

Level: Middle School

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: Christ came and lived among us so that the world might be saved. 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: Assemble the students at their desks and begin the lesson with the prayer that is provided. Read the Bible verse. To encourage a deeper understanding of the verse, ask the students to repeat the verse with you a second time, or ask a student to read the verse.

Activity 1: Pass out the "New to Orthodoxy in Guatemala" Activity 1 sheet. You may allow the students to read quietly or have them read the sheet aloud.

Activity 2: Using the discussion questions, lead the students in a discussion of the reading "New to Orthodoxy in Guatemala". Read each discussion question and discuss the answers out loud.

Activity 3: Assemble the OCMC Coin Boxes

Activity #1: *Read "New to Orthodoxy in Guatemala"*

Thousands of people in northwestern Guatemala have embraced Orthodoxy over the past few years, and their numbers continue to multiply. These communities are served by a handful of Orthodox priests under His Eminence Archbishop Athenagoras of Mexico. OCMC has sent two missionary families to serve the Guatemalan Church, with a third family preparing for service. In 2013, the first short-term Mission Team went to this region.

The Mission Team visited a village called Aguacate and celebrated the Divine Liturgy. OCMC Mission Specialist, Fr. John Chakos, describes the experience:

The OCMC team members had never seen such spirited worship. The church was filled to overflowing. In this village, every Sunday seems like Pascha because almost every member attends and fully participates in the Liturgy. When the Liturgy was over, our team sang a lively Latino worship hymn to the delight of the congregation. They sang music in their own Mayan language. Hundreds upon hundreds of children, holding each other's hands, or carried on the backs or in the arms of a parent, kept streaming in. Overwhelmed by the sheer number of children, I felt a profound sense of responsibility for them. This was the present and future of Orthodoxy and they were waiting for us to respond.

One of the short-term team members, Nick Hogan, offers his own reflection:

One of the most shocking elements of our mission was to see how friendly, how warm and accepting the Guatemalan people are. Every stranger I was introduced to, although separated by language and culture, embraced me with a hug as though I were family. Our real purpose in Guatemala was to show the people in Guatemala that they are loved and cared for, and to show them that the Orthodox world at large is here for them.

Activity #2: *Discussion*

1. Imagine being at the Divine Liturgy in Aguacate. What do you think it was like? How do you think it looked, sounded, and felt?
2. Fr. John mentions how he feels responsible for the children because they are the present and the future of the Church in Guatemala. What does this mean?
3. Read Nick Hogan's quote again. How did two different languages and two different cultures become united? How can we be "family"?
4. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." How can we serve others as if we were serving Christ himself?
5. What can you do in your life to serve others like the people in Guatemala?

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.