

For the Classroom – Formation in Christian Chastity, Grade 6 Lesson Plan 1

Theme: God Made Us to Love And To Be Loved

Objectives:

1. Students will learn the true meaning of love.
2. Students will be able to identify characteristics of friendship, and understand that true friends are not self-centered.
3. Students will understand that certain acts, such as gossiping, bullying, and teasing violate love of neighbor and friendship.

Begin by telling the students that every year the Church sets aside the month of October as “Respect Life” month. Tell them that one crucial way we can show our respect for life, our own and others, is by living a life of chastity. Then, tell them the story of St. Maximilian Kolbe given below.

St. Maximilian Kolbe:

Raymond Kolbe, born January 7, 1894, was the son of devout Catholic parents. When Raymond was still a child, our Blessed Mother came to him holding two crowns, a red one symbolizing martyrdom and a white one symbolizing persevering purity. She asked if he was willing to accept either crown. He accepted both.

As a young man, Raymond, along with his elder brother, entered a junior Franciscan seminary. He excelled in mathematics and physics and also had a passionate interest in the military. Later, he decided that rather than be a military strategist, he would fight in another way. He wished to fight moral and spiritual evil by overcoming it with the weapons of truth, love, and mercy. In October 1917, he and six friends founded the *Crusade of Mary Immaculate* with the goal of converting sinners, freemasons, and those who left or denied the Catholic faith. He took the religious name Maximilian and was ordained a priest on April 28, 1918.

Despite constant suffering from tuberculosis, Maximilian lived a life of intense prayer, work, and charity. Upon returning to Poland, he formed one of the largest Franciscan friaries in the world, with over 700 inhabitants. In honor of the Ever-Virgin Mother of God, he named the friary “Niepokalanow,” which means “City of the Immaculate.” He believed that it was important to use all available technologies to further the kingdom of God. He did this by establishing a printing press which printed a monthly magazine, a daily newspaper, and a radio station – all to advance and spread the message of the love of the Lord Jesus and His Holy Mother. By the mid-1930’s, Father Maximilian’s magazine was reaching 750,000 people a month. His daily newspaper was reaching over 100,000 readers per day. Priests throughout Poland credited his magazine and newspaper with fostering greater faith all over the country.

Fr. Maximilian was a great missionary, setting up friaries with printing presses in Japan and India to spread the love of God and devotion to Our Lady. All the while he respected the local customs and traditions in those lands.

In 1939, while back in Poland, Fr. Maximilian was taken prisoner by the Nazis, who had invaded Poland. He was released on December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. After his release he spent much of his time organizing shelters for refugees. In February 1941, Fr. Maximilian was arrested again and sent to prison in Warsaw where he was brutally treated. In May of the same year, he was sent to Auschwitz. In July, several prisoners escaped from two separate cellblocks. In reprisal, 10 men from each cellblock were randomly chosen by the Nazi commandant to die in their place. One of those was a man named Franciszek Gajowniczek. Upon being chosen to die, Francis cried out, "Oh, my poor wife, my poor children. I shall never see them again."

Fr. Maximilian stepped forward and offered his own life in place of Franciszek's. His offer was accepted and he was taken to the starvation chamber with the other men who had been chosen for death. There he led them in daily prayers, hymns, and the Rosary. Slowly, all the men died of thirst and starvation – all that is except Fr. Maximilian. Finally, after growing impatient waiting for Fr. Maximilian to die and wanting to use his cell to kill more people, Fr. Maximilian, with a prayer on his lips, was given a lethal injection.

This heroic martyr of charity was canonized a saint by Pope John Paul II on October 10, 1982. His feast day is August 14, one day before the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Until his death, Franciszek Gajowniczek spoke often and in different parts of the world about St. Maximilian Kolbe's self-sacrificial love and how that love had saved his life.

(The following Opening Prayer, Scripture quotes, and quotes from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as well as the "Key Concepts" Reading are reproduced at the end of this Lesson, for your distribution to your students. Recite the opening prayer together, and have the children take turns reading the quotes out loud.)

Opening Prayer: Dear Jesus, You have given us St. Maximilian Kolbe as a heroic example of self-sacrificial love. By your grace and through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, Mary, help us to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

Quotations from Sacred Scripture:

With age-old love I have loved you; so I have kept my mercy toward you. (Jeremiah 31: 3b)

Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all. (Romans 12:16-18)

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:13)

Quotations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

Charity [love] is the theological [God-given] virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. (1822)

God who created man out of love also calls him to love – the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. (1604)

God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature, man can live this friendship only in free submission to God. (396)

“Key Concepts” Reading:

True love and its relationship to true friendship.

God, Who is Love, loved us into being. Because we are made in His image we are to love Him above all things and love our neighbor as ourselves. Who is our neighbor? Every person, because we are all made in God's image and because the good that we do helps not just those close to us, but everyone. By the same token, the evil that we do harms not just ourselves, but everyone.

The best way that we show our love for our neighbor is to help him to get to heaven. Jesus' death on the Cross shows us the meaning of self-giving and that love involves sacrifice. His death was the ultimate sacrifice. His sacrifice was offered out of love and obedience for God the Father, and out of love of us.

God made us to live in community with others. This desire is imprinted into our nature. It is part of who we are. Because we are made to live with others, God wants us to form friendships, which are gifts precious to each one of us. Like God, a true friend wants what is best for both our body and our soul. True friends do not use another person for pleasure, to look good to others, or for selfish reasons. Rather, we act as friends by treating each other with respect, kindness, loyalty, and mercy. There are certain acts, which go against friendship, and they must be avoided. One of these acts is gossip. Gossip involves telling somebody something about another person that the person does not have a right to know. It involves “talking about someone behind their back.” This is wrong.

There can be a time when we do talk about another person, such as when that person is in danger or when that person is endangering someone else. In that case, we should tell a parent or an adult, who is able to do something about it. Aside from that, we should make it a habit to either speak well of others or say nothing about them. There is an old saying that works here: “If you don't have something good to say about someone, don't say anything at all.”

Making fun of others and bullying others is also wrong and is to be avoided. Such actions break the fifth commandment, “You shall not kill.” This commandment forbids murder. It also forbids actions by which we would intentionally harm another person physically, emotionally, or spiritually. God loves every person. Bullying and ridiculing others means that we are not treating them with the dignity God gave them. Everybody deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. One thing we can do is to always be kind toward those whom we see “picked on.” Kindness is pleasing in the sight of God. If others persecute you for such kindness, rejoice! Jesus tells us that our “reward will be great in heaven” if we are persecuted for doing good on His account. He also said that whatever we do to the least of our brothers we do to Him.

Discussion Questions:

Question: Does God love everyone?

Answer: Yes, God loves everyone, because God is Love.

Question: Who is our neighbor?

Answer: In a certain sense, everyone is our neighbor, because every human being is made in God’s image and likeness. Not only that, but every baptized person is an adopted son or daughter of God the Father and is our brother or sister in Christ.

Question: Ultimately, how do we show love for our neighbor?

Answer: We show love for our neighbor by doing good toward him and helping him or her get to heaven.

Question: What are some characteristics of true friends?

Answer: Answers here will vary, but may include such things as respect, loyalty, mercy, and kindness.

Question: What are certain actions, which we must always avoid with respect to others?

Answer: Answers will again vary, but may include, gossiping, bullying, ridiculing, ignoring or being mean to another person, because we think we will fall out of favor with the “cool” crowd.

Activity:

Make sure every student has a Bible. If there are not enough Bibles for everyone, have them share one with a partner. Students are to read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7, as a sort of “examination of conscience.” Every time St. Paul uses the word “love,” such as “Love is patient, love is kind,” the students should silently insert their own name in place of the word “love.” So, for instance, a girl named Mary might read, “Mary is patient, Mary is kind.” Ask them to think about (but don’t share out loud) whether they are patient, kind, not jealous, not inflated, not rude, do not seek own interests, are not quick-tempered, do not brood over injury, do not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoice with the truth, bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things.

Summary:

So far, we have learned that God creates every person out of love and that because we are made in his image, we must love him above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. True love involves self-sacrifice. Jesus demonstrates this by his whole life and especially by his death for us on the cross. True friends are those who live for the good of another person and who help them along the path to heaven. Love of neighbor rules out ever doing harm to another, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually. We must never be unkind to anyone. Gossip, bullying, and ridicule are acts displeasing to God. We should avoid those who seek to use us for their own pleasure or selfish gain.

Closing Prayer: Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us! Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us! St. Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us!

Opening Prayer

Dear Jesus,

**You have given us St. Maximilian Kolbe
as a heroic example of self-sacrificial love.**

**By your grace and through the
intercession of our Blessed Mother, Mary,
help us to love God with all of our heart,
mind, soul, and strength, and to love our
neighbors as ourselves.**

Amen.

Quotations from Sacred Scripture:

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