

MATERIALS FOR MISSION EDUCATION USING THE BOOKS:

Help for planning mission club meetings:

TITLE: TO ACT JUSTLY: INTRODUCING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING TO CHILDREN
For grades 2-6

This book is divided into four parts:

1) Exploring the Beatitudes:

- Each beatitude is defined so teachers can offer a clear explanation to children.
- Each beatitude is further explained with a story about a saint whose life exemplifies that beatitude. These stories include: Saints Katharine Drexel, Peter Claver, Zita, Nicholas, Bathildis, Joseph of Cupertino, Catherine of Siena, and Paul Miki.
- Activity suggestions follow which put the beatitude into the children's life experiences. These include doing research, creating timelines, discussing movies and books with characters who also exemplify a beatitude, illustrating, and speaking with family members about this subject.

2) Exploring the Wisdom of Vatican II teachings:

- Through fictional stories of modern day children in many parts of the world, this book helps students become more aware of the variety of life situations that their sisters and brothers experience. This awareness leads to viewing the self as part of the greater world.
- Sections of the Vatican II text, *The Church in the Modern World*, are paraphrased for children, and then further introducing them to these teachings within the framework of the stories.
- Together, these help students put the concepts of Catholic teachings into real circumstances.
- Several on-going projects build upon the children's growing understanding of their connectedness with others around the world.

3) Exploring the Principles of Catholic Social Teachings

- Seven stories of real people help explain these teachings. Each story focuses on a principle and people whose actions best show the principle. (Example: the principle calling for preferential treatment for the poor and vulnerable is portrayed through the story of Craig Kielburger, a young Canadian teen who started an organization to work on issues of child labor. Today, the international organization works on many issues involving vulnerable and poor children.)
- Discussion suggestions for the stories are included.

- Also included are lists of children's literature, at three different reading levels, which exemplify each principle.

4) Further Resources:

- This section is a wealth of organizations, websites, videos and books, and lending libraries that will assist in a search for project that fits your class' abilities and interests.

TITLE: TO LOVE TENDERLY: TEACHING COMPASSION AND JUSTICE THROUGH STORIES AND ACTIVITIES

For Ages Five through Nine
and

TITLE: TO WALK HUMBLY: STORIES AND ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING COMPASSION AND JUSTICE

For Ages Ten through Thirteen

Compassion and a desire for social justice are important traits of a missionary. These companion books give you the tools to help children develop both. Each has a section on using Catholic Social Teachings in conjunction with the stories.

In To Love Tenderly:

- Forty-four stories (twenty-two for grades k-1, twenty-two for grades 2-4), introduce your students to children around the world, their lives, homes, problems and joys. Written with sensitivity to young children's emotional responses, these stories nonetheless touch on the realities of poverty and injustice. Through the stories, children can identify with their peers and begin to recognize the challenges found by these peers.
- Through very short stories, the k-1 children will encounter Amos and Beatrice from Tanzania who experience drought and hunger, Roxana who plays along side her sister who washes clothing in a river in El Salvador, Priscilla and her grandmother celebrating a feast day in Brazil, Jozo enjoying life after a war has ended in Croatia, Ranya from India who rejoices after her surgery which corrected a cleft lip and palate and changed her life, Prembai, a child laborer in India who now attends school, a little boy excited that the communal television set is once more coming to his village in Mali, and others.
- The children in grades 2-4 will learn about Harun's prayer life in Canada, Dalki, a ten-year-old garment worker in Bangladesh, optimistic siblings in Rwanda building a new life for themselves, Anna's two-day walk to make a pilgrimage in Latvia, Noli's makeshift house in a shantytown in South Africa, neighbors helping neighbors in El Salvador after a severe earthquake, and Samuel, an enterprising American child living in poverty, learning skills to help himself and his family.

In To Walk Humbly:

- This book offers fifty-five stories of children around the world. While these are in greater length and depth for older students, they do not encourage despair but develop a desire for social change. Among the story topics are improving family life through Fair Trade coffee production in Nicaragua, the blessing of water in El Salvador, the ‘secret’ lives of child domestic servants, the good will and creativity of people after a tsunami, child slavery in the chocolate business, religious celebrations in Germany, the United States, Mexico, Kenya and Latvia, surviving war in Sudan and embargoes in Iraq, the caste system in Nepal, orphanage life in Ukraine, and finding contentment in simplicity in Guatemala and Morocco.

Learning and Teaching

- Both books feature a section on two issues that our Church calls us to address: hunger and child labor. Students will learn the causes, the situations, implications and ways to act to alleviate some of the suffering. As with the stories, the information is presented in ways that are respectful of the children’s ages, and yet challenging them to care and act in ways appropriate to their abilities.
- Once they have learned this, they become the teachers, helping others to learn about these issues through plentiful ideas and directions for plays, games, prayer, artwork, presentations, etc.

Ways to teach children through the stories:

Just reading the stories will:

- develop a sense of the world, a curiosity about the differences and similarities amongst God’s peoples—a tremendous start!
- help children reflect on their own lives, what they have, how they are blessed (family, education, food, medical care, etc.)
- show children that while others’ lives may be very different from theirs, those differences are often good too
- help children become aware of basic needs and what life is like when those are lacking.

After reading the stories:

- students can write and illustrate their own stories using the story characters and information about the circumstances of these characters

- they can create puppet shows using the stories to present to other children.

Use the stories to supplement other subjects:

- when reading the stories, use maps and globes to develop a sense of world geography
- explore the culture of another place including the problems that are the result of injustices.
- have students bring in current events news stories about the places they have read about in the stories
- current events can be tied in with violations of Catholic Social Teaching (war denies people their human dignity, their right to have basic needs met, etc.); discussions help students see how Church teachings are relevant in today's world and are necessary in striving for a just world
- correspond with students in other countries
- explore a country through fiction (e.g. stories and novels about South Africa)
- read novels/stories that reflect issues of Catholic Social Teaching (see title suggestions in TO ACT JUSTLY)
- write their own stories based on information they have learned about a country (e.g. challenge students to write a short story about a child in South Africa during apartheid)

Teaching Religion Classes with Catholic Social Teaching:

- the whole school or program could learn the principles of CST; posters about these could be in each classroom, or hallways.
- explore the Beatitudes through stories of saints who lived the Beatitudes (see TO LIVE JUSTLY)
- look at parts of the teachings of Vatican II in the light of world and national situations; this would be a good way to discuss how Jesus would act in today's world.

ACTION IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD:

All three books offer suggestions and guidelines for action:

- *To Love Tenderly* and *To Walk Humbly* give information on organizing education fairs, etc. for the topics of child labor and hunger.
- *To Act Justly* has a wealth of information on organizations that offer justice projects and activities for students.
- Bring in speakers working on local community issues that are linked to Catholic Social Teachings (e.g. transportation, affordable housing, health care, education.)
- If older students at your school produce a play, it could revolve around a justice issue.
- Students can involve the parish on an issue by speaking and presenting during and after Masses. Some possibilities:
 1. Children introduce the parishioners to Heifer International (see www.heifer.org) through:
 - brief but clever announcements at Mass, complete with animal posters or masks made by children
 - a colorful visual display (think of the fun art work!) and animal-shaped cookies served immediately after Mass
 - students prepared to explain the program and help people understand the incredible impact Heifer has on impoverished people.
 2. A similar event to encourage parishioners to buy Fair Trade Coffee, tea and chocolate.
 - Students work with Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org) to educate themselves on the importance of buying Fair Trade products and to obtain information on where these products are available.
 - Set up booths at church to display information and products such as coffee, or offer them for sale.
 - Have a bake sale offering cookies, etc. made with Fair Trade chocolate, serve Fair Trade coffee and tea. Profits can benefit families who are impoverished because of unfair trade practices.

THE BIG PICTURE:

- Instead of choosing to have individual classes working on certain issues, consider an overall school theme around an issue. At different developmental levels, students could work on that issue over the course of a school year.
- If this were done, there could be a cumulating event on the order of a science fair, with children of all grades able to speak of the issues, art, writings, research, etc. displayed, etc.