

GROWING UP CATHOLIC

Faith Activities
on **SERVICE**

PATRICIA MATHSON



The Pastoral Center

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

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INTRODUCTION

As followers of Jesus, we are called to love one another as God loves us. One way to do this is through acts of service and caring. This book contains a variety of activities, projects, and prayers that engage children in Christian service. The lessons can be used to supplement catechetical sessions or religion classes, as catalysts for outreach in families, or as part of sacramental or whole community catechesis programs in a parish. While the material is geared for children ages 5–11, it can be adapted for older children as well.

Activities in the book are folded into a month-to-month time frame, beginning in September and ending in May. This ties them to particular seasons and holidays. Nevertheless, most lessons could be used at any time of the year that suits the needs and interests of the children and the parish, school, or family. Each lesson plan and accompanying activity page invites children to be generous and compassionate people. The activities show children how they can make a difference in the lives of other people and makes service a part of daily life. In this way children start a lifelong practice of caring about others in Jesus' name.

Each lesson concludes with prayer. In addition to being people who help one another, we also pray for one another. We pray for the grace to use our God-given gifts in a life of service to others. We pray for the generosity to share the resources God has given us so that all people will have what they need. With God all things are possible.

HAVE A HEART FOR OTHER CHILDREN

Objective

Encourage children to help other children in their daily lives by choosing one activity that speaks to their hearts

Background

Start the year right by showing children how to help other children. Jesus teaches us to love others as he loves us. This is how we are to live our lives each day.

Children learn about loving other people by doing it. They relate to the needs of other children and learn how to act in ways that benefit their peers. This is a good place to start teaching them about service and what it means to love others as we love ourselves.

Materials

- RED PAPER
- CHILD-PROOF SCISSORS
- PENS
- COPIES OF HANDOUT

Lesson starter

Ask: How do you feel when someone does something nice for you? Why do you think they do it? What would our classroom be like if everyone did something nice for someone else?

Explain that we are called to be caring toward other people each day. This is part of who we are as followers of Jesus Christ. By his words and actions he showed us how to love others. We must be open to opportunities to reach out a helping hand to other children. Let's think of ways we can do this.

Activity

① Point out that there are different ways to "have a heart" for other children. Use the following as examples of caring for others. Write the following ideas on chart paper or a white board.

- let someone go ahead of you in the lunch line
- open the door for someone carrying a heavy backpack
- allow another child to have a turn with a ball or a game
- invite a new child to eat lunch with you
- notify a teacher or other adult if you see bullying
- do a good deed in secret for a friend or sibling
- say something nice instead of teasing another child

② Distribute the red paper and the heart pattern. Invite the children to write or draw something on the heart to help another child. The heart will remind them to look for ways to help others.

③ As time allows, invite them to share their heart ideas with each other. Remind them to take their hearts home to remember to help someone else. Gather in a circle for the closing prayer.

Pray together

Lord Jesus,

it is a new year of school and a new year of learning to live as your disciples.

Help us to live this year as your people

and to find ways to serve others in your name.

Fill our hearts with compassion

and our lives with your love.

May we be open to the needs of other people today and all through the year.

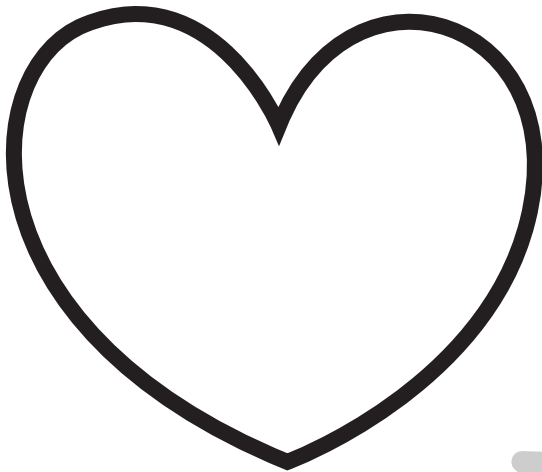
Amen.

Option

Invite the children to lift up their hearts and voices to God with the song "Make a Joyful Noise" by Mark Friedman on the CD set *God Shines on You*, available from ocp.org. Even young children can clap their hands and sing along with the refrain, "Make a joyful noise to our God."

Have a heart!

Write one way
you will help
another child



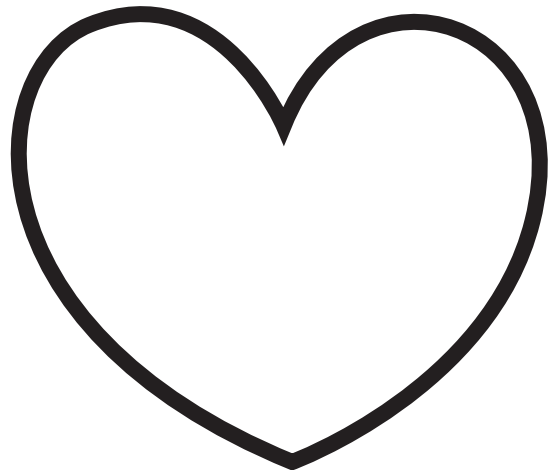
Write one way
you will help
another child



Write one way
you will help
another child



Write one way
you will help
another child



HAVE A HEART FOR OTHER CHILDREN

Objectives

- ☐ To encourage children to help other children in their daily lives by choosing one activity that speaks to their hearts

Step-by-Step

1. Discuss the following questions with your child.
 - ▶ How do you feel when someone does something nice for you?
 - ▶ Why do you think they do it?
 - ▶ What would our family be like if everyone did something nice for someone else?
2. Explain that as followers of Jesus we are called to be caring toward others each day. By his words and actions, Jesus showed us how to love others.
3. Brainstorm ways your child can “have a heart” for other children. Possible ideas:
 - ▶ let someone go ahead of you in the lunch line
 - ▶ open the door for someone carrying a heavy backpack
 - ▶ allow another child to have a turn with a ball or a game
 - ▶ invite a new child to eat lunch with you
 - ▶ notify a teacher or other adult if you see bullying
 - ▶ do a good deed in secret for a friend or sibling
 - ▶ say something nice instead of teasing another child
4. Have your child write or draw something on the red hearts to help another child. Take the hearts home to remind you to help someone else.
5. End your time together with this prayer:
 - ▶ Lord Jesus, it is a new year of school and a new year of learning to live as your disciples. Help us to live this year as your people and to find ways to serve others in your name. Fill our hearts with compassion and our lives with your love. May we be open to the needs of other people today and all through the year. Amen.



CREATE **BIRTHDAY CARDS** FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMEBOUND

Objective

Demonstrate caring about others by making birthday cards for people who are homebound

Background

In the story of creation in Genesis we hear how people were created in God's own image and likeness (1:27). This is the basis for all Catholic teaching on social justice. We are called to treat each person with dignity and respect because each person is God's creation, created in God's image.

In our own communities, many elderly people need help because they are unable to get around well. People who are homebound cannot get to the grocery store or cook for themselves. Organizations such as Meals on Wheels provide home delivery of one meal a day. The volunteers also like to have birthday cards to deliver with a meal on the day of a person's birthday. Children can make birthday cards for homebound people. This is a simple project for all ages and abilities.

Materials

- COPIES OF BIRTHDAY CARD
- MARKERS OR CRAYONS
- SELF-STICK STARS

Lesson starter

Ask: Do you like to celebrate birthdays? Do you enjoy getting birthday cards from friends and relatives? How would you feel if no one gave you a birthday card?

Point out that many elderly people are isolated at home. They are not able to drive or take the bus to the grocery store because they are not in good health. Homebound elderly can become lonely. A community organization delivers a meal to homebound people each day. Sometimes the volunteer bringing a meal is the only person that homebound people see on their birthday.

Explain how Jesus calls us to help others. Each of us can do something to brighten the day for people who are homebound. One way is to make birthday cards that the volunteers deliver along with the meal on people's birthdays.

Activity

① Distribute copies of the birthday card. Illustrate how to make the birthday cards, using the following instructions:

- fold paper down the middle
- color the front of the card
- add self-stick stars for decoration
- inside put a happy birthday greeting
- sign your first name

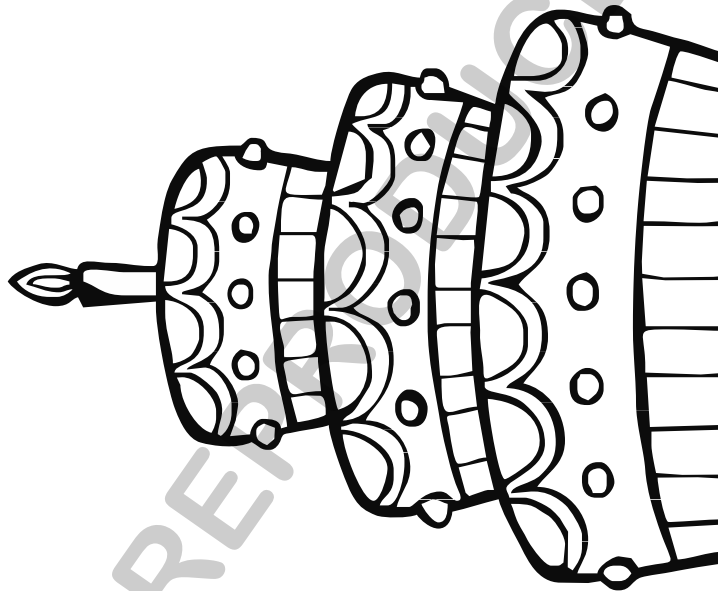
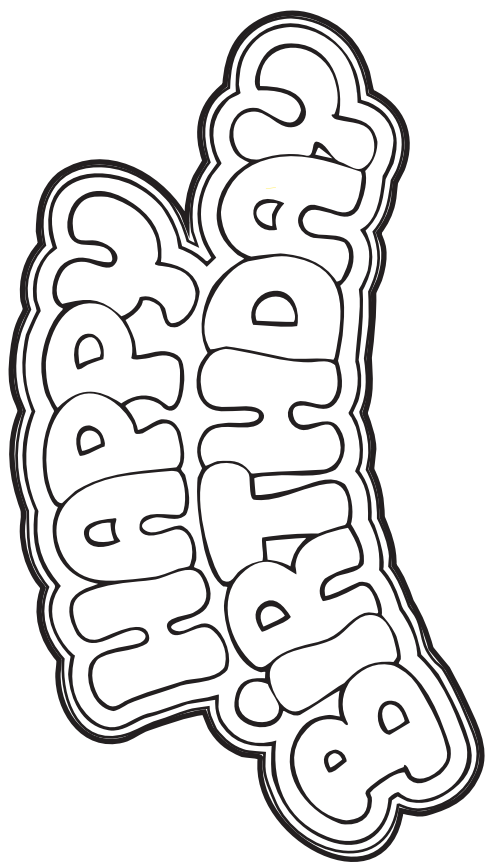
② When the children finish with the cards, put them in the box for delivery to the organization. Gather the children together to pray for those who are homebound due to illness or age as well as for the volunteers who care for them.

Pray together

*God of love,
you told us that whatever we do
for others we do for you.
Help us to share your love with people in need
in our communities and in our world.
We remember especially elderly people
who are homebound and who rely on others for help.
May we reach out to them in your name.
Amen.*

Option

Ask someone who serves in social ministry in your parish for information about birthdays for homebound or elderly parishioners. Then send the birthday cards to those people.



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CREATE **BIRTHDAY CARDS** FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMEBOUND

Objectives

- ❑ To demonstrate caring about others by making birthday cards for people who are homebound

Step-by-Step

1. Discuss the following questions with your child.
 - ▶ Do you like to celebrate birthdays? Do you enjoy getting birthday cards from friends and relatives?
 - ▶ How would you feel if no one gave you a birthday card?
2. Explain that many elderly people live alone at home. Sometimes they are not able to drive or take the bus to the grocery store because they are not in good health. This can be lonely. But there are community organizations that deliver meals to homebound people every day!
3. Remind your child that Jesus calls us to help others. Each of us can do something to brighten the day for people who are homebound. One way is to make birthday cards that the volunteers can deliver along with the meal on people's birthdays.
4. Using the card template, create a birthday card.
 - ▶ Fold the paper down the middle.
 - ▶ Color the front of the card.
 - ▶ Add stickers for decoration.
 - ▶ Put a happy birthday greeting on the inside.
 - ▶ Sign your first name.
5. End your time together with this prayer:
 - ▶ *God of love, you told us that whatever we do for others we do for you.
Help us to share your love with people in need in our communities and in our world.
We remember especially elderly people who are homebound and who rely on others for help.
May we reach out to them in your name. Amen.*

USE SCENARIOS TO TALK ABOUT WAYS TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE

Objective

Learn ways to help other people by talking about life situations and how to respond to their needs

Background

Talking about situations helps children begin to see how one person can make a difference. Children need help in making good choices. They can also share the situations page with their families. This extends the learning outside the classroom and into the home.

Materials

- COPIES OF SITUATIONS ACTIVITY

Lesson starter

Ask: Is it easy to do the right thing? Does it take time and energy? How can we know when others need our help?

Talk about how, as followers of Jesus Christ, we follow his example each day. One person who did this was Saint Teresa of Ávila. She said, “Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours.”

Activity

① Explain that Jesus teaches us to help other people. Refer to the situations on the handout to discuss ways to help others. Invite the children to act out one or two of the situations, to draw pictures, or to discuss ways to respond to each one. Older children might write their responses and share them in small groups.

② Point out that each of us can do something to serve others, just as Jesus was the servant of all. It is not always easy to do the right thing, but Jesus calls us to step forward when someone needs help. We can make a difference in the lives of others.

③ Encourage the children to share the activity page with their families. Close by offering together the following prayer.

Pray together

*God of peace,
guide our lives that we may follow Jesus
in loving one another as you love us.
Give us the strength to serve other people
as Jesus Christ was the servant of all.
May we be caring people who open our hearts
to the needs of other people in our lives.
Give us hearts filled with your peace
and lives filled with your love.
Amen.*

Option

The song “St. Theresa’s Prayer” by John Michael Talbot (from *Heart of the Shepherd*, available from christianbook.com) reminds us that Christ uses our hands to bless the world. Let the children listen to this song and then talk about what this song is telling us about being the hands, the feet, and the eyes of Jesus in our world.

Situations:

What can YOU do?



Discuss the following situations with your group.

Talk about ways to respond. Listen to the ideas of one another.

SITUATION ► A child at school has a broken arm and has to have a cast for six weeks. **What can you do?**

SITUATION ► Your little sister is lonely since her best friend moved away. **What can you do?**

SITUATION ► You called someone a name that made them feel bad. **What can you do?**

SITUATION ► A friend of yours is sad because his parents are always fighting. **What can you do?**

SITUATION ► You see a child being cornered after school by two older kids. **What can you do?**

SITUATION ► Your grandpa is always forgetting things and repeating himself. **What can you do?**

SITUATION ► An elderly person is trying to get her packages through the store door. **What can you do?**

SITUATION ► You are talking to friends when you see a new student in the hallway. **What can you do?**

USE SCENARIOS TO TALK ABOUT WAYS TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE

Objectives

- ❑ To learn ways to help other people by talking about life situations and how to respond to their needs

Step-by-Step

1. Discuss the following questions with your child.
 - ▶ Is it easy to do the right thing? Does it take time and energy?
 - ▶ How can we know when others need our help?
2. Explain that as Jesus' followers we follow his example each day. One person who did this was Saint Teresa of Ávila. She said, "Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours." Ask:
 - ▶ What do you think she meant?
3. Complete the handout together.
4. End your time together with this prayer:
 - ▶ *God of peace, guide our lives that we may follow Jesus in loving one another as you love us.
Give us the strength to serve other people as Jesus Christ was the servant of all.
May we be caring people who open our hearts to the needs of other people in our lives.
Give us hearts filled with your peace and lives filled with your love. Amen.*

DRAW RICE BOWL POSTERS FOR YOUR PARISH

Objective

Guide children to an awareness of the tremendous need of hungry people in our world and how we can make a difference

Background

All people have a right to share in the blessings of God's creation. This is a basic teaching of Catholic social justice. "The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2402). During Lent we walk with Jesus and live what we believe. Many people in our world do not get enough to eat each day. Ask if you can put up posters the children make about the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Rice Bowl collection at your parish.

Materials

- SHEETS OF POSTER BOARD
- MARKERS
- COPIES OF "MY LENT JOURNEY" ACTIVITY

Lesson starter

Ask: How would you feel if you only had enough food for one meal? Millions of people around the world are hungry today and every day. Does Jesus want us to reach out to them?

Explain that all of us are called to share the resources of our world so everyone will have enough. Millions of people in our world suffer from hunger due to drought, war, and other causes. CRS Rice Bowl is a wonderful program that benefits hungry people in our world. One of their slogans is "What you give up for Lent changes lives." Encourage the children to pick up a rice bowl at Mass for your family and bring back the donation at the end of Lent.

Activity

- 1 Participate in the CRS Rice Bowl program
 - Eat a light dinner or do without dessert

and put the money saved in the rice bowl

- Donate the money to help those in our world who are doing without
- Pray for people who are living in poverty around the world

- 2 Divide the children into small groups to make posters to support CRS Rice Bowl. Tell them that the posters will be displayed during Lent to remind people about this program from Catholic Relief Services that raises money for hungry people around the world.

My Lent journey

- 3 Tell the children: We are called to live Lent in our lives. The three themes of Lent are prayer, fasting, and giving. Write on your paper one way you will pray, fast, and give to others during the season of Lent. In this way we live Lent and follow the way of love of Jesus Christ. Take home your paper and share with your families.

Pray together

*Jesus, Lord of all,
you showed compassion for the poor
and call us to do the same for others.
May we follow your example in our lives
and reach out to people living in poverty.
Many people in our world go hungry
while there is enough food to feed all.
Open our hearts that we may join together
to make the world a better place for all people.
Amen.*

Option

Take the World Awareness Quiz at crsricebowl.org. This helps children see the great need in our world. Use this quiz to kick off a discussion about the many people who do not get enough to eat each day and how we can help. Each of us is called to share with others.

My Lent journey



Jesus Christ calls us to follow him on our journey through the season of Lent. Write ways you can live Lent in your life.



I can pray for others during Lent by...

I can fast during Lent by...

I can give to people in need during Lent by...

Signed _____

DRAW **RICE BOWL POSTERS** FOR YOUR PARISH

Objectives

- ❑ To guide children to an awareness of the tremendous need of hungry people in our world and how we can make a difference

Step-by-Step

1. Discuss the following questions with your child.
 - ▶ How would you feel if you only had enough food for one meal?
 - ▶ Millions of people around the world are hungry today and every day. Does Jesus want us to reach out to them?
2. Explain that all of us are called to share the resources of our world so everyone will have enough. Millions of people in our world suffer from hunger due to drought, war, and other causes. CRS Rice Bowl is a wonderful program that benefits hungry people in our world.
3. Help your child create a poster to support CRS Rice Bowl. The posters will be displayed at church during Lent to remind people to participate.
4. The three themes of Lent are prayer, fasting, and giving. Complete the handout with your child, choosing one thing your family will do during Lent for each theme.
5. End your time together with this prayer:
 - ▶ Jesus, Lord of all, you showed compassion for the poor and call us to do the same for others. May we follow your example in our lives and reach out to people living in poverty. Many people in our world go hungry while there is enough food to feed all. Open our hearts that we may join together to make the world a better place for all people. Amen.

