

THOUGH MANY, WE ARE ONE

UNIT 1

Building Community

Lesson 7

Christian Meditation

Unit 1 Lesson 7

Building Community

Christian Meditation

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students and teachers will be introduced to the concept of Christian Meditation.

Duration: 30 minutes

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Religious Education:

Gr 5 Big Idea: PR2: Prayer has three major expressions found in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, each with their own unique characteristics: vocal, meditative, and contemplative.

Gr 6 – PR1.1: Identify the obstacles to prayer and the ways to overcome this struggle so that prayer and our Christian life are inseparable. [CCC nos. 2725-2751]

ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS & CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

The Catholic Social Teachings evident in this lesson include:

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations evident in this lesson include:

A Discerning Believer who:

CGE1f: seeks intimacy with God and celebrates communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship

GUIDING QUESTIONS (coming out of the Big Idea)

Big Idea:

- What is Christian Meditation (CM)?

Scripture Passages:

- “For God along my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.” (Psalm 62:5)
- “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” (Luke 5:16)
- “Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10a)

LEARNING GOALS

At the end of this lesson, students will know, understand and/or be able to:

- Engage in Christian Meditation

Though Many, We Are One - Religious Education for Combined Junior Grades

Success Criteria, based on the Learning Goals, can be co-constructed as a class in language meaningful to students. The success criteria help students understand what to look for during the learning and what it looks like once they have learned. They identify the significant aspects of student performance that are assessed and/or evaluated (i.e., the “look-fors”) in relation to curriculum expectations.

INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS AND CONTEXT

Terminology:

Christian Meditation - ancient form of prayer of the heart where one becomes more aware of the wonder and presence of God, and the experience of God’s love.

Materials:

- bell, chime
- Christian Meditation App (Contemplative Prayer, WCCM)

Internet Resources:

- Ontario Classroom experience of CM
<http://vimeo.com/106713264>

Resources:

- Appendix 1: *Christian Meditation with Children and Youth*

NOTE:

Please see below for *Continued Learning Opportunities*

MINDS ON

- Establishing a positive learning environment
- Connecting to prior learning and/or experiences
- Setting the context for learning

Have a class discussion with the following prompts:

- When are we asked to be silent?
- What is the purpose of each silence?
- What does silence ‘look’ like?

ACTION

- Introducing new learning or extending/reinforcing prior learning
- Providing opportunities for practice and application of learning (guided → independent)

Arrange room to allow for meditative space (e.g. desks to outside of room, chairs in a circle)

Introducing Christian Meditation in the Classroom (*See Appendix 1 for more information*)

- Invite students to be silent for 30 seconds to 1 minute
- Ask them to share whether that was easy or difficult.
- What are the challenges to being silent?
 - God has created us to live in relationship, so we want to be social
 - Silence is rare in our lives so we are not accustomed to it

Though Many, We Are One - Religious Education for Combined Junior Grades

- We are often distracted by people, things, and sounds around us, and by our own thoughts
- Invite students to be silent again, but this time, ask them to close their eyes, and to listen for the 'sounds of the room.' What did they hear? Was that easier or more difficult? Why?
- Sounds such as the clock ticking, heating or air conditioning, or our own breathing are always there, but we don't usually notice them. God is always there, but we do not always pay attention to God's presence.
- Introduce the word 'Maranatha' – an Aramaic (the language spoken by Jesus) word from scripture which means "Come, Lord." It is a suitable mantra because it invites God to be present, and because of the regular rhythm and rhyme.
- Practice breathing deeply with one syllable of maranatha on each inhale or exhale of breath (in-ma, out-ra, in-na, out-tha).
- Teacher/leader may say the word aloud a few times, students continue to 'think' the word silently.
- See *Appendix 1* for more details – What does Christian Meditation look like?

CONSOLIDATION

- Providing opportunities for consolidation and reflection
- Helping students demonstrate what they have learned

- Students may share their experience: How did they feel?
- After some discussion, and if time allows, experience another short time of Christian meditation. Was the experience different a second time.
- Remind students that Christian Meditation is a practice. With practice, we are better able to overcome the obstacles and distractions, so that we can enter more fully into prayer.
- Regular prayer through Christian Meditation will influence our behaviour and attitudes so that we live out our faith in our actions each day.

CONTINUED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Further extensions to this lesson might include:

- Scheduling weekly or daily sessions of Christian Meditation
- Follow-up Arts activities- reflection drawings
- Sharing the practice with families or with primary classes

APPENDIX 1

Christian Meditation with Children and Youth

What is Christian Meditation?

- A form of prayer used as far back as the fourth century with St. Anthony of the Desert and the desert mothers and fathers. While some early Christians spread the Good News and served those in need, others withdrew to the desert to focus on prayer. This tradition continues in cloistered religious communities.
- It is about entering more fully into the ordinary to discover the wonder of the presence of God and to experience God's love. God is always present, but we are not always paying attention.
- It moves from mental prayer (the prayer of the mind – saying prayers) to a deeper level (the prayer of the heart).
- It is an acknowledgement that the Holy Spirit dwells within each of us .
- It differs from mindfulness in that the focus is on relationship with God rather than one's self.



What are the benefits of Christian Meditation?

- Experience in Australia shows that children and adolescents enter more easily into Christian meditation than adults.
- Christian meditation with children and young people is proven to:
 - Make them calmer and more relaxed
 - Help create a sense of wonder
 - Help create a sense of God
 - Help create a sense of community
 - Allow them a chance to be silent and experience God's presence in silence
 - Allow them a chance to enter into the present moment

Introducing Christian Meditation in the Classroom

- Invite students to be silent for 30 seconds to 1 minute and to listen for the 'sounds of the room.' What did they hear? Most will report hearing the heat/air system, the clock, sounds from nearby classrooms, and perhaps their own breathing. These things are like God. They are always there, but we do not always notice them. God is always with us. We don't pray to ask God to be with us, but we pray so that we pay attention to God who is always there.
- Ask them to share whether the silence was easy or difficult. What are the challenges to being silent?
 - God has created us to live in relationship, so we want to be social
 - Silence is rare in our lives so we are not accustomed to it
 - We are often distracted by people, things, and sounds around us, and by our own thoughts
- Discussion & sharing: "When do you have to be silent? What is the purpose for each of those silences?" In Christian meditation, the purpose of the silence is for us to be more aware of the presence of God, who is always with us.

Though Many, We Are One - Religious Education for Combined Junior Grades

- We can close our eyes to shut out visual distractions. A mantra can help keep our mind busy so that we are less distracted by our thoughts.
- Introduce the word 'Maranatha' – an Aramaic (the language spoken by Jesus) word from scripture which means "Come, Lord." It is a suitable mantra because it invites God to be present, and because of the regular rhythm and rhyme.
- Practice breathing deeply with one syllable of Maranatha on each inhale or exhale of breath (in-ma, out-ra, in-na, out-tha).
- Teacher/leader may say the word aloud a few times, students continue to 'think' the word silently.

What does Christian Meditation look like?

- Students sit in a circle, on chairs with heels and toes flat on the floor or on the floor cross-legged. The circle is a sign of our unity; connecting to the floor symbolizes our connection to creation.
- Sitting upright with palms open on lap – offering prayer to God and receiving God's love.
- A candle may be lit in center of circle.
- Students close their eyes – teacher or other adult keeps eyes open for supervision and safety.
- Begin with a short opening prayer, scripture, or song.
- Silent repetition of mantra "Maranatha" .
- Length of meditation varies with age – start with 1 minute per grade; work up to 1 minute per year of age.
- Students who find it difficult to be completely still may be given a sacred object (rosary, prayer stone, small cross, etc.) to manipulate during the meditation.

Apps for Christian Meditation:

- Centering Prayer – Contemplative Outreach <http://www.centeringprayer.com/> (for iPhone)
- World Community for Christian Meditation <http://www.wccm.org/> (for Android and iPhone)



Other Resources for Christian Meditation:

- <http://www.cominghome.org.au/> - Christian Meditation for Children and Young People from Catholic Education Diocese of Townsville, Australia
- <http://vimeo.com/106713264> - Video from Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board – interviews with elementary students, teachers, parents, and administrators