

7th Grade: Religious Life

OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVE:

To learn how religious life fosters depth of character.

MAIN CONCEPTS:

The religious life draws people with depth of character.

Through prayer, contemplation, and service, depth of character is fostered in religious brothers and sisters.

St. Teresa Benedicta's life and writing is an example of the wisdom which comes from contemplation and devotion to God.

PLANNING DIRECTIONS:

Choose the components you wish to use given the time you have and the needs of your students.

INTRODUCTION

2 min

Summarize today's theme.

Through these lessons we hope to become familiar with the vocations to which God calls people so that you will be able to follow his call always. Right now, you are in the single state of life, but someday God may call you to a particular vocation—married life, priesthood, or religious life. Today's focus is on Religious Life.

OPENING PRAYER

2 min

Let us draw near to God during today's lesson. The Gospel of Luke says: "Put out into deep water, and lower your nets for a catch." - LUKE 5:4

RELIGIOUS LIFE

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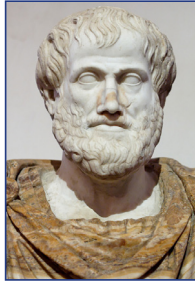
OPENING ACTIVITY

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "DEEP?"

People who are called to the religious life usually have depth of character, which continues to be formed through their vocation.

When someone says, "That's really deep," what do they mean? Normally they mean that something is profound or insightful.

Do you know any people who are "deep." Have you read any deep books or watched any profound movies?



Aristotle was a Greek philosopher who lived about 350 years before Jesus. Even today, he is considered one of the greatest thinkers of all time.

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

EDITH STEIN BECOMES TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS

Edith Stein was born in 1891 in Breslau, Poland, to a Jewish family.

Her father died when she was a toddler, and she was raised by her very intelligent and capable mother.

Gifted with a brilliant mind, Edith actively sought the truth through extended philosophical studies. Eventually, she found the Truth himself when she encountered Jesus through reading the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila. She was baptized soon thereafter in Germany when she was 31.

She taught, wrote, and studied philosophy with great zeal, though she longed to offer herself to God as a Carmelite nun. Much of her writing focused on philosophy and women's distinct role. She was a pioneer in many regards. Eventually, she became a Carmelite sister and took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Only a few years later, as the Nazi influence became more threatening to her Jewish roots, she secretly left Germany and fled to a Carmelite Monastery in Holland.

The Nazis invaded Holland and expelled all Catholics of Jewish background, including Teresa Benedicta who was put to death in the gas chambers at Auschwitz on August 9, 1942. Her writings and her prayerful love for people in the midst of her sufferings became widely contemplated. She was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1998.



Edith Stein as a young woman

Pray a simple prayer from the heart or:

Lord, show us how to go out into the deep water and lower our nets for a catch. The shallow things of this world leave us empty, but we are not capable of more without you. Your world needs the depth of grace which redeems. Show us the way, Jesus, to receive that grace. Show us the way to reach other people with your love. We are open to your gifts.

OPENING ACTIVITY

10 min

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “DEEP?”

People who are called to the religious life usually have depth of character, which continues to be formed through their vocation. Let’s get a sense of what “deep” actually is.

1. Have the students write on the board names of books, movies, or famous figures whom they think are “deep.” (Examples: Shakespeare, The Lord of the Rings, Stephen Hawking, Einstein, the book of Hebrews, etc.)
2. Students who are familiar with the suggestion hold up their hands to give a rating on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the deepest).
3. Discuss what makes something or someone “deep.” (Examples: thinking about something more clearly than many other others; asking insightful questions about things that others don’t notice; offering a new perspective on problems in life, etc.)
4. Discuss if “depth of character” is different from “deep.” (For example, a man might write a book that others think is brilliant, but he may not display much virtue in his life.)

ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS

20 min

1. Read through the reading pages individually, in small groups, or as a class.
2. Use the questions to spark class discussion, or assign students to write answers to the questions.
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.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

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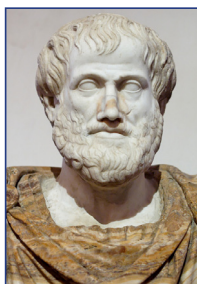
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Edith Stein as a young woman

Have students read the story. As a class, discuss how the author felt drawn to religious life even before she was Catholic. How is that a testimony that it truly is *God* who calls?



ESTABLISHING THE CONCEPTS *continued*

Step in Her Shoes

The following are quotes by Edith Stein. As a philosopher, many of her writings take time to understand, but they show the fruit of prayerful contemplation.

1. Read through the quotes.
2. Pick one.
3. Rewrite it in your own words.
4. Find an application in your life or in the world around you.
5. Repeat, depending upon time available.

Quotes from St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross

1. "In order to be an image of God, the spirit must turn to what is eternal, hold it in spirit, keep it in memory, and by loving it, embrace it in the will."
2. "The limitless loving devotion to God, and the gift God makes of Himself to you, are the highest elevation of which the heart is capable; it is the highest degree of prayer. The souls that have reached this point are truly the heart of the Church."
3. "Those who join the Carmelite Order are not lost to their near and dear ones, but have been won for them, because it is our vocation to intercede to God for everyone."
4. "Let go of your plans. The first hour of your morning belongs to God. Tackle the day's work that he charges you with, and he will give you the power to accomplish it."
5. "Each woman who lives in the light of eternity can fulfill her vocation, no matter if it is in marriage, in a religious order, or in a worldly profession."



St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross

ALTERNATIVE READING

THE VOCATION STORY OF SISTER LUCIA MARIE

From the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia

I began to explore the idea of a religious vocation even before I became Catholic. For some reason I bought an old novel about a nursing sister and began reading it my junior year of college at St. John's University in Annapolis. This is the first time I heard a sister being called a "Bride of Christ." The idea consumed my thoughts; it was so beautiful. In the book, the main character endured many hardships for the love of God and the desire to become holy. That anyone would willingly endure these hardships for Him showed me the importance and happiness that comes from holiness. I tried to find more books about sisters and began to read the lives of the saints.



A monstrance stands in the chapel of St. John's Seminary in Boston. A new papal document released Oct. 8 says devotion to the Eucharist can help transform the world.

(CNS photo by Gregory L. Tracy, The Pilot) (Oct. 8, 2004) See EUCHARIST-LETTER Oct. 8, 2004.

At this time I also began to visit a Perpetual Adoration chapel at the church a few blocks from my apartment. I remember going in and seeing the Host in the monstrance for the first time. I genuflected because that was what everyone else was doing, but I had no idea why. I sat down and looked at the Host. It was so white, I thought that maybe it was a relic of the habit of a saint, but then I realized that I was looking at the Host, and thought, "Catholics think that is Jesus." Then I realized, "It is Jesus!" I suppose that was the real moment of my conversion.

That tiny basement chapel is also where my desire to be a bride of Christ became tangible. On the left wall hung a large crucifix. One day during Holy Week, a woman was standing by the crucifix, crying and kissing Our Lord's wounds. A real Mary Magdalene before my eyes! I was filled with the desire to be poured out for the love of Christ, to share in His sufferings and take pleasure in His joys. Shortly after this I read an essay by Edith Stein in which she said that once a person hears the call of God to be His bride, nothing else can satisfy her.

EXPLORATION

15 min

CHARACTER DEPTH ACTIVITY

The people who are called and attracted to the religious life often have a depth of character. Additionally, depth of character is much further enhanced by a life of prayer and service found in the religious life.

Have the students write and design an ad for religious life. They can work alone or in groups.



RELIGIOUS LIFE

ALTERNATIVE READING *continued*

I entered the Church the following Easter. During that year, I explored religious life very seriously. My RCIA sponsor was a Carmelite nun. I went to daily Mass at the Carmelite Monastery near my school. After graduation, my desire for holiness did not wane, but I put thoughts of a vocation aside for the time being.

I moved to Alexandria, Virginia, and began teaching second grade. I had a very fine spiritual director who encouraged me to strengthen my prayer life. He was a Dominican Tertiary...

I began to pray even more, making a holy hour each day. I felt that God wanted me to be in St. Catherine's order. It is funny now to remember coming home from the January vocation retreat to the Diocese of Arlington and telling the priest at my parish, "I want to be a Dominican, but I am not sure where!" I had a hundred concerns about looking in the direction of Nashville. I was quieter than most of the sisters I had met, and I wasn't sure that I wanted to teach. But the more I prayed the more I felt that God was calling me south. I made a retreat at the Motherhouse and saw my attraction for the life expanding. I then returned a month later, this time convinced that this was where I belonged. I was accepted on Palm Sunday and spent the spring and summer in happy anticipation.



Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia <http://nashvilledominican.org>

Now that I am here, I realize that not only is the life different from what I expected, but it has actually exceeded my expectations. When I was looking at different communities, I paid attention to their daily schedule, prayer life, and apostolate. While these are all important factors, I have come to realize how important community life is. It is from the example of the other sisters that I learn to be more and more like Our Lady. With my sisters I am learning to see and serve Christ. The reason I am so happy is not because I live in such pleasant surroundings or have access to a pretty chapel with beautiful music, or even that I am taken up by the joy of the sisters. It is because I am learning every day to love more and to see the world from the perspective of heaven. Growing in virtue and coming closer to the Lord is my true joy.

Sister Lucia Marie professed her first vows on August 10, 2005

EXPLORATION

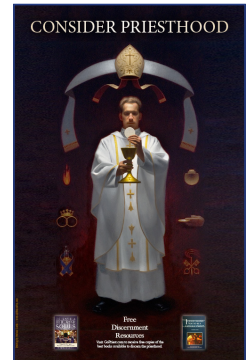
HELP WANTED: RELIGIOUS MEN OR WOMEN

More religious men and women are needed in the Church! Pretend that a Religious Order has hired you for your marketing skills, so you can attract people to consider joining their order.

Girls: Write and design the "help wanted" ad for a women's religious order.

Boys: Write and design the "help wanted" ad for a men's religious order.

Include a detailed explanation of who is needed and what they will be doing. If needed, research some particular religious orders.



INTO THE DEEP

1. Introduce the meditation.

Now is a prayerful time for you to internally interact with God. Saint Ignatius of Loyola encourages us to use all of our senses and imagination when we read Scripture and to encounter Jesus personally in his Word. Let this picture of fishermen on the sea awaken your senses to what it is like to be out on a boat, fishing in the deep. Place yourself in the boat with Christ, and notice your surroundings and his words.

2. Display the photo while you slowly read Luke 5:1-11.

“While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Genesaret.

He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets.

Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.”

Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.”

When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing.

They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.”

For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him,



REFLECTIVE PRAYER

PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP



The Sea of Galilee

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For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”

When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.”

Points to Ponder

After reading Luke 5:1-11, answer these questions:

1. What is it like to be there in the boat?
2. What do your senses teach you?
3. What words of Christ’s resound in your heart?
4. If Jesus called you, would you leave everything to follow him as a brother or sister?

VOCAL PRAYER

Come, Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts
of your faithful and kindle in
them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they
shall be created. And You shall
renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the
Holy Spirit, did instruct the
hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same
Holy Spirit we may be truly wise
and ever enjoy His consolations,
Through Christ Our Lord,

AMEN.

and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”

When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.”

- LUKE 5:1-11.

VOCAL PRAYER

2 min

Come, Holy Spirit

1. Direct the students to look over the prayer.
2. Students pray the vocation prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit*