

AGENTS OF MERCY LESSON: CARING FOR THOSE IN NEED

GRADES 1-3

Goal:

Students will be encouraged to explore the meaning of poverty here in the United States as well as around the world. What does poverty look like? Why is help for the poor central to Jesus' message?

Lesson:

Students will explore what is meant by poverty. They will look at both extreme poverty, like that which exists in certain developing parts of the world, and practical poverty, like that which we have in the US, where even working families struggle to make ends meet and fall further and further behind. Pope Francis has called us to go out with the joy of the Gospel, to encounter people where they are. Like Mother Teresa, we are called to serve the poor by looking people in the eye, respecting their dignity, and engaging in works of mercy.

Bible Story:

- Watch [the story of the Little Boy](#) who shares his lunch with Jesus.

Discussion:

- What happens in the story?
- Why are all of the people hungry?
- How does Jesus solve the problem?
- How do you think the people felt after Jesus gave them food to eat?
- Can you think of a time when you are generous with someone who did not have something that you had? Did you share with them?

Throughout the Bible, we hear Jesus talk about his great love for the poor. He means not only people who don't have anything to eat, but also people who are lonely (poor in spirit). Why does he spend so much time talking about these people? It is because people who are poor require something from us—there is a humility to their presence that invites us to be generous and merciful and share with them what we have.

The story of Jesus feeding the 5000 people by sharing the little boy's lunch allows us to see that caring for the poor changes us for the better as much as it helps those in need.

Watch:

- [Sesame Street talks about Food Poverty in the US](#)

Discussion:

- What did you learn about people who are poor or who don't have enough food to eat?
- Can you help them? Can other people in your community help them?
- What if you learned that your friend at school was hungry and didn't bring a lunch to school? Could you help? How?

Activity:

Poverty takes many forms. There is no clear dividing line between "poor" and "not poor". It is easy to lose perspective of what other people face when we may live in a very different experience.

- Ask students to spend a few minutes thinking of all of the things they have. Encourage them to write down or draw 3 things that they think they could not live without. Have them share with the class. Lead a discussion based on what students share.
 - What can we not live without?: house, family, water, food, friends.
 - What are not actually necessities?: TV, games, vacation, toys, candy.
 - Help students understand the difference between what is actually a necessity and what is an extra.
- Discuss ways to help people who don't have the necessities of life.

Watch (if time allows):

- [Fly Away Home](#).

Discussion:

- Lead a discussion with students about what it might be like not to have a home. Of the necessities in life, what does the boy in the story have? Any? How do you think he must feel? What would you do if you knew someone who didn't have a home to live in? What gave the little boy hope?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

You have given us so many good things.

You have given us our family, our friends, our home, our school, good food, and nice clothes.

We pray for our brothers and sisters who do not have these things.

Help us to love them and to find ways to help and serve them.

Amen.