **Discovering Faith and Trust in God:** Invite learners to find out about other people like Mother Teresa who placed their trust in God in their lives.
- 9 **Learning to trust:** Explore ways in which little children and young people learn to trust their parents' and/or teachers' judgement. Play the 'blindfold game' where one learner is blindfolded and another guides him/her on a walk outside the classroom. The blindfolded one is meant to trust his/her guide completely, believing that the instructions given by the guide are good and true. Discuss how our trust in God can be compared with the situations above.
- 10 **Events in Scripture:** Invite the learners to explore one of the following scenes, drawing out the trust that was necessary for Mary or Jesus to allow God's will to lead in their lives.
 - The Annunciation to Mary [Luke 1:26-38]
 - Temptations of Jesus [Matthew 4:1-11]
 - Jesus' Agony in the Garden [Matthew 26:36-46]
- 11 **Proving Our Trust:** Some events in our lives are opportunities where our trust is put to the test. Invite learners to look for the following passages: [Matt 8:5-10, 13], [Matt 14: 22-33]. Discuss the readings. What happened to Peter's trust in God? and to the Centurion's faith? As soon as Peter doubted the power of God and relied only on himself he sank. So it is with us, we must trust that God is with us, that she will always help and guide us. We must live our faith in God every day of our lives, accepting God's will. Once we have done our best we have to leave the rest to God. That is how we place our trust in God.

LESSON 14: The Gift of Love


AIM

To help the children reflect on the gift of love, and the responsibility we have of sharing it with others and the whole creation (2.3.3)

OUTCOME




Learners understand what the gift of love requires of us.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **What is love?** Begin by asking the learners to complete the sentence, 'Love is...' in their workbooks. Allow a short time for sharing and discussion. Propose the description of love given under **TO REMEMBER**. ⇨
- 2 **A Perfect Example:** Read the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet at the Last Supper [John 13: 1-9]. Love means serving others - putting them first. Jesus did not ask us to love others without showing us first how to do it [1]John 4:7-12]. The washing of feet was symbol of the service he performed his whole life long in teaching and healing people.
- 3 Washing feet is a service we no longer practise. Invite the learners to mention the kinds of action we can perform for one another today in the same spirit of **humble service**.
- 4 Sing: *A New Commandment*
- 5 Show the children pictures or newspaper headlines that illustrate human neglect of **the natural environment**, allowing them to describe the feelings they experience. From their answers lead them to realise that an important dimension of loving others is taking care of our natural surroundings. In doing so we love God the Creator of all things who gives us the task of looking after our world [Genesis 1:28], we love our neighbours who are affected by the environment, we love all living beings who depend on the health of the environment, and we even love future generations yet unborn.
- 6 Introduce the learners to **St Francis of Assisi** who is well-known and loved for his attitude of friendship towards all living beings. Give a brief sketch of his life which is easily available in any book of saints.
- 7 Conclude the lesson by praying Francis' **Canticle of the Sun** which you will find on the worksheet.  ⇨



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (2)
- *  *A New Commandment* (4)
- * Pictures or headlines (5)
- * Life story of St. Francis of Assisi (6)
- *  Worksheet (7) ⇨
- * Symbols or costumes (8)
- * Newspaper clippings (9)
- *  One of the following: *Heal the World* (Michael Jackson), *Don't Kill the World* (Boney M), *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, *All Creatures of Our God and King*, *God is Love* (10)
- * Bibles (11)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 8 The Canticle of the Sun could form the basis of a **paraliturgy** or an assembly prayer. Learners bring symbols, objects, pictures or paintings to create a collage as the prayer

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progresses. Or some of the learners could dress up imaginatively to represent the sun, moon, wind, water, fire and earth.

- 9 Collect **newspaper clippings** for your class noticeboard that focus on good work done to help save the environment.
- 10 Teach the children a popular **song or hymn** about caring for the world to sing at assembly. Try one of these: *Heal the World* (Michael Jackson), *Don't Kill the World* (Boney M), *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, *All Creatures of Our God and King*, *God is Love*.
- 11 Read **St Paul's description** of love [1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 7].

TO REMEMBER

Love is the gift that enables us to treat ourselves, others, and all living beings as God does.

Canticle of the Sun

Divide the class or school into two alternating choirs, the first praying the sections marked ❶, followed by the second praying the sections marked ❷.

❶ O most high, almighty, good Lord God, to you belong praise, glory, honour, and all blessing!



❷ Praised be my Lord God through all creatures; and especially our brother the sun, who brings us the day, and who brings us the light;

❶ fair is he, and shining with a very great splendour: O Lord, to us he signifies you!



❷ Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon, and for the stars, which he has set clear and lovely in heaven.



❶ Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind, and for air and cloud, calms and all weather, by which you uphold in life all creatures.



❷ Praised be my Lord for our sister water, who is very serviceable unto us, and humble, and precious, and clean.



❶ Praised be my Lord for our brother fire, through whom you give us light in the darkness; and he is bright and pleasant, and very mighty, and strong.



❷ praised be my Lord for our mother the earth, which sustains us and keeps us, and brings forth many different fruits, and flowers of many colours, and grass.



❶ and ❷ Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon one another for his love's sake and who endure weakness and tribulation; blessed are they who peaceably shall endure, for you, O Most Highest, shall give them a crown!

(Adapted from *Saints and Feast Days*, Loyola University Press, 1985)

LESSON 15: Sainthood

AIM

To develop the idea of sanctity or sainthood as the fullness of being human, by referring to the stories of some significant canonised saints and other contemporary holy people. (2.4.8, 9.2)

OUTCOME

Learners value the lives of saints as a model for their own.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 Work out a suitable and understandable **definition of the word 'saint'**. A suggestion for a simple definition is given below. – The Oxford Dictionary gives: “holy, canonised or officially recognised by the Church as having won by exceptional holiness a high place in heaven and veneration on earth.”
- 2 The Oxford Dictionary definition refers more particularly to **canonised saints**. Explain what canonised means and how the process of canonisation sometimes takes many years to complete. – However, there are countless people who have lived close to God and merit the title 'saint'. For example, all children will probably have heard or read something about Mother Teresa or Martin Luther King. The point of sainthood is being a friend of God, and not necessarily being recognised as such.
- 3 Present each learner with a card on which is written the **name of a saint**, with the feast day where possible, and corresponding to his or her name. This of course will be relatively easy in the case of learners bearing the names of traditional Christian saints. For learners with African or other first names, try to match them with saints on the calendar that have their name when translated into English, or are known for a quality that the name expresses. Failing that, match the learner with a saint whose feast day falls on his/her birthday. Ask each to do some research. This may be possible in class, or else the learners will need a few days to consult libraries.

Instead of yourself matching learners with saints, you could hand out the cards to the class, and let them negotiate who researches which saint. Each learner fill in a worksheet entitled **Friend of God** and presents it for display. See MATERIALS below. Give the learners instructions to make such a worksheet or make your own for photocopying. ⇒
- 4 **Me, a Saint!** Point out to the children that the people mentioned above made conscious choices to make a difference in the world, even if this was not very big. Help them to understand that each human person is called to become a saint, that is, one who lives according to God's will, and in so doing become the full person God made him or her to be.

Invite the learners to identify things that they can do in their own world to make a difference. These things will be their offering at the paraliturgy suggested below in 6. They should be written down in the learners' workbooks.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Dictionaries (1)
- * Book of saints or daily missals (3)
- * Story of the school's patron (5)(6)
- * Book of saints or daily missals (7)
- * Story of Mother Teresa (8)
- ⇒
- * ♪ *Circle of Friends* or *When I Needed a Neighbour* (9)

- 5 To end off this lesson read the children the story of **the school's patron saint** very briefly from a children's book of saints. If the school does not have a patron, you could choose a saint who will interest the class and whose feast day is near in the future.
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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 Let the class prepare an **assembly or paraliturgy** on the life of the school's patron saint or any of the saints whose feast day is next on the calendar.
- 7 Give the children a mini-project to find out ten facts about **a saint of their choice** and find a picture where possible. This can be presented to the class.
- 8 Drops of Clear Water: Tell a story about Mother Teresa.

During one of her visits to Rome, various newspaper reporters gathered around Mother Teresa in the outer courtyard of her convent home on the Coelian Hill, and one of them said: "Mother, you are seventy: when you die the world will be exactly as it was before. What has changed after so much effort?"

Mother Teresa could have reacted with a touch of righteous indignation, but she merely gave one of her luminous smiles, as if they had kissed her affectionately, and replied: "You see, I have never tried to change the world! I have only tried to be a tiny drop of clear water in which God's love can shine. Do you think that is nothing?"

The reporter was speechless and Mother Teresa became the centre of an attentive, moving silence. She spoke to the reporter again, saying: "You, too, try to be a drop of clear water and then there will be two of us. Are you married?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Then tell your wife, too, and then there will be three of us. Have you any children?"

"I have three, Mother."

"Then tell them, too, and like that there will be six of us...."

- 9 **Sing:** *Circle of Friends* or *When I Needed a Neighbour*.

TO REMEMBER

A saint is a friend of God who tries with God's help to become fully human.

A canonised saint is one that the Church officially recognises as a friend of God and holds up to us as a model for our inspiration.

MATERIALS

FRIEND OF GOD

SAINTS NAME

FEASTDAY

A SHORT LIFE SKETCH

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.....
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.....

WHAT IMPRESSED ME ABOUT THIS SAINT

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.....

MY NAME