



Suggested Secondary School Classroom Activities

Activity 1: Be Merciful, Even as Your Father is Merciful (30mins)

Introduction

1. Let the class know that Feb 11 is the World Day of the Sick. In Pope Francis' annual message to all, he tells us two key messages:
 - a. "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36).
 - b. Standing beside those who suffer on a path of charity
2. Today, let's begin by unpacking and exploring the first part of the message. What does it mean to show mercy or to be merciful?

Bible Reading

1. Ask the class to read this bible passage individually where Jesus saves the woman who committed adultery from being stoned: John 8: 1-11.
2. While reading the passage, ask students to keep this guiding question in mind: In what ways did Jesus show mercy towards the woman in the story? Solicit responses:
 - a. He did not let the sins that she committed define her as a person
 - b. Jesus protects/saves her from being stoned
 - c. He does not shame or embarrass her in front of others even though the people who brought her to be condemned do so (they tell Jesus exactly what she has done wrong with no background story to it). Instead, he chooses to treat her with dignity.
 - d. He doesn't make her feel guilty or that she has a debt to owe him for saving her
 - e. He gives her a second chance when he says "go now and leave your life of sin"
 - f. He didn't expect anything in return
3. Watch this [modern day story of mercy and forgiveness](#). Keep the same guiding question in mind: in what ways did the mother show mercy to the person who murdered her son?
 - a. She forgave him for what he did
 - b. When she offered to visit him in prison, her reaching out shows that she chose to not let his wrongdoing define all that he is when she said to him: "you don't know me, I don't know you, let's just start with right now"
 - c. She believed that he had rightly served his time for what he did and did not need to be punished more (this is why she chose to help him get back on his feet by helping him find a home when he got out of prison)
 - d. She chooses to treat him with dignity and respect even though he hurt her.



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- e. She also doesn't ask for anything in return from him nor does she expect or pressure him to be and do better
 - f. She does not make him feel guilty for what he did like he has a debt to owe her for her forgiveness and kindness
4. In comparing these two stories, ask students to name characteristics of merciful words or actions? What do these two stories show us what mercy entails?
- a. Forgiveness, compassion, courage, empathy, not expecting anything in return, making an active choice.
 - b. If necessary, reinforce what mercy is NOT:
 - i. Forgive AND forget (you're not diminishing the fact that a mistake was made)
 - ii. Being kind and nice
 - iii. Ignoring and pushing aside your feelings (anger, disappointment, hurt). You can still feel these emotions, mercy is choosing to not act on these emotions as often these actions will be irrational
 - iv. Saying you're sorry
 - v. Putting on a brave face i.e. masking your true feelings
5. Finally, using the characteristics listed, in groups, ask students to now brainstorm and come up with their own definition of mercy.

Handout #1

1. Give one [worksheet](#) to each person or one worksheet between two people.
2. Ask students to write down the different ways in which they would show mercy in the different scenarios
3. Go through the answers together as a class - pick a few students to share answers for the different scenarios. See [answer key](#) for suggestions.
4. Ask students if they have had (or they know someone who has had) any personal experiences of God's mercy. Feel free to also share your own anecdote with the students as well.
5. End with: Could you see yourself choosing to act mercifully all the time in those scenarios we just went over? This is how much God loves us. Imagine how hard/difficult it is for God to show us mercy each time we do something wrong or each time we show Him that we do not deserve it, He chooses to show us mercy endlessly. And while it is difficult and near to impossible to be merciful always, Jesus challenges us to do these for others just as He has and will continue to do so for us.



HANDOUT #1: Be Merciful, Even as your Father is Merciful ANSWER KEY

Scenario	Acts of Mercy
A friend shared a secret of yours when you asked them not to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Give them an opportunity to explain why they did it- Don't let this one mistake (especially if it's their first time) determine whether you should remain friends - give them a second chance- Not sharing a secret of theirs- Not talking about them behind their backs
Someone cut in line but then they dropped their wallet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Return their wallet back to them- Not making a snide or rude remark- Deciding not to cut others in line just because the same was done to you
A sibling who is being annoying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Choosing to still attend to their needs- Choosing to not reciprocate the annoyance
You witness your frenemy doing something embarrassing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Refrain from using this experience against them- Refraining from making a snide or rude remark about it to their face- Refraining from embarrassing them further by bringing it up the next time you're with them in a group setting
You're winning by a landslide in a game that you're playing with your opponent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Don't boast about it on social media- Don't put the other team down (in the locker room or post game talks/interactions)- Don't belittle the other team e.g. show off your skills during the game when you're already winning by a lot
An adult just scolded you for something that you didn't do	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- You have a right to be angry but try not to act on that anger- Don't judge them from this one action (if this is the first time this has happened) e.g. my teacher/parent picks just on me or hates me- Refrain from spreading rumors about the adult



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Activity #2: Standing Beside Those Who Suffer on a Path of Charity (30mins)

1. The second part of Pope Francis' message for World Day of the Sick is "Standing beside those who suffer on a path of charity"
2. Ask students to brainstorm ways in which one can be charitable.
3. Let students know that when Pope Francis says "those who suffer" in his message, he is referring to those who are ill but also those who care for those who are ill.
4. If students have access to Google Docs, make a copy and share the [handout](#) with them (giving them editing access). If not, project the handout for students to view.
5. Assign one of the following patrons to a group of students.
6. With their assigned patron, they are to brainstorm the challenges that these individuals may be facing (i.e. try to identify the type of suffering they might be going through).
7. Then, knowing what the challenges may be, write a prayer intention asking God to:
 - a. Help these individuals work through these specific challenges
 - b. Guide us on how we can be charitable towards these patrons
 - c. E.g. God, please be with and embrace those who are struggling with their mental health so they know and feel that they are not alone in their struggles. We also ask that you help us to persist with patience and understanding when we're interacting with someone who may be struggling with their mental well-being.
8. When everyone is done, ask each group to read out their prayer intention ending with "For this we pray to the Lord". The class to respond, "Lord, come and heal us"
9. After all intentions are read out, end with:

Special Blessing for the Sick

Father in heaven, grant our brothers and sisters comfort in their suffering. When they are afraid, give them courage, when afflicted, give them patience, when dejected, afford them hope, and when alone, assure them of the support of your holy people. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Special Blessing for Caregivers

Lord Jesus, our Brother, you showed your love for the sick by your concern for them. Help us to see you and serve you in the sick. Bless these men and women who are dedicated to helping and healing the sick. Guide them in their labours and give them a greater share of your love. Reward their service by the peace and joy of your Holy Spirit and by the everlasting happiness of heaven.

Lord Jesus, we praise you, for you are our Lord forever and ever. Amen.



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HANDOUT #2: Standing Beside Those who Suffer on a Path of Charity

Patron	Possible Challenges They are Going Through	Prayer Intention
The terminally-ill		
The chronically-ill		
People who are self-isolating		
People with covid who are hospitalized		
The elderly in long-term care homes		
Patients in palliative care		
Someone struggling with their mental health		
Patients and healthcare workers in developing countries who are suffering due to inadequate healthcare systems		
Healthcare workers		
Caregivers		