



**Three-Day Lesson Plan: The Human Thread
The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
-Primary-**

DAY ONE: People Are Sacred-Work Is Sacred-The Earth Is Sacred

DAY TWO: What do I Want? What do I Need? Why Does it Matter?

DAY THREE: What can I do?

Use:

Each set of three lessons is sufficiently developed for experienced and inexperienced teachers to implement with two to four hours of preparation:

- **Studying** the one to two-page overview and the three lessons as presented.
- **Studying** the recommended websites, Scripture citations and contexts.
- **Identifying** potential questions, and rehearsing answers, e.g., What does image of God mean?
- **Making** adaptations if needed.
- **Preparing** materials, and **securing** supplies and equipment as needed.
- **Rehearsing** ways to teach the vocabulary for understanding.

*****Begin each lesson with the adapted Laudato Si' Prayer found in the additional resource list at the end of day three.***

Materials Needed:

Hand mirror(s) or Full Length Mirror
Buckets/sponges/rags/water/mild cleaner
Bag of pretzel sticks (or similar item if gluten is a problem)
World Map (optional)
REDUCE/REPAIR/REUSE/RECYCLE paper strips (see Day Three)

Vocabulary:

- Sacred- made by God so worthy of being (should be) treated with respect
- Developing country- a poor agricultural (farming) country that is seeking to (have more money and resources) become more advanced economically and socially.

Overview- Rooted in both Scripture and Catholic Tradition is the teaching that “the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.”

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>

Unfortunately, in practice, this is not how our society has evolved in its treatment of people and the earth. In this three-day unit students will explore the innate dignity of both work and the worker. They will also come to see the effect of consumption and materialism, especially in the clothing industry, on human dignity and on God’s creation.

Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this three day unit students will be able to express why people are innately holy, what makes work sacred, and why we must be stewards of God’s creation. They will be able to differentiate between wants and needs and then interrelate how our “wants” can lead to the mistreatment of people and the earth. They will then determine what they can do to address this problem.

DAY ONE: PEOPLE ARE SACRED-WORK IS SACRED-THE EARTH IS SACRED

Class Objective: Students will express why all human beings and the earth are sacred and infer what makes work sacred.

Anticipatory Set: Have students look at themselves as you pass around a shatterproof hand mirror or as they file past a full-length mirror in the classroom. Once they have all had a chance to see themselves ask them what they saw. After fielding answers tell them you are going to share something really awesome with them that might make what they see in that mirror even more wonderful!

Procedure:

Step 1: Read out loud Genesis 1:7 from Scripture (Written on Board):

*God Created (hu) mankind in his image;
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

Step 2: Ask students to close their eyes and think about this verse for 30 seconds. Read it again. Then, ask them to look in the mirror again. Ask students:

- 1.) How can God's word change how you saw yourself?
- 2.) How you see others?
- 3.) How you might treat yourself and others?

Remind them how every person on earth, no exceptions, is made in the image and likeness of God and therefore is sacred and must be treated with care and respect—with dignity

Step 3: Ask students what they think that person in the mirror will spend a great amount of his or her time doing when she or he grows up (working). Ask them to think about what they might want to do for work/a job when they grow up and why. Ask them to briefly share their thoughts with the student next to them.

Ask them the following questions about their jobs/careers:

- 1.) Raise your hand if you will do good things for people, the community or the world?
- 2.) Raise your hand if you think you will have enough time to be with your family?
- 3.) Raise your hand if you think you will make enough money to pay your bills?
- 4.) Raise your hand if you think your bosses will treat you nicely?
- 5.) Raise your hand if you think you will be safe at work?
- 6.) Are all these things we just mentioned important to your well-being? To your dignity? Is it how we treat someone that is holy?

Step 4: Remind students that we now know that God made both human beings and the work that they do sacred. But God is not done yet!! God also made a beautiful place for us to stay. It's called the earth. It is a gift to us. He told us to take good care of it. Read aloud Genesis 2: 15 (written on board):

*The Lord God then took the man and settled him
in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.*

Ask students to share one thing we can do "care" for the earth like God asked of us.

Conclusions: (Review):

Review the three things students learned:

- 1.) All human beings are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with respectful loving care / with dignity.
- 2.) Work is a big part of our lives, and workers are created in the image and likeness of God, so they deserve to be treated with respectful loving care/ with dignity when they are at work.
- 3.) The Earth is a gift to us from God and he expects us to care for it. We do this with respectful loving care because it is sacred.

Assessment: Inform students that tomorrow they are going to become workers. They are going to clean and scrub the classroom desks. They must come up with three rules about how they should be treated during clean up and why they should be treated that way. Either write the rules and reasons down or illustrate them. Give as homework but provide classwork time for guided feedback.

DAY TWO: WHAT DO I WANT? WHAT DO I NEED? WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Class Objective: Students will distinguish between wants and needs and begin to relate how our many wants can sometimes harm workers and the earth.

Review: Ask students to share some of their cleanup worker rules that were given as Day One class/homework. Put three well thought out rules on the board. As you collect assignments distribute rags or sponges, show students the filled buckets, and then begin a brief desk scrubbing session. Make sure the rules are being followed.

Upon desk cleaning completion, ask students to name the three things that they learned were sacred (human beings, work and the earth). Congratulate them because they were just treated with dignity as they worked. Point out that they were showing each other and the classroom environment care and respect. God must be really pleased!

Anticipatory Set: Have students break into groups of four. Ask them to pretend that they were given lots of money and that they have five minutes to list as a group what they would buy with that money. One person should be the recorder.

Procedure:

Step 1: Explain to students that today we are going to explore the difference between a want and a need. Put on board and explain:

need= have to have

want= would like to have

Step 2: Ask students to circle every item on their lists that they “need” and cross out any item that is a “want”. Ask if more things are circled or crossed out. Hypothesize some reasons why there are more of one than the other. Brainstorm things that people truly need to live in dignity as sacred persons.

Step 3: Ask students what bad things can happen if people with lots of money keep buying more and more things that they want rather than what they need. Start to distribute pretzel sticks to students giving a lot to some and very few to others. (Since desks are clean it may be possible to set them on the desk rather than waste paper towel/napkins). Ask students not to touch them so you can fairly redistribute after discussion. Point out that when people take a whole lot more than they need then some people end up with very little or nothing. Ask them to pretend you only need five pretzel sticks to live in dignity. This would be what they” need.” All the rest would be a “want”. Ask them what happens to the people who have less than five pretzels? (They go hungry). People cannot live in dignity if they are starving.

Conclusions: (Review):

Review the three lessons learned today:

- 1.) We know that human beings, human work and the earth are sacred.
- 2.) There is a difference between what we want and what we need.
- 3.) If we take more than we need sometimes other people end up with very little or nothing.

Assessment: Ask students to estimate how many shirts they have in their drawers and closets at home. Have them write it in their class notebook. Inform them that for homework they should count how many shirts they own and that they should write that number down underneath their estimate. Tell them that the class will be talking about clothing and how it affects human beings by the way it is made and over consumed.

DAY THREE: WHAT CAN I DO?

Class Objective: Students will associate overconsumption of clothing with assaults to God given human dignity and to the environment. They will then determine together what part they can play in addressing this social sin.

Review: Ask students the difference between a need and a want. Solicit responses and then ask them what happens when some people have too many wants? (Other people end up in need).

Anticipatory Set: Have students take out their homework and calculate the difference between how many shirts they thought they had from how many they actually had in their closets and drawers. Ask students to share their differences and ask if their estimates were close or way off. Were they surprised? Tell the students that we are going to look at the effects of producing (making/sewing) clothing on our brothers and sisters around the world and on our God given home planet earth.

Procedure:

Step 1: Have students check the labels on their shirts (students can check each other or the teacher can help). Nearly all of them will be from a developing country. If a map is accessible locate some of the countries. Point out that (nearly) all of their shirts were made by those living in poverty (the poor) due to not being paid a fair living wage while working very long hours (12 to 20) under some very hot and crowded conditions.

Step 2: Share with students the fact that producing clothing hurts what Pope Francis calls “**Our Common Home**” –the earth. It takes a lot of petroleum (oil) to produce human made cloth for clothing. It takes a lot of water and herbicides and pesticides, dangerous chemicals, to make cotton cloth and clothing. They also use dangerous (toxic) chemicals in cloth making and color dyeing that end up in the air and in the waterways. All the extra clothing that people get rid of clogs up landfills and is sent to other countries to be given away. Although this sounds nice, but when people in other countries get our old clothes they do not buy the clothes that people in their own countries make so those people cannot support their families.

Ask the students to share what they think or feel about this clothing situation:

- 1.) Are people being treated as sacred?
- 2.) Is work being treated as sacred?
- 3.) Is the earth being treated as sacred?
- 4.) What can we do about this? Are you too little?

THEY ABSOLUTELY CAN DO SOMETHING

AND

ABSOLUTELY ARE NOT TOO LITTLE!!

Step 3: Break into four action groups. Each one will receive an ACTION to carry out:

REDUCE: We learned that we have a lot of clothes and can live with less.
(have less) Closets are just a bit too small to hold our stuff. Ask yourself every time you want something new “Do I need this?”

REPAIR: Learning to sew is a holy act. Fix your tears and missing buttons.
(fix)

REUSE: Donate your clothes to someone who needs them.
(use again)

RECYCLE: Worn out clothes can be made into rags and stuffing.
(make into something else)

Each group should get a slip of paper that states their action and explains it. They should discuss their plans to do one act related to their ACTION. Tell them they have one week to do their action and will be asked to tell the class what they did and why they did it.*

*The teacher circulates and helps groups to plan their ACTION. There should be a couple check-ins over the next week.

Conclusions: (Review):

The last three days we learned that:

- 1.) Humans, work and the earth are sacred and need to be respected and taken care of.
- 2.) We have more than we need and this can hurt people who work and this can hurt our planet.
- 3.) We can take ACTION and actively show love to those who are poor and toward the earth. They both need us to do the right thing.

Assessment: Group presentations on ACTIONS: What they did and **why** they did it.

Additional Resources:**Prayer from *Laudato Si'***

A prayer for our earth

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

Primary:

We thank you for being with us each day.

*Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.*

Amen.

The Human Thread-website: <http://www.humanthreadcampaign.org/>

Catholic Relief Services:

Catholic Social Teaching-Video

Shorts: <http://www.crs.org/resource-center/CST-101>

- (Life and Dignity of the Human Person)
- (Care for God's Creation)
- (The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers-upcoming) (For grades 3-6)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: [Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching](#)

Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God ([Gn 1:27](#)). (USCCB, [Economic Justice for All](#))