

## 5-Session Teaching Plan of Catholic Moms of Mercy, Diocese of Springfield, MO

I would like to share with you briefly what we did, how the children responded, and how it impacted us as parents and a community.

### **Opening Community Time**

As I began thinking about how to open up each session, I felt inspired to use popular children's movies to share themes of Theology of the Body. I had a wonderful time drawing from movies that were not intended to be used in this way to teach truth! I wanted the kids to begin a habit of looking for what is true, good, and beautiful in all things! I used simple decorations each week in line with the theme and have music from the movie playing as the kids walked in. It was so fun to see their reactions when they walked into the room!

The movies and TOB themes were:

**Week 1: Trolls-** We talked about what true happiness looks like and that God instilled that desire for truth, goodness, and beauty.

**Week 2: Moana-** We used this movie to share the biblical account of Creation, The Fall, and Redemption through Jesus Christ. We discussed that Jesus came to restore "the heart" that had been stolen.

**Week 3: Toy Story 4-** We used this movie to discuss the Dignity of the Human Person, What it means to be human, and what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God.

**Week 4: The Jungle Book-** We discussed Original Solitude and the Gift-of-Self. We talked about how God made us Male and Female to image His love for us.

The kids responded really positively to these opening thoughts. They participated by answering questions about the movies and seemed to be able to connect spiritual truths with what the movie portrayed. We would then say a prayer of blessing on our time together and dismiss by grade to classes.

### **Class Time:**

We met in our classes for one hour of teaching and then 15 minutes of snack time/fellowship. We gave parents a letter at the end of each class describing what we did and giving them ideas to continue the conversation at home. Here is a summary of what we did in each grade.

### **Kindergarten:**

In the Kindergarten class we were able to cover the following themes: "The Gift of Creation", "Generosity and Fruitfulness", "Beauty", and "Original Solitude". We used the books An Egg Is Quiet by Diane Aston and A Tiny Seed by Eric Carle. We had a wonderful time together and the kids responded so well. We used a lot of music and movement in addition to the suggested activities and literature. We ended each session with snack time/fellowship and a prayer time. The kids participated very well in every part of the class. They responded positively to the stories and really seemed to understand the concepts covered. The length of time seemed to be perfect for them! In addition to two teachers, we consistently had several parents in the room participating and helping.

The Kindergarten teacher shared, "**It gave me so much joy to share these truths with these young children. To be honest, it might have had more**

impact on me than on them! These themes are easy for little ones to understand because they are TRUE! They are very intuitive and natural for children to grasp.”

### First Grade:

The first class we read A Seed is Sleepy by Diane Aston. We discussed how all of creation has order, design, and meaning (TOB 2:3; 15:1; 22:6; 25:1). We talked about the order of seasons, the order of how plants grow, etc. My most favorite part of that lesson was the “lead in,” and activity. We read Matthew 13: 3b-8, “The Parable of the Sower” and then predicted whether a seed would grow in sand, rocks, or fertile soil. The teacher had each of the students write down their predictions and then sprinkle a few grass seeds on each of the soil types. She then took it home and cared for it and brought it back to each class.

The second class we planted seeds. Each student chose a different seed to plant. We talked a lot about how to care for seeds — what they need in order to grow; how humans can help them grow, etc. We learned about two Theology of the Body (TOB) themes “Creation is a Gift” and “Original Solitude.” The teacher shared, **“My favorite part of this lesson was the “sorting activity.” We got to really learn how creative God is! There are an infinite number of ways that you can sort nature! From this we did a craft project and created our own flowers.”**

The third class we read The Animal Hedge. We watched a video and sang a beautiful song by Sarah McLachlan called “Ordinary Miracle” from the movie, “Charlotte’s Web.” This song ties into the Theology of the Body so perfectly. The kids really loved the video. We went on nature walk in the SEAS Prayer Garden and talked about the beauty of God’s creation and the TOB concept of how creation is a gift. We finished the class reading, “The Creation Story” in Genesis. It really tied everything together reading about the TOB concept of “Creation is a Gift” in scripture.

The fourth class was dedicated to learning about the TOB concepts of “Virtue and Freedom” and “Human Work.” In using The Animal Hedge as a guide, I based this class around the “Illuminations” on page 52 and how the children of Fatima answered God’s call to us just as Mother Mary did. We also talked about how this was similar to the farmer, and his sons; how they answered their calling in their own special ways. We watched a clip from *“The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima (1952)”* from Warner Archives <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9lnLusZ6h0>, and then colored a booklet of flowers associated with the Virgin Mary. This class was really special as it tied TOB concepts into our Catholic Faith.

When asked how the experience impacted her, the teacher shared, **“For me this has been a learning experience. I have never taught a class before. There was a lot of trial and error and I always had a “back up plan.” The kids really responded well to the videos I showed as well as to the various activities. I really got a sense that they just really love God and appreciate the beauty of His creation. These classes highlighted that.”**

### Second Grade:

In the Second grade class, we taught the following themes: “The Body Reveals the Person” and “Virtue and Freedom.” After reading the book Saint George and The Dragon retold by Margaret Hodges, the class spoke a lot about the characters and their relationships. They then talked about their own relationships. They focused on a few saints who have given themselves as gifts to help others. The kids reflected on how they can help others in their own lives. The class also covered the theme of Dignity of the Person by discussing the book The Quiltmakers Gift by Jeff Brumbeau.

The class talked about how quilts can tell a story. They focused on their gifts and how they can show respect for others. The class also created a creation timeline base on Genesis 1. They drew pictures of what God made each day and discussed how all things have purpose, from the seed to feathers on a bird to each and every one of us!

The Second grade parent/teacher said of her experience, **"It made me hunger for more Theology of the Body in general. I signed up for the teen version (Made For More, Ruah Woods Press) and have been working through that some. Really good as well! I definitely want to keep this going as I could see how each grade was building on the previous years. Hearing what other classes did was so neat and I know my kids really enjoyed it as well!!"**

### **Third Grade:**

In the Third grade, the class covered the themes of "Gift" and "Fall and Redemption" using the book Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters by John Steptoe. The students were able to see that one of the daughters gave of herself while the other looked only to her own interest. The teacher said of their response, *"The children even recognized more of the complex themes in the story such as how the negative sister could only see the more loving sister as weak."* Through the activities suggested in the curriculum the children were able recognize that they have free choice, their works matter, and that being more like Christ will bring them true happiness and love.

In the last two classes we were able to combine some themes because they fit together so well and, though there was limited time, each theme was important. The class covered "The body reveals the person" with the beginning of the scripture study on original Solitude. On the last meeting the class contemplated original Solitude with the two creation stories from Genesis. The children then created a timeline in order to reflect on their ongoing relationship with God.

The parent/teacher said of the children's response, **"....the children were able to grasp how loved they are and how God has an individual plan for each. My thoughts are that truly these teachings must surely be written on the hearts of man because these themes made sense to the kids. They could respond and reflect adequately."**

### **Fourth Grade:**

In the fourth grade, the class covered the following TOB themes: "Dignity of Work", "Gift of Self", "Suffering, Sin, and Transformation", "Redemption", and a Scripture Study on Original Unity. The class read the books, Peppe the Lamplighter by Elisa Barton. They also read the book, Shep-Our Most Loyal Dog by Sneed B. Collard, III. Both are stories that tell how God created us for work and to be a gift to our family and friends. The students kept a journal to record all the ways they helped around the house and with younger siblings. The children responded very positively and wanted to keep meeting together.

When asked how this experience impacted her, the teacher shared, **"I wish I had been offered this class growing up and just know that we can change the world for the better if we can keep teaching Theology of the Body."**

### **Fifth Grade:**

The Fifth grade class covered the following themes: "Gift of Self", "Creation is a Gift", and "Original Nakedness". Using stories of Greek Mythology they compared and

contrasted Greek gods with our one true God as well as drawing out the themes of Theology of the Body.

In looking at the theme of "Gift of Self", students learned that we are happiest when we live our lives toward what we were made for: to be a gift-of-self to others. Man is called to give himself in love, comes to know himself through a gift-of-self, and finds his identity through communion.

Looking at the theme "Creation is a Gift", students identified the following gifts in the creation accounts: Adam and Eve were the climax of creation, everything God made was good, God gave us food and drink to survive, and God created something from nothing.

For the Scripture Study on Original Nakedness, students read the second creation account in Genesis. Together the class was able to identify "What is the one act of creation that is not good" They replied, "For man to be alone." They explored the following questions: who created man, what material was used to create man, how was man made, how are human beings different from animals, and what relationship does man have to the animals? The teacher shared, **"The process invited students to appreciate truths about our Catholic faith in contrast to the Greek myths, such as, how God is a loving Father, how He is one in three Persons, and how He created us out of love. Students also appreciated how all of creation is a gift to us and how we have a special place in creation. Students also learned to appreciate their bodies. Human persons are not pure spirit like the angels, but are body and soul. Our bodies are good and a gift from God."**

Upon the final lesson, the class finished the theme of "Creation is a Gift" and the Scripture Study. The teacher shared, **"We discussed how the Trinity is a communion of persons. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God in three persons. The Father and the Son fully give and receive one another in love. The Holy Spirit is the embodiment of their love. The love of a husband and wife mirrors the love of the trinity. A husband and wife fully give and receive one another in love, and their son or daughter is the embodiment of their love. To think more deeply about God's plan of creation and salvation, students received cards with information about Original Nakedness (man before Original Sin), Redeemed Man (man after Christ's first coming), and Eschatological Man (man after Christ's second coming). Students reflected on each moment and placed the cards and illustrations in the most logical order."**

#### Closing Session:

At the end of each session, one class would share with the entire group what they were learning or working on. This was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to hear about what each grade level is focusing on. It helped to foster the sense of community as well.

We also had a potluck/pool party for the families involved. It was a wonderful way to celebrate all God had done and our new community!

*If you would like to start something similar in your community and would like some support, feel free to contact our group by e-mail at:*  
[catholicmomsofmercy@gmail.com](mailto:catholicmomsofmercy@gmail.com)