



open wide our hearts

the enduring call to love *a pastoral letter against racism*

Grade 5 Activity: Implicit Bias and the Unity of the Body of Christ

Doctrinal elements:

The Profession of Faith

I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.

- The Church has a great diversity of members; but sin can imperil her unity. (CCC 795, 814, 815)

The Seven Sacraments of the Church

The Sacrament of Baptism

- “From the baptismal fonts is born the one People of God of the New Covenant, which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races and sexes: ‘For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.’” (CCC 1267)

“Racism can often be found in our hearts – in many cases placed there unwillingly or unknowingly by our upbringing and culture.”

– U.S. bishops, Open Wide Our Hearts

Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Understand that we are united across the human limits of nation, culture, race and sex due to our Baptism, which makes us members of the Body of Christ and thus “members one of another” (CCC 1267, quoting Eph. 4:25).
2. Value the diversity and gifts of the Church’s members—diversity which is not opposed to the Church’s unity (CCC 814).
3. Recognize how we can sometimes fail to recognize the dignity of some members of our human family, even subconsciously (CCC 814).
4. Understand implicit bias—what it is, where it comes from, and how we can work to overcome it.

Materials Needed

- Copies of the Word Associations handout (final page of this packet).

Quotes from *Open Wide our Hearts*

- “Holy Scripture boldly proclaims, ‘See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are’ (1 John 3:1). This love ‘comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a “we” which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is “all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28)’ (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 18).”
- “Racism can often be found in our hearts – in many cases placed there unwillingly or unknowingly by our upbringing and culture. As such, it can lead to thoughts and actions that we do not even see as racist, but nonetheless flow from the same prejudicial root. Consciously or subconsciously, this attitude of superiority can be seen in how certain groups of people are vilified, called criminals, or are perceived as being unable to contribute to society, even unworthy of its benefits.”
- “Overcoming racism is a demand of justice, but because Christian love transcends justice, the end of racism will mean that our community will bear fruit beyond simply the fair treatment of all. After all, ‘Within [the human] family,’ as St. John Paul II said, ‘each people preserves and expresses its own identity and enriches others with its gifts of culture’ (John Paul II, Address at the Meeting with the Native Peoples of the Americas, September 14, 1987, no. 4).”

Before the Lesson

- Assign as homework the night before the Word Associations handout below. Or, have the students complete the handout at the start of the lesson, as described below.
- Answer key: Macaroni and (Cheese); Pins and (Needles); Peanut butter and (Jelly); Hide and (Seek); Trick or (Treat); Father, Son and (Holy Spirit); Night and (Day); Salt and (Pepper); Sugar and (Spice); Sweet n’ (Sour)

Instructions for the Lesson

Begin with this prayer:

Thank You for Creating the Children of the World

Loving Father,

Thank you for the many beautiful colors
and languages of the world
and for making all your children unique.

Thank you for creating me in your image.
Thank you for loving me and making me wonderful.
Help me to love like you.

Help me to share your love
with all the children you have made,
for they are unique and wonderful.

Amen.

If students were not assigned the Word Associations handout for homework, distribute copies of the handout and have them complete it now. Then, go through the answers as a class. Make note of which associations seemed to come automatically for everyone or almost everyone.

- Name a few of the associations that seemed to come the most easily for everyone. Ask: Why do you think we all seemed to automatically associate these words with one another? Is there some inherent property in peanut butter that makes it necessary for it to be connected with jelly? Or is that association learned?

Review the following concepts:

- Our Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ and so we have a responsibility to one another. We care for each other like members of a family. Our unity as a Church cuts across the human limits of culture, race, and sex.
- As members of the worldwide (and heavenly) Body of Christ, we value the diversity and gifts of the Church's members. Diversity is not opposed to the Church's unity. We celebrate diversity in our communities and within our Church.
- However, sometimes we can fail to recognize the dignity of some members of our human family, even subconsciously.

Grade 5 Activity: Implicit Bias and the Unity of the Body of Christ

Project/show and read this quote from the U.S. Catholic bishops in *Open Wide Our Hearts*:

- “Racism can often be found in our hearts – in many cases placed there unwillingly or unknowingly by our upbringing and culture. As such, it can lead to thoughts and actions that we do not even see as racist, but nonetheless flow from the same prejudicial root. Consciously or subconsciously, this attitude of superiority can be seen in how certain groups of people are vilified, called criminals, or are perceived as being unable to contribute to society, even unworthy of its benefits.”

Unpack this quote:

- The bishops say that racism can be found in our hearts, and that it can be placed there *unwillingly* or *unknowingly* by our upbringing or culture.

Introduce and explore the concept of implicit bias:

- Just as we associate salt with pepper, peanut butter with jelly, or trick with treat, stereotypes work the same way. Our brains process information about certain groups of people—from TV shows, movies, or social media posts that depict ethnic groups in certain ways; from conversations or comments by adults that we overhear, etc. Our brains notice patterns and then make generalizations as short-cuts. These generalizations are what psychologists call “implicit bias.”
- Some racial stereotypes might seem harmless on the surface—for example, the stereotype that Asians are smart and serious. But what if this perception means that an aspiring Asian actor or artist is treated differently from his or her white counterparts or not given the same opportunities—because he or she is perceived as not very creative due to his or her race? Stereotypes, even when they seem complimentary, are never good because they do not honor people as individuals, created by God, with unique and special gifts and talents.
- Sometimes implicit bias can have very real consequences. The bishops write: “Consciously or subconsciously, this attitude of superiority can be seen in how certain groups of people are vilified, called criminals, or are perceived as being unable to contribute to society, even unworthy of its benefits.”

Share examples of implicit bias:

- In one [study](#), when white, black and Latino applicants applied for entry-level jobs with equivalent résumés, the black applicants were half as likely as whites to receive a callback or job offer.
- In the [same study](#), black and Latino applicants with no criminal records received callbacks and/or job offers at rates similar to white applicants just released from prison.
- In [another study](#), college professors were 26 percent more likely to respond to an email from a student who said their name was “Brad,” than an identical email signed “Lamar.”

Grade 5 Activity: Implicit Bias and the Unity of the Body of Christ

Discuss these questions about implicit bias:

- How do racial biases go against our unity as the Body of Christ?
- Why do racial biases make us less able to recognize the dignity of some members of our human family?
- What ideas do you have for how we can each try to overcome racial biases that we may have?

Share how to overcome implicit bias:

- Often, we don't even realize that we have formed stereotypes about certain groups of people—it can be completely subconscious. An important way of working to overcome our bias is to educate ourselves. One primary way of doing this is by being in relationship with people from different ethnic backgrounds than our own. Friendship and relationship are the best antidote for bias.

Implicit bias is a sensitive and challenging topic. Invite students to spend some time reflecting individually (either as part of the classroom time, or as homework) on biases they may possess. Helpful journal questions may include:

- What attitudes or perceptions do you have about cultural ethnic groups outside of your own?
- Where do you think these attitudes or perceptions came from?
- What is an example of a way that you may have acted differently toward someone of another ethnic group because of implicit bias?
- How does bias and the way it causes us to act fail to respect the dignity of every child of God?
- What can you do to overcome your own biases?

At Home

Share at home what you learned about implicit bias.

The next time you or your family are watching your favorite TV show or movie, identify and discuss any racial stereotypes you notice.

- How are people of different racial backgrounds portrayed?
- How might these stereotypes contribute to our biases?

Word Associations Activity

Fill in the blanks below using the first word that comes to mind. The idea is to do the activity as quickly as possible, to see what association immediately jumps to mind. If you can't think of a word for the blank right away, skip it and come back to it later.

1. Macaroni and _____.
2. Pins and _____.
3. Peanut butter and _____.
4. Hide and _____.
5. Trick or _____.
6. Father, Son, and _____.
7. Night and _____.
8. Salt and _____.
9. Sugar and _____.
10. Sweet n' _____.



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