

- Level:** Elementary
- Bible Verse:** "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." -Matthew 25:40
- Overview:** The purpose of this lesson is to examine the concept of sharing the love of Christ. This will be done through the following:
- **Introduce** the theme of caring for others for the sake of Christ
 - **Challenge** students to consider how we can care for people spiritually by sharing the love of Christ with them
 - **Explore** some of the OCMC's mission efforts to care for the growing Orthodox Church in northwestern Guatemala
 - **Identify** ways that Orthodox missions can serve Christ by serving other people
 - **Act** by collecting funds throughout Lent with the Mission Coin Boxes to support the work of the Mission Center so that many more are empowered to use their spirit of peace to bring others to the faith

Note to Teacher: As Orthodox Christians, there are numerous ways that we can express our Faith and share it with others, showing them the depths of our love for Christ and His love for us. The goal of the lesson is to encourage students to consider missions in the context of Christ's teachings about caring for one another. OCMC does this through short-term mission teams and long-term missionaries that travel to corners of the world where Christ is yet to be known. You will be reflecting on serving others as a means to spreading the gospel and bringing more people to Christ.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, We pray for all people from all nations around the world that they may come to know who You are because they see You alive in me. Help me to care for the spiritual and physical needs of others around me and around the world. Help me to be a good example of your love to others. That I may be bold to welcome new believers into your Church. Let my life be an example of Christian love and action.

Lesson: Begin by reading the prayer above, then read the bible verse provided. Have the children repeat it or have a child read aloud for deeper understanding.

Activity 1: Read activity sheet #1 together, then read and discuss answers to the discussion questions

Activity 2: Read activity sheet #2 together, then read and discuss answers to the discussion questions

Activity 3: Assemble the OCMC Coin Boxes

Activity #1:

Read Matthew 25:31-46 (RSV)

"When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'"

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the story mean to you?
2. What does it mean to care for "one of the least of these my brethren"?
3. How can we care for and fill the needs of others?

Ask the students to share something kind that has been said or done to them recently.

Discuss how it feels to receive kindness from others and to be kind to others.

Explain that acts of kindness to others are a way to show others that they are cared for and valued.

Apply the concept of fulfilling others' needs to the context of international missions.

Activity #2: *The Orthodox Church in Guatemala*

Thousands of people in the greater region of northwestern Guatemala have become Orthodox Christians over the past 3 years. These communities are served by just a few Orthodox priests. Over the past few years, the OCMC has sent long-term missionary families as well as short-term mission teams.

While the most recent short-term mission team was in Guatemala, they visited a village called Aguacate to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. OCMC Mission Specialist Fr. John Chakos describes this experience:

OCMC team members had never seen such happy worship. The church was filled. When we began to give Holy Communion, the people kept coming and coming. Then, when the Liturgy was over, our team sang a lively worship hymn to the delight of the congregation. The people sang a song in their own Mayan language. Finally, as it came to an end, we began passing out paper icons of "Christ the Sower". While many had come forward for Holy Communion, even more, especially the children, came forward eagerly. Hundreds upon hundreds of them, holding each other's hands, came forward to receive their first icon. They clutched them in their hands as a precious gift.

One of the short-term team members, Nick Hogan, offers his own thoughts on his time in Guatemala:

One of the most wonderful parts of our mission was to see how friendly, warm, and accepting the Guatemalan people are. Every stranger I was introduced to hugged me as though I were family. Our real purpose in Guatemala was to show the people that they are loved and cared for, and to show them that the Orthodox world at large is here for them.

Discussion Questions:

1. Imagine being at the Divine Liturgy in Guatemala. What do you think made the children so thankful for the simple gift of an icon?
2. Nick talks about love and how it is something that unites us with people of different cultures with different languages. What are some ways that you can be "family" and loving to everyone to reflect God's love?

Activity #3: *OCMC Coin Boxes*

Discuss how these funds will be used to support the ministries of the Mission Center to spread Christ's love around the world. Send the boxes home with the students and ask them to fill them and return the boxes at a time you decide upon. Remind the class of their role in spreading Christ's love through caring for others.