



Love Thy Neighbor: Orthodox Christian Acts of Charity

Educational Materials in Connection with the Orthodox Church in America's Charity Appeal

Lesson Outline- Teacher Guide

Developed through a combined effort of the Orthodox Church in America's Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry and Department of Christian Education

Purpose: These lessons are intended to be a short addition to regular church school lessons during the month of November in connection with the Orthodox Church in America's Charity Appeal. However, they can be used at any time. They are designed to help instill the Orthodox understanding about our response to people in need. In addition to the mini-lessons provided below, be sure to copy and distribute the enclosed handout for students to take home and discuss with their families.

We recommend these lessons be followed with an actual charitable project in order to provide students with an opportunity to put the concepts they learn in action. For project ideas visit *The Hub: Resources for Youth and Young Adult Ministries* at <http://yya.oca.org/TheHub> in the *Activities* section under *Parish Success Stories*.

To discuss these issues in more depth with teenagers see the 7-session study unit "Reaching Out: Our Call to Minister" available from the Orthodox Christian Publications Center or online in *The Hub: Resources for Youth and Young Adult Ministry* at <http://yya.oca.org/TheHub> in the *Study Units/Guides* section under *Catechetical Themes*.

Objectives for Students and Families:

- To identify different ways in which people are in need.
- To define a Christian's "neighbor" as anyone in need as defined by Christ in the parable of the Good Samaritan.
- To retell Christ's parables of the Good Samaritan and the Last Judgment.
- To list the groups in Matthew 25:41-46 to whom Jesus instructs us to minister (hungry/thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, and imprisoned).
- To brainstorm different ways in which to fulfill Christ's commandments to visit the sick, feed the hungry, and clothe the naked.
- To explain that when Christians are ministering to people in need they are ministering to Christ.
- To discuss the importance of prayer when serving others.

Useful Texts:

Exodus 16; 22:21-24	Luke 4:16-21; 6:20-25; 10:25-37
Psalms 72; 146:1-10	Matthew 14; 25:31-46
Isaiah 58:1-10	Mark 10:17-22; 14:3-11

From the Liturgy of St. Basil:

"Remember, O Lord, those who bring offerings and do good in Thy holy churches, and those who remember the poor....Fill their treasures with every good thing...support the aged; encourage the faint-hearted...free those who are held captive by unclean spirits...defend the widows; protect the orphans; free the captives; heal the sick. Remember, O God, those who are in courts, in mines, in exile, in harsh labor, and those in any kind of affliction, necessity, or distress, and remember each man and his request, his home and his need. Amen."

From the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony

Keep their wedlock safe against every hostile scheme; give them of the dew from the Heavens above, and of the fatness of the earth. Fill their houses with bountiful food, and with every good thing, that they may have to give to them that are in need, bestowing also on them that are here assembled with us all their supplications that are unto salvation.

Lesson Ideas:

Select activities that are most appropriate to your group's age and size, as well as the time you have, the resources/materials at your disposal, etc.

Pre-school/ Kindergarten/ Primary (Grades 1-4)

1. Participants can begin by defining charity as helping someone and then talking about things they do at home to help someone (giving someone a hug when they are sad, helping someone in their family clean up, helping another child find a toy or do something in pre-school, etc.). Read Luke 10:25-37. Ask participants, "What is Jesus saying we should do?" Then read Matthew 25:31-40. Now ask, "Why do you think Jesus said it is so important to do these things?" Affirm the Christian teaching that when we help people in need we are helping Jesus. Have participants look up pictures in magazines and newspapers of people helping others and create a collage or mobile with the heading "Love Thy Neighbor."
2. Create or decorate alms boxes. These can be purchased already made at a local craft store and then decorated, or can be made from cardboard boxes. Have the students list ways they can earn money at home, or at the parish (doing chores, walking the dog, having a bake sale, washing cars etc.) to raise money to put for their alms boxes. Choose a specific project that this money will help support. The funds could be used to contribute toward the OCA Charity Appeal, to support seminarians, to buy food for a food pantry, or to raise funds for camp scholarships. Other ideas could include using the money to help with meals for elderly parishioners, combined with a visit or cards from the students. The teacher should discuss the needs of the parish and receive the blessing of the priest before beginning such a project.
3. Plan a trip to visit the elderly, sick, etc. with homemade cards, cookies, plants, songs, poems, etc.. Be sure to read through the article [How to Visit a Nursing Home](http://yva.o.ca.org/TheHub) online in *The Hub: Resources for Youth and Young Adult Ministries* at <http://yva.o.ca.org/TheHub> in the *Activities* section under *Projects*. On the day of the visitation/project reread Matt 25:31-40. Remind participants that Jesus teaches us that we visit people who are sick or lonely we are visiting Him.

Intermediate (Grades 5-8)

1. Have students look up the word "charity" in the dictionary and then use it in a sentence. Ask them why they think this is an important idea for Christians. Brainstorm as many different ways as possible that people can be in need. Next, ask participants to think of all the different ways Jesus helped people. If they get stuck give them the following citations to look up in the Bible (visiting – Luke 19:1-10; healing – Mark 10:46-52; forgiving- Luke 23:33-34; feeding the hungry - Matthew 14:14-21; teaching – Matthew 5).
2. Brainstorm ways to complete the following sentences:
 - Jesus teaches me to love when....
 - I act like Jesus when...
 - I show love and care when...
 - I can make a difference when...
 - The Lord expects me to give....
3. As a group, read Mark 12:41-44. Create or decorate alms boxes (see explanation above) and discuss how the Scripture teaches us about the spirit with which Jesus calls us to give.
4. Plan a trip to visit the elderly, sick, etc. with homemade cards, cookies, plants, songs, poems, etc.. Be sure to read through the article [How to Visit a Nursing Home](http://yva.o.ca.org/TheHub) online in *The Hub: Resources for Youth and Young Adult Ministries* at <http://yva.o.ca.org/TheHub> in the *Activities* section under *Projects*.
5. Plan an activity that will allow children to raise funds for the Christmas Stocking Project. It can be as simple as a bake sale, an ice cream dessert after a church lunch, or a car wash in the parish's parking lot.

Teens and Young Adults (Grades 9 and up)

1. Distribute the list below to students. Ask them about which of the following issues they think Christians should be most concerned about. Have them choose four, ranking them from 1 (most concerned) to 4 (least concerned). On a large visible writing surface create a chart with their results. Discuss why they rated the list the way they did. Follow up by assigning each of the readings above to different students or groups and have the group go through the process again. Discuss results.

___ Drug Abuse

___ Poverty

___ Child Abuse

___ School Violence

___ Divorce

___ Terrorism

___ Abortion

___ Sexual Immorality

___ TV Violence

___ Materialism

___ Over-population

___ Racism

___ Prayer in Public Schools

___ Crime

___ HIV/AIDS

___ Homelessness

___ World Hunger

___ Illiteracy

___ Teenage Pregnancy

___ Other: _____

2. Ask students to give the first word that comes to mind when you say the word 'needy.' List their responses on a clearly visible surface (poster board, white board, chalk board, butcher paper, etc). Discuss why they think they had this kind of reaction. Now ask students to give the first words that come to mind when you say 'to love' and 'to minister.' (Draw their attention to the fact that when love is used as a verb it requires a certain amount of action.) Discuss the difference between needing and wanting something.
3. Either have participants look up the Useful Texts listed above or look up the following words in a Bible concordance: fatherless, widow, orphan, stranger, and poor. Have participants choose one word and look up some of the references to answer the following questions:
 - a. Why do you think the Lord is so focused on our concern and care for these people?
 - b. What should the reader do in regard to these people?
 - c. How does this relate to Jesus' words in Mark 14:3-11?
 - d. Why would prayer be an important element of any charitable act we might try to accomplish?Our Sacred Scripture is clear: our care of people in need is God's litmus test of faithfulness.
4. Lead teens through an examination of their attitudes toward and use of money, time, energy, and the other resources available to them. Ask them what they consider to be necessities in life. Then ask them what a person in a third-world country would consider to be necessities in life. Challenge them to think how they could live more modestly, mindfully, and even joyfully. For some ideas, contact: Alternatives for Simple Living, 5312 Morningside Ave., Sioux City, IA 51106; 800-821-6153; www.SimpleLiving.org.
5. Plan an activity that will allow children to raise funds for the Christmas Stocking Project (<http://www.oca.org/pages/news/news.asp?ID=407>). Activities can include a bake sale, an ice cream dessert after a church lunch, a car wash, or a 24-hour fast lock-in in which people sponsor a teen per hour.
6. Have participants go home and look up the following web sites to collect information about issues like hunger, poverty, and illiteracy and come back with two ways they can respond to these issues as Christians.

OCA Charity Appeal – http://www.oca.org/pages/min_orqs/appeals/charityappeal2003.html

Inter-Orthodox Christian Charities

Go to: www.iocc.org.

Bread for the World

Go to: www.bread.org.

Re-hydration Project

Go to www.rehydrate.org.

World Vision's 30-hour Famine

Go to www.30hourfamine.org.

Orthodox Christian Mission Center

Go to: www.ocmc.org and click on *Agape*.

Church World Service

Go to: www.churchworldservice.org.

World Hunger Education Service

Go to www.worldhunger.org.

United Nations: Food and Agriculture Organization.

Go to www.fao.org.



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