

3rd Grade: Priesthood

OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVE:

To be able to recognize a priest's connection with Jesus Christ.

MAIN CONCEPTS:

- *In persona Christi* means “in the person of Christ.”
- Jesus is the true priest.
- All Catholic priests share in the priesthood of Christ.

PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

- Complete the core components of the lesson.
- Select and complete other components given the time you have and the needs of the your children.

INTRODUCTION

2 min

Summarize today's theme.

Today we will learn about a priest's link to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true priest who connects people to God the Father. All other priests share in this priesthood of Jesus.

SIMPLE PRAYER

2 min

Slowly read aloud John 15:13, 16-17 several times, allowing a few seconds of silence between each time for reflection.

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends... It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain... This I command you: love one another.”
– JOHN 15:13, 16, 17.

Pray this or another simple prayer from the heart:

Thank you, Lord, for dying on the cross for us. Thank you for showing us how to love. Amen.

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PRIESTHOOD

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends... It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain... This I command you: love one another.” – JOHN 15:13, 16, 17

READING

JESUS CHRIST, THE TRUE PRIEST

Jesus is at the center of the priesthood. In a way, there is only one priest—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. All other Catholic priests share in Jesus' priesthood. It is not their own.

Imagine that a girl is turning nine years old. She is having a big birthday party. All her friends come to the party and bring presents. When it's time to open the presents, the girl's mom says to her little brother, “Peter, will you hand the presents to your sister?” Little five-year old Peter excitedly drops the presents on his sister's lap, one by one, so she can unwrap them.

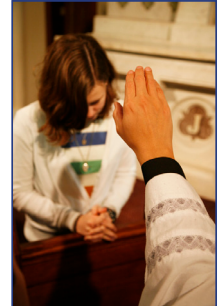
Are the gifts from the little brother? No, but he is the one who hands them out. That is a good way to think about priests. The gifts priests bring are really from Jesus.

When you turn on the faucet, water comes out. Does the faucet make the water? No. It delivers it to you! Priests are the like the faucet. They help bring the water, but they are not the source of it.



This is why we have priests—so that they can bring us Jesus. Imagine if you lived a long time ago and could see and touch Jesus. Can you imagine him talking? Think about seeing his miracles, laughing with him, and asking him questions. Think about being healed by him! Well, that's why God gave us the priesthood. Because of God's gift, a real person, right before our eyes, can be Jesus for us.

When you go to confession, the priest says, “I absolve you of your sins.” He is like the little boy who gets to hand out the gifts. The gift of forgiveness is from Jesus, but it comes through the hands and voice of the priest. There is a special Latin phrase for acting in the person of Christ: *in persona Christi*. A priest acts *in persona Christi* as he delivers the love of Jesus Christ to us.



A priest absolving a young woman in confession.

Photo by Stephen Golder Photography, Inc

DISCUSS:

- In your own words, how is a priest like a child who hands out the presents at a party?
- How does Jesus connect us to the Trinity?
- What do you think it would be like to heal a person?
- Which one of the sacraments would be most exciting to bring to people?

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READING

10 min

1. Read “Jesus Christ, the True Priest” to the class, or have students take turns reading the passage aloud.
2. Use the questions to spark class discussion, or assign students to write answers to the questions.



ACTIVITY

10 min

1. Have the students brainstorm all the similarities that they can think of between a priest and Jesus.
2. Write these on the board or a large piece of paper.
3. Direct each child to draw a picture expressing one of these similarities.
4. Display drawings on a bulletin board with the title, "Jesus loves us through his priests."

REINFORCE

5 min

1. Display the main concepts on the board.
2. Have the students verbally repeat them, write them down, or ask questions about them.
3. Quiz the students a bit to see if they grasp the concepts. If it is helpful, refer to the Vocation Glossary found at www.vocation-lessons.com/glossary.

EXPLORATION

15 min

Lay Down One's Life

1. Introduce the activity.
To lay down one's life for one's friends doesn't necessarily mean that a person literally dies, like Jesus died for us. Think about the ways that a person gives something up to care for another. Perhaps you have even seen one of your friends or family members do this in a small way.
2. Have the students free write about a person who has "laid down his life for his friends".
3. Have volunteers read some of their responses out loud.



PRIESTHOOD

EXPLORATION

LAY DOWN ONE'S LIFE

Jesus talks about "laying down one's life" for others. Think of a person you know (or know about) who is very generous, who always helps others, and who is hardly ever selfish. Write a paragraph describing this person.



VISUAL ART



"Crucifixion," by Nardo di Cione

PRAY TOGETHER

Vocation Prayer

I glorify You, God,
In all that I do.
Mind, body and spirit,
My best is for You.

For us to be close, Lord,
Is what you desire.
I trust that your good love
For me will not tire.

I say, "yes" like Mary,
And give you my heart.
To follow you Jesus,
I will do my part.

Help me follow your will
No matter the call.
Whatever vocation,
I promise my all.

AMEN.

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VISUAL ART

5 min

1. Display "Crucifixion" by Nardo di Cione.
2. Direct students to study the image in light of today's theme.
3. Discuss the painting with the class, using the questions below.
 - At Mass a priest changes wine into the blood of Christ. What are the angels doing here in this picture?
 - Why is it painted in gold?
 - How can a priest be like Jesus in this painting?

MEDITATIVE PRAYER

5 min

1. Introduce the meditation.

Now is the time to listen to the word of God. Let's God's peace come to you as you get a little bit comfortable. You can close your eyes if you'd like.

2. Slowly read aloud John

15:13,16,17. Pause in between times for silent contemplation. *"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends..."*

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain...

This I command you: love one another."

- JOHN 15:13, 16, 17

3. Help the students to reflect on this scripture and their own lives. Allow a few moments for silent conversation with Jesus.

When Jesus says that there is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends, he is calling you his friend. He has laid down his life for you on the cross. Can you imagine how much bravery and love it would take to die for a friend? Think about how much love it would take to die for anyone. It must be a lot. Jesus died for you with that much love. Speak to God from your heart in the next few moments. Listen to him. Thank him. Tell him what is on your mind. Offer your friendship to him.

VOCAL PRAYER

2 min

1. Direct the students to look over the prayer.
2. Students pray together the Vocation Prayer.



PRIESTHOOD

EXPLORATION

LAY DOWN ONE'S LIFE

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