

Superhero of Justice

A story activity about how kids can be superheroes of justice in their communities

Created by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development Archdiocese of Baltimore

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Description: An interactive activity about applying the principles of social justice and helping neighbors.

Audience: Elementary school children, in Kindergarten up to third grade

While this activity provides a brief synopsis of the principles of social justice, it works best if the children have some understanding of the themes of Catholic Social Teaching before-hand, as it is intended to reinforce the knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching and how they can act the principles of justice out, rather than teach them about Catholic Social Teaching or social justice.

Supplies:

- Either a flip-chart, dry erase boards, or big pieces of paper that the children can draw on; one is needed for each group or child depending on if you want to do this as a group or individually
- Markers, colored pencils, or crayons; each child should have at least one writing utensil
- A copy of the “Ways to Help My Neighbor” handout for each child
- A copy of the “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching” handout for each child is optional if the leader feels the children need a refresher

Directions: For small groups, give each child a writing utensil and a drawing surface. For large groups, separate the children into groups of 3-5 where each group has a drawing surface. If the leader wants to give the children a copy of the Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, this should be handed out at the beginning. Read the story prompts and reflections as indicated below.

Story prompt:

Imagine you (or your team) are a superhero of justice. Your mission is to go around your community and help make it a place full of Catholic social justice using the themes of Catholic Social Teaching. These themes are: Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; the Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity; Care for God’s Creation.

What does your superhero look like? What powers does your superhero have? On the flip chart (or blank page etc), draw your superhero of justice and indicate what powers your hero has.

Reflection:

Have each group or child present their superhero to the class and explain why the superpowers can be used to promote justice in their community. For the ideas that connect well to any of the themes of Catholic Social Teaching, mention that they made this connection.

Story prompt:

Uh-oh! Your superhero has just been hit by the Ray of Reality! All your superhero's supernatural powers are gone! What powers does your hero still have? What traits would a non-superhero have that could still let him or her make the community full of justice?

Reflection:

Have each group or child present their superpower-less but still powerful hero to the class and explain why they believe that power stays and why it is still helpful to the community.

Even though none of us have superpowers, there still is a lot that we can do to help bring justice into our community. Often we cannot do things alone, so we need to work together with the other people in our community in order to help our most vulnerable members. Insert reflection here about what ordinary people can do? How even w/out superpowers we're still pretty powerful? See if the kids' heroes can work together & combine their strengths?

Story prompt:

There is a signal in the sky! Your superhero has been given a mission to help his or her neighbor. But your hero is confused—who is his or her neighbor?

Reflection: Ask the children who they think their neighbor is.

Explain to them that a neighbor is not just the person who lives in their neighborhood, but anyone in their community, state, country, and even in the world. We are all one big human family and are all neighbors. Thus we need to help our neighbors in need no matter where they are or who they are.

Ask the children what they think that they can do to help their neighbors near and far. Write down their suggestions, and see if there are any that the class could do together. Then give them the "Ways to Help My Neighbor" handout as a list for future brainstorming.

Ways to Help My Neighbor:

1. Be friendly—even a simple smile whenever you see someone in your community can brighten their day.
2. Sit with someone at lunch who is alone
3. Pray for your neighbors—the ones near and far; prayer is a very important aspect of bringing about social justice; you can keep them in the intention for your nighttime prayer, or think of them during the Prayer of the Faithful at mass
4. Share your knowledge with others—tell your family and your friends who are not in your class about the principles of social justice and what they can do to help
5. Talk with your parents about the Themes of Catholic Social Teaching—ask how they practice them in their jobs and personal lives; encourage them to pay attention to social justice issues and vote for policies that would promote them
6. See if your teacher will organize a field trip to a policy maker’s office to learn how citizens can help with policy change
7. Ask your principal if your class or school can organize a project—like a canned food drive for food pantries or a fundraiser to give money to a local or foreign charity—in order to help people in your community or abroad
8. Organize a scout trip where you learn more about poverty and volunteer at an organization that helps those living in poverty
9. Ask your church if there are any justice-related efforts that you can help with
10. Do volunteer activities alone or with your friends
11. See if your community has a community garden that you can help in; ask if your parents will let you help them garden in your backyard and ask you can donate some of the produce to food pantries or shelters
12. Help clean up a local park with your family, classmates, or scout group
13. Take care of the earth by turning off lights or electronics when you are not using them, taking shorter showers or not letting the water run if you are not using it, and recycling
14. Give your old but still good clothes and toys to children living in poverty
15. Draw cheerful pictures and send cards to kids with cancer or other long-term illnesses in your area
16. Visit a senior center and talk with the seniors, play games with them
17. Help your family or friends resolve conflicts without fighting
18. Learn more about a culture that is struggling with poverty, then donate some of your allowance to a charity that helps that country
19. Write a letter or have a parent help you write a letter to a policy maker to make a law that will help make the community or world a better place
20. Think of a justice issue you really care about then ask a parent to search online to see what organizations are working on it in your area; ask or have a parent ask the organization if there is something you can do to help

Now try some of these or create a new idea for how you can help your neighbor!

Themes from Catholic Social Teaching: Elementary School Level

CST principle explanations for the Elementary School level were adapted with permission by CCHD of the Archdiocese of Baltimore from “Themes from Catholic Social Teaching” by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C., 2005.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person: People should love each other. Some medicine and science practices forget this. Wars hurt people. We should solve problems without fighting. We also should not kill anyone. We are all people with value and should care for each other.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation: People are social. The way we make our rules is important. We need to remember our whole community when we make rules. Loving families are good. Law and money rules should be fair for everyone. We need to help people who are poor.

Rights and Responsibilities: People need food, clothes, a house, and to be able to go to school. We have a right to these things. Sometimes people in our community lack these things. We should help them.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: We need to think about how people who are poor in our community live. People who have enough need to share with people who do not have enough. We should put the needs of people who are poor and vulnerable first.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers: People need to work to make a living. Their work should make them happy. It should be safe. They should make enough money to buy what they need to live a decent life. We should make sure all workers are protected.

Solidarity: We are one human family. We are brothers and sisters even if we are different. We need to get along with each other. Solidarity means not fighting and helping others. We should love our neighbors all over the world.

Care for God’s Creation: We love God by taking care of the earth. We must protect the planet and its people. We must live in harmony with creation.