

Educational Resources – Reflecting on Power

Overview

Themes: Ireland, Deciduous Forest Ecosystem and creatures, power, bullying, healing

Through a discussion of superheroes, students will explore how power can be used for good or evil. Throughout the discussion, students will tie knots in a piece of string as a way of noticing and naming for themselves any abuses of power they have experienced in their personal lives. A closing ritual will give them an opportunity to offer these “knots” to God for healing.

Educational Objectives:

- Students will reflect on personal power and power dynamics through a discussion of superheroes.
- Students will be given resources and encouraged to seek help if they are experiencing bullying.
- Students will notice and process personal feelings about these power dynamics through a short healing ritual.

Materials:

- *Amazing Friendships Between Animals and Saints* book
- world map
- (optional) online read-aloud image of border art to project on a screen
- a 20–30 cm piece of string for each person
- a cross (large or small)
- contact information for local anti-bullying programs
- a recording of "Amazing Grace"

Directions:

Step 1 – The Story

Together, find Ireland on the world map. Compare this to where you live.

Project the border art on a screen.

Read the story of Saint Brigid and the Boar.

Read about Ireland’s ecosystem (see additional online resources provided).

Can you find the Magpie and creatures in the illustrated border?

Read the Fun Facts about each creature as it is found.

Step 2 – Discussion

Introduction

Gather in a circle around the cross (either large or small – you may want to go to your school chapel or outdoors). Everyone is given a piece of string (including the teacher/parent) long enough to tie knots in. Throughout the discussion, tying knots in the string is used as a way to acknowledge the difficult feelings that arise around bullying and abuse of power. The discussion is outlined and to be led by the teacher/parent, followed by a short healing ritual.

Teacher/Parent Explanation to the group:

As we discuss today, you might find that it brings up feelings inside of you. Sometimes these feelings are sad, uncomfortable or hard. If you have any difficult feelings during this discussion, tie a knot in your piece of string... kind of like the knot you might be feeling inside. You will not have to talk about these knots, but we will be doing something with your knotted strings later. (Throughout the discussion, the leader can pause to tie knots of sadness or pain to model how the children might do this. Encourage students to spontaneously tie knots when they have feelings.)

Discussion

We all know about superheroes. I want you to think about your favorite superhero, and when I count to 3, I want you to shout out the name of that superhero. 1, 2, 3!

Superheroes are super because they have special powers. What are some of the superpowers that your favourite superhero has?

One of the cool things about superheroes is that they use their power for good. Villains also have power, BUT they use their power for evil. (Prompt students to tie a knot in their string, and tie one in your own.) When the superhero overcomes the villain's evil power, it makes for an exciting story!

Every person in your life has power too ... even you! Some use it for good, and some don't. Who in your life has more power than you? Why? Think about parents, adults, men, teachers, bigger kids, older kids etc. (Maybe give a personal example to get the ball rolling and tie a knot in your string if it is sad.)

Who has less power than you? Why? Think about your pets, younger siblings, kids in the schoolyard who are in lower grades, etc. (Maybe give a personal example to get the ball rolling and tie a knot in your string, if needed.) Did Saint Brigid have power?

As you think about people having power in your life, take a few moments to notice silently if people are using their power for good or not. (Tie knots.) Did some people in Saint Brigid's story use their power kindly and others unkindly?

Sometimes when people use their power to hurt others it is called bullying. Bullying can make us feel sad and hurt. (Tie knots.)

When we experience bullying, there are things we can do about it. What are some things that you know can be done about bullying?

Note: Bullying prevention programs probably already exist in your school and community, so students may have lots to share. Emphasize the importance of talking to a safe adult or Kids Help Phone (In Canada, if you are a young person and are struggling with a problem big or small, you can call 1-800-668-6868. Kids Help Phone is always available, 24/7/365.) Be prepared to share local contact information for help in your school or community.

Saint Brigid protected the boar who had experienced bad treatment, and we too can find protection or healing if we are scared or sad. We can go to God to help us heal the hurting parts inside of us. We might be hurting because someone else has used their power to harm us. Or we might be feeling bad because we have hurt someone else. No matter what, Jesus tells us that we are loved and forgiven when we take our struggling feelings to God for help. This is part of God's Grace that is offered to us.

Healing Ritual

The group gathers in a circle around the cross. Everyone has their knotted string.

Introduction

Now we are going to offer our difficult feelings to God for healing. (Music optional) As we listen to "Amazing Grace," we will offer up our knotted strings as a way of giving our struggling feelings to God to be healed.

Instructions

One at a time, come up and lay your string at the foot of the cross. Silently offer a prayer for healing (something like "God, please heal all my hurt.").

Closing Prayer

Loving God,

We know that you want to heal us.

Please take these knots and gently untie them with your love.

Help our wounded and scared hearts.

Please hold us and love us as we continue to heal and grow.

We know we are not perfect, but you love us anyway.

Thanks for always caring for us no matter how broken we might feel.

We love you, too!

Amen.

Extension Activity

You may want to gather up the knotted strings and burn them outside as a final step in giving your struggle to God.