

TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Create a Culture of Christian Character in the Classroom

Dr. Patricia M. McCormack, IHM

Environment

Are there physical reminders of the sacred in the classroom?

Where is Sacred Space?



Rituals

What routines integrate awareness of God into the daily events of school life?

Customs

What social habits or practices “season” class time with the sacred?



Sacramental Life

What special occasions are annually celebrated with class or school-wide Eucharist?

When does my class celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Personal Example

How frequently do I demonstrate my personal relationship with God?

... throughout the Liturgical Year

In the course of a year the Church celebrates the whole mystery of Christ: birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, promised return, and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The liturgical cycle suggests a rhythm of Christian prayer that leads to Easter and flows from it. Easter is the central and most solemn feast of the year.

The seasons of the liturgical year are like a mini-series of salvation history. The six-episode story makes present:

- the ancient longing for the Messiah (**ADVENT**)
- the fulfillment of God’s promise to send a savior (**CHRISTMAS**)
- the public life and ministry of Jesus (**ORDINARY TIME I**)
- that led to his passion and death (**LENT**)
- the resurrection and ascension of Jesus (**EASTERTIME**)
- the fulfilled promise of the Father and Son to send the Holy Spirit to guide us until the end of the world when Christ will come again in glory (**PENTECOST/ORDINARY TIME II**).



Some Practices for Ordinary Time

65% of the liturgical year (34 Weeks) is Ordinary Time

Prayer Center	Window sill, tiered corner shelving, table, top of a filing cabinet, . . .
Prayer Dish	Container to hold prayer intentions
Table Centerpiece	Liturgical color, symbols related to feasts that occur during Ordinary Time, i.e., picture of the Sacred Heart, birthday candle for Mary (Sept. 8), Crown of Christ the King (End of November), etc., a thought-a-day calendar, a miniature easel to hold a focus picture/quotation/symbol, . . .
Class Motto	Hang a banner of your class motto above the entrance to the common room, i.e., “Do whatever He tells you.” “That Christ may reign.” “Love one another.” “God-is-with-us-now.” “Dayenu!”
Class Mantras	Leader: God is good all the time! Response: And all the time, God is good!
Bless the Hour	Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God. Response: Let us adore God’s divine majesty. Glory be...
Mealtime	Pray Grace before and after meals.
Morning Greeting	Create a special morning greeting. For instance, “Good morning, Laurie. You are a gift from God.” (Laurie responds): “And everything God makes is good.”
Prayer Before Class	“Lord God of power and might, nothing is good which is against your will, and all is of value that comes from your hand. Place in our hearts a desire to please you and fill our minds with insight into love, so that every thought may grow in wisdom and all our efforts may be filled with your peace. Amen” (Opening Prayer of Mass for the 22 nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.)
Conversation Starter	“May the Word of God be +in our minds, +on our lips, +and in our hearts throughout our conversation.”
Sunday Gospel	Discuss the ABCs of the Sunday Gospel: Attitudes, Behaviors, and Consequences of Choices.
Annually Consecrate the Classroom	Honor the Triumph of the Cross (Sept. 14) with class Mass in the morning. At school remove the crucifix from the wall and pray, “We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.” Allow each student to make a physical expression of reverence and then re-enthroned the crucifix.

IHM Office of Formative Support for Parents and Teachers

DrPatMcCormack@aol.com

www.ParentTeacherSupport.org

PROMOTE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER via the GOSPEL

Strategies for Applying the Sunday Gospel to Christian Character Formation

Dr. Patricia M. McCormack, IHM

Gospel ABCs

Gospel ABCs – *the Attitudes, Behaviors and Consequences that are suggested in a Gospel story* – is a technique for breaking open the Word, a framework for reflection, and a tool for children to use independently throughout their lives. The exercise can *form and inform* Christian Character. Prayer occurs when the issues raised are discussed with God and we listen for what God has to say before we draw a conclusion or make a resolve.

For Example:

Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector (Lk. 19: 1-10)

ATTITUDES: resourcefulness, creative hope, willingness to “go out on a limb,” compensating for and coping with a disadvantage, proactive, claiming his desire/need/curiosity to see Jesus . . .

BEHAVIORS: think outside the box, climb a tree, accept responsibility for past choices . . .

CONSEQUENCES: Zaccheus received a personal invitation into relationship with Jesus, he converted, he made restitution . . .

Beads of Discipleship

Create a *Christian Character Rosary*. How? (1) Determine a life lesson from a Gospel story. (2) Convert the lesson into a “Hail Mary” bead. (3) Combine a bead for each Sunday Gospel to create a rosary that reviews the liturgical year. (4) Perhaps make 6-inch circle beads to build a rosary around the perimeter of the classroom or hallway.

For Example:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, **Jesus who wants us to give second chances as he did for Peter**. (Jn. 21:17-17, Peter and Jesus on the Beach in Galilee)

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, **Jesus who asks us, like the Scribes and Pharisees, why we hold onto hurtful thoughts**. (Lk. 5: 17-26, Paralyzed Man Cured)

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Gospel Journaling

Gospel Prayer allows the Word of God to intersect with our human experience. The result? Christian Character formation. A six-step process for Prayer Journaling includes:

1. Pray to become conscious of, and attentive to, the presence of God.
2. Read the scripture passage slowly and audibly – loud enough to hear my own voice.
3. Write a brief, unbiased summary statement of the passage.
4. Personal Analysis using “I-You” language:
 - What is Jesus saying in this passage?
 - What do Jesus’ words mean to me today?
 - Why do I think that Jesus is calling my attention to a particular idea, word, phrase, thought?
 - What is Jesus asking me to do?
5. Dialogue: Converse with Jesus about the issue(s) that the Holy Spirit stirred up in me. Ask Jesus to comment.
6. Resolution: Use “I-You” language to tell Jesus how I WANT to respond, what DIFFICULTIES I predict that I will encounter and HOW I will need his help.

Ideas for Promoting Christian Character in the Classroom throughout the Liturgical Year

Consult the website, www.ParentTeacherSupport.org. From the Home Page, select NEWSLETTERS. There explore the newsletters that are titled, **RELIGIOUS ED CLASSROOM**, in particular, the following titles:

- Advent Wisdom (WINTER)
- Culture of Spirituality
- Lent to Pentecost (SPRING)
- Back to School (FALL)
- Ordinary Time
- Mary Ways

A Rosary of Core Gospel Values For Christ-like Character Development

Directions:

Read a Gospel story and isolate specific character traits that Jesus is teaching. Express each trait in a clausal statement that refers to **JESUS** and begins with the pronoun **WHO** or **WHOSE**. Then connect the clause to the first part of the Hail Mary prayer. Every ten statements form a decade of the Rosary.

For example,

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, **Jesus . . . who wants us to give second chances as he did for Peter** (Jn. 21: 15-17).

Gospel Story	Suggested Clausal Statement
Ten Lepers (Lk. 17: 11-19)	Who taught us the value of <i>saying “thank you”</i>
Paralyzed Man Cured (Lk. 5: 17-26)	Who asks us, like the Scribes and Pharisees, why we hold onto <i>hurtful thoughts</i>
Son of Widow of Naim (Lk. 7: 11-17)	Who desires us <i>to help others without being asked</i> , as he did for the Widow of Naim
Woman at the Well (Jn. 4: 1-30)	Who is happy when we <i>tell the truth</i> like the Woman at the Well did.
Avoiding Judgment (Mt. 7:1)	Who commanded us <i>not to judge</i> other people
The Golden Rule (Mt. 7:12)	Who taught us to <i>treat other people the way we want to be treated</i>
Forgiveness (Mt. 6: 14-15)	Who told us to <i>forgive</i> each other
True Riches (Mt. 6: 26-34)	Who reminded us to <i>depend on God’s providence</i> to take care of us rather than worry about tomorrow
Love of Enemies (Mt. 5: 43-48)	Who gave us an example to <i>love our enemies</i> and to <i>pray for people who have hurt us</i>
Purity of Intention (Mt. 6: 1-4)	Who advised us to <i>keep our good deeds secret</i> instead of bragging or showing off

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Gospel 1

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector (Lk. 19: 1-10)



Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount"

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Gospel 3

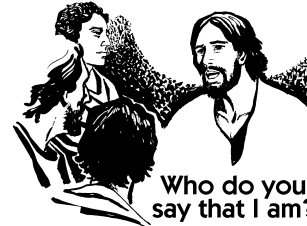
The Straying Sheep (Luke 15: 3-7)



Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Gospel 2

Peter's Confession of Christ (Mark 8: 27-33)



Who do you say that I am?

Lk 9:20

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

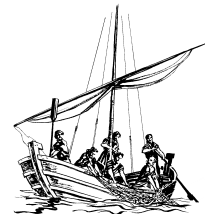
Jesus Predicts His Death

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Gospel 4

Jesus Calms the Storm (Mark 4: 35-41)



That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, JESUS . . . who -----