

The Interim



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Curriculum Supplement For Schools

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The *Interim Plus* is a periodical dedicated to educational matters and specifically designed to assist teachers in integrating relevant life issues in their lesson planning.

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Christmas Joy

This month's curriculum supplement is divided into two parts: one presenting a spiritual context for the "event bursting into time" but whose meaning and import is "for all time"; then a fun part with things associated with the warm feelings generated by Christmas celebrations. Why do people flock to the churches on Christmas? Why do they flock to the stores? What is the quintessential Christmas spirit? Pope Benedict XVI delivered a simple Christmas message a year ago:

God's sign is simplicity. God's sign is the baby. God's sign is that he makes himself small for us. This is how he reigns. He does not come with power and outward splendour. He comes as a baby – defenceless and in need of our help. He does not want to overwhelm us with his strength. He takes away our fear of his greatness. He asks for our love: so he makes himself a child. He wants nothing other from us than our love, through which we spontaneously learn to enter



into his feelings, his thoughts and his will – we learn to live with him and to practise with him that humility of renunciation that belongs to the very essence of love. God made himself small so that we could understand him, welcome him, and love him.

Part I

**For children:
putting charity into practice**

Linda McCullough Moore is an author who writes novels and short stories. Some of her work has appeared in St. Anthony's Messenger. Here she presents lessons in giving, short pieces on how she teaches her children some virtues.

A mother teaches her children the value of being generous

THAT'LL BE \$96.57 with the coupons," the pretty young woman says as she begins to bag my groceries. As I swipe my credit card, my four-year-old, Josh, shakes his head, despairing.

"You know," he says, "if we didn't spend so much on food, we'd have a lot more money for toys."

But it is only after I have recounted this story to everyone I know that it hits me: It's always a choice. And, yes, fewer carrots and pork chops do mean more PlayStation games and Legos.

That evening, I'm sitting watching It's a Wonderful Life with my two sons when a commercial opens with the wide-eyed face of the dearest girl I've ever seen.

"Just \$20 a month will feed and clothe Marie and buy her medicine and schoolbooks," a man is saying. Both boys are riveted.

"Hmmm," I say. "Twenty dollars a month. That's how much we were going to spend on the new high-speed Internet. What do you guys think? Faster Internet or \$20 for Marie?"

"Mom, don't be silly," eight-year-old Adam says.

"Who would pick the cable thing?"

Who indeed? The movie's back on. Harry Bailey is calling Uncle Billy. And we call, too. Adam does the talking.

"Hello, this is Adam. We'd like to wait a minute for things on the computer and give our money to Marie. Could you give it to her?"

A week later Josh shrieks out from the den: "Mom! Dad! Come look at the TV. Marie is on! She looks great!"

And so it begins. A few days later I go to the bank and get four rolls of quarters, which the boys unwrap in the middle of the table.

"O.K.," I say. "Now let's see what these little round silver things can buy."

I give the boys a few catalogs from charities which specify what we can buy with what amount. We settle on Africa to begin. Adam and his dad—our resident mathematicians—do some serious long division.

"Here it is," Adam says at last. "For 25 cents we could buy food for a day for this little boy, or a shot to make him well, or clean water for one whole week or a whole pair of sandals because he has to walk miles and miles to his school."

"I hate shots," Josh says. "Let's get him shoes."

"I think he'd like some food," Adam says. "I'd like food."

"Oh, wait just a minute. I forgot," I say. "We only have so many quarters here." I put on the table a few fliers from some local toy stores. "We need to choose what we will buy."

"You mean we can buy toys instead of food and shots and sandals?" "Yep," I say. "You guys get to choose."

The boys peruse the fliers.

Then Adam picks up a World Relief flier to hold in the other hand.

"Wait a minute," he says, laughing. "I can buy a camera phone for the same amount I could get a cow which could give milk to a family for a whole year. I think I'd like a cow, please."

"Or I could buy a goat for what it costs to buy a punching bag. I don't need a punching bag. I've got Josh." He jabs his brother, who starts yelling that he wants a goat, too.

This was three years ago—years that have rushed by in a heartbeat.

I sit here this morning looking at our refrigerator door. There is a crayon drawing of Adam and Josh done by



our sponsored child, Rose Ibanga, who lives in Nigeria. There are also magazine pictures of not just goats and cows but every animal there is. Each one is labeled lest there be any misunderstanding.

Our first cow we named Camera Phone, and the two goats were christened Sega Genesis I and II. The walls of the boys' rooms are plastered with pictures of the purchases, many paid for with the spoils of leaf-raking ventures and lemonade stands.

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Dec2009/Feature2.asp>

Questions and Activities

1. How does the story teach the importance of choices?
2. Why should the children care about people far away?

3. How can people make a difference?
4. Could the class come up with a similar project, where they contribute their own little savings that could be used for this purpose?
5. Ask them to come up with local needs and novel ways they can share their bounty with others in need. For example, instead of having a hot dog or pizza day, they could choose to

- pool their money to sponsor a child or a village somewhere less materially fortunate than them.
6. Lead the children to appreciate the value of community and experience over possessions.
7. One can easily be overwhelmed by the enormity of human deprivation and suffering around the globe, but children tend to believe that it is indeed “better to light one candle than to curse the dark”. Why?

Thoughts of the Day

This is an activity of reflection suitable for any class or subject around the period of Christmas. The activity could help frame the season of advent as we approach the Holy Feast of Christmas. Students can do the reflecting individually or in a small group and then share their insights with the class. A number of statements are presented dealing with the celebration of Christmas. The celebration of Christmas brings great joy and happiness, but it can also be a period of sadness and depression for many. Why this paradox?

Educational Goals:

The general objective of this lesson is for all learners to (1) comprehend the “Thought(s) for the Day” and (2) value the “Thought(s) for the Day” as these could apply to their lives, to their experience of Christmas.

Objectives:

Students will be able to explain what the author’s quote is saying; what the quote means to them; how it might apply to society in which they live; and consider why the quote may have value.

Teacher preparations and general lesson activities:

The teacher should develop his or her own individual insights to the quotes and use personal examples and other allusions to help the learners through the exercise.

- * Distribute a sheet with the “Thought(s) for the Day” or project it on screen via computer, or write on whiteboard.
- * Have the learners read the thoughts silently to themselves.
- * The learner will then use the four key questions to ponder over the meaning, importance, and use of the thoughts
- * Have the students write responses to the questions, and allow approximately 15 minutes for writing.
- * Have the students discuss their learning insights with each other, and allow approximately 20 minutes for discussion.
- * Use the final 10 minutes to summarize the discussion and make important connections to curriculum learning expectations and to their relevance to the society we live in.

Lesson Plan

Introduction

Have learners select the key words in the quote(s) and ask what the words mean. Ask the students to rephrase the quotation or to say the same thing in another way. Have them answer these four questions as they develop their understanding of the quotations:

1. What is the author trying to say?

First, put yourself in the author’s shoes to try to understand what he or she was saying. Who is the author(s) of the respective quotes? Does it matter if we know this? When and where did they live? What does this background information add to your proper understanding of the quote?

2. What does it mean to you?

Once you understand what the author was trying to say, then ask yourself, “What does it mean to me?” Think about yourself, your family, and general society. What if people do not agree with the spirit behind the thought? How do teenagers view Christmas? Do you agree?

3. Why is it important?

Now, place your own personal meaning to the quote and think about the importance of what it means to you personally.

4. How can you use it?

Think about how you can apply the concept to your life. This is a critical step along with attaching a personal value to the quote. Start to identify ways and means by which you can make the whole Christmas spirit more important in your life.

Writing Component. The students can be directed to write their responses to the Four Questions raised above. You can ask the students to do this aspect of the lesson individually.

Class Discussion Learners share their responses and discuss their insights. Taking the first question, ask learners to share their responses in groups of 4 and see if there are common themes or aspirations. Encourage talk among individuals and between groups and call for feedback among the learners. A technique that works is to highlight the various choices of words to describe the quote. The teacher should write key words on the board as a visual reminder of learners' ideas and for the final summary of the work. The teacher should work with the *learners' thoughts and insights.*)

Conclusion and Close

Re-Motivation:

Summary: Invite the students to summarize what they have learned by this process. Learners should connect insights to previous learning, and the learning expectations announced earlier.

<http://www.quotegarden.com/christmas.html>

When we were children we were grateful to those who filled our stockings at Christmas time. Why are we not grateful to God for filling our stockings with legs?

G.K. Chesterton

Once again, we come to the Holiday Season, a deeply religious time that each of us observes, in his own way, by going to the mall of his choice.

Author Unknown

I am not alone at all, I thought. I was never alone at all. And that, of course, is the message of Christmas. We are never alone. Not when the night is darkest, the wind coldest, the world seemingly most indifferent. For this is still the time God chooses.

Taylor Caldwell

The best Christmas of all is the presence of a happy family all wrapped up with one another.

Burton Hillis

Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches the heart of man. Anonymous

Essay assignments with Christmas theme

A Christmas-related writing assignment could include the following topics for the different grade levels, or possibly the same topic for elementary and secondary, but with obviously different learning expectations.

Such themes could be assigned in languages other than English as well.



1. How/why has the celebration of Christmas changed over the years?
2. Is there a “crisis of values” in the celebration of Christmas today?
3. Is Christmas a feast for the young and the old primarily?
4. How do Canadian newspapers editorialize about Christmas today as opposed to 30 years ago?
5. What are your favourite Christmas colours?
6. What is your favourite Christmas film?
7. What do you like best about Christmas?

Are Children Passe?

In recent years some pro-life groups have placed billboard ads at Christmas time to lament the contemporary attack on children. Here is the ad that appeared on a large billboard near Yonge and Dundas Streets in downtown Toronto.



Notice the text accompanying the photo of the toy soldier. The ad is meant to remind people that there is help for women considering abortion. But one can relate all this to the Christmas theme as well.

Are children passé in the modern world? Are children seen as an inconvenience, something which interferes with adult fulfillment, adult enjoyment of life? The birth rate is down virtually in all western countries. People work longer hours. Men and women devote themselves to their careers. It makes one ask whether people today work for the sake of work, unlike in the past when one worked to support the family they had brought into the world. How much time do parents actually spend with their children? Is the television set or the computer or the video player the new parent, the real upbringer of children? The modern dichotomy is that people ostensibly work for the family, but end up spending little or no time with the kids.

On the 7th Billion Baby

In reports on the birth of the “7 billionth baby” media people expressed different views, some seeing it as the harbinger of terrible things to come

like pollution, poverty, malnutrition, disease, violence and unemployment, in effect warning of impending doom for the planet and for the human race because of overpopulation. Others like Vatican spokesperson Father Federico Lombardi took a welcoming approach. He devoted his weekly radio editorial to the 7 billionth child assumed to have been born somewhere on earth around October 31. Here are extracts of his comments:

*Dear baby number 7 billion: I don't know if you are a girl or a boy, whether you are Indian or Chinese, born in a great city or a tiny village. I don't know if you were born in the fertile South American lowlands or under an igloo above the arctic circle. I don't know if you were born on a remote island, or in a refugee tent. I don't know whether you are healthy or sick or handicapped. I don't know whether both your parents were there to embrace you at your birth, or whether your mother alone was there to hold you. I don't know whether people will say there are too many or too few of you and your contemporaries. Today, I don't care about that....the world that you are coming into is a bit complicated and not friendly for everyone..... We haven't done a very good job preparing it for you....the leaders of the richest and most powerful nations are sitting around a table, struggling to find a way forward. We too are asking ourselves about your future.....**But today, I want to tell you that you are unique and special**, that you are a wonderful gift, that you are a miracle, that your spirit will live for ever, and so you are welcome. We hope that when you smile someone will respond to your smile, and when you cry someone will caress you. We hope you can go to school and that you won't go hungry. We hope that someone will answer your questions wisely and encourage you as you find your place in the world. We hope you will be able to love others, that you will be able to grow, and work, and live among your family, with many friends, in a nation and in a world that is free and at peace. We pray that you can understand that your life will find its fullest meaning not in this world but in the next....Because this is what you were born for. Your Creator and Father made you for this. We will do our part to make this possible; but you will have to do your part, too, because your future will*

also depend on you and the choices you make — and it will be up to you to welcome baby 8 billion.

<http://www.zenit.org/article-33783?l=english>

Questions

1. What do you think of the ad campaign by Niagara Region Right to Life?
2. Is it an effective way to get out a pro-life message?
3. Have students write a short essay on whether the 7 billionth baby is a threat or a gift to human life today.

Part II



Stirring Musical Memories

Many of us are quite familiar with the first verses of the traditional Christmas carols and songs, but how well do you know the rest of the lyrics? This would be good to have for a staff party or for some fun in class. Test

yourself and complete the next two lines of these songs. (correct lines are found on the answer page.)

1. *It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas,
Toys in ev'ry store,*
2. *Have yourself a merry little Christmas
Let your heart be light*
3. *"Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,*
4. *Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*
5. *I'll be home for Christmas
You can count on me*
6. *Christmas, Christmas time is near
Time for toys and time for cheer*

7. *We three kings of Orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,*
8. *What child is this, who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap, is sleeping?*
9. *Adeste fideles,
laeti triumphantes,*
10. *Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.*
11. *Sleigh bells ring, are you listening,
In the lane, snow is glistening*
12. *Jolly old Saint Nicholas,
Lean your ear this way!*
13. *The First Noel, the Angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay*
14. *'Twas in the moon of wintertime, when all the
birds had fled,
That mighty Gitchimanitou sent angel choirs
instead.*
15. *Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,*

Songs carry messages, sometimes serious and sometimes frivolous.

1. What did the child want in the Christmas song?
a) a wallet b) a snowboard c) two front teeth d) two hockey decks
2. In the Christmas song 'Let It Snow' what was the weather described as?
a) frightful b) delightful c) awful d) beautiful
3. In the Christmas carol when did 'Good King Wenceslas' look out?
a) feast of Lucy b) feast of Stephen c) feast of James d) feast of Gertrude
4. What tree is mentioned in the Christmas song 'Twelve Days of Christmas' ?
a) pear tree b) lemon tree c) plum tree d) orange tree

5. In the Christmas song what was 'Roasting on an Open Fire'
 a) marshmallows b) boar c) capon d) chestnuts
6. What brought Frosty the Snowman to life?
 a) sprinkling of pixie dust b) an old silk hat c) a magic wand d) a kiss
7. What did Frosty the Snowman have for a nose?
 a) button b) carrot c) apple d) icicle
8. In 'Have yourself a merry little Christmas' what "will soon be out of sight"?
 a) our money b) our troubles c) our turkey d) our wallets
9. According to Christmas lore, it is customary to exchange kisses beneath which plant?
 a) juniper b) poinsettia c) holly d) mistletoe
10. Which of the following was not a gift from a magi?
 a) myrrh b) gold c) frankincense d) diamonds
11. Who wrote "A Christmas Story"?
 a) Hans Christian Anderson b) Charles Dickens c) Mark Twain d) Antoine de Saint Exupery
12. What drink was adapted to become the Christmas drink "egg nog"?
 a) the French drink "lait de poule" b) Norwegian drink "glogg" c) German drink "biersuppe" d) Russian drink "vodka on the Volga"
13. In the song, the 12 days of Christmas, what did my true love give on the fifth day?
 a) flying butterflies of love b) lords a leaping c) gold rings d) maids a whispering
14. How many sides does a snowflake have?
 a) eight b) twelve c) six d) ten
15. Where did the real St. Nicholas live?
 a) Poland b) Turkey c) Germany d) Netherlands



Completion of the opening stanzas of the songs/carols

1. *But the prettiest sight to see
 Is the holly that will be
 On your own front door.*

2. *From now on,
 our troubles will be out of sight*

3. *Yonder peasant, who is he?
 Where and what his dwelling?"*

4. *Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
 God and sinners reconciled.*

5. *Please have snow and mistletoe
 and presents on the tree*

6. *We've been good, but we can't last
 Hurry Christmas, hurry fast*

7. *Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
 Following yonder Star.*

8. *Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
 While shepherds watch are keeping?*

9. *Venite, venite in Bethlehem!
 Natum videte,*

10. *The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
 The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.*

11. *A beautiful sight, we're happy tonight.
 Walking in a winter wonderland.*

12. *Don't you tell a single soul
What I'm going to say;*

13. *In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.*

14. *Before their light the stars grew dim,
And wandering hunters heard the hymn:*

15. *And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.*

Answers to

Song messages serious and frivolous

1. c 2. a 3. b 4. a 5. d

6. b 7. a 8. b 9. d 10. d

11. b 12. a 13. c 14. c 15. b

Humour

A baker's dozen and more of corny jokes you can try in class.



1. What did the Gingerbread Man put on his bed?
2. How did Scrooge win the football game?
3. What did Adam say the day before Christmas?
4. What is the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the regular alphabet?

5. What do Christmas trees and bad knitters have in common?
6. Why did they ask the turkey to join the band?
7. What did the salt say to the pepper?
8. What did the bald man say when he got a comb for Christmas?
9. Why wasn't the turkey hungry at Christmas time?
10. What do you call a letter that is sent up the chimney on Christmas eve?

Answers to corny questions

1. A cookie sheet!
2. The ghost of Christmas passed.
3. It's Christmas, Eve!
4. The Christmas alphabet has no L.
5. They both drop their needles.
6. He had the drum sticks.
7. Season's Greetings.
8. Thanks, I'll never part with it!
9. Because he was stuffed.
10. Blackmail.

MERRY CHRISTMAS in all nations
and in many languages!!!!

Joyeux Noel vesela koleda

Buon Natale Mboni Chrismen

vrolijk Kerstfeest Noeli Nziza

Feliz Navidad! su Kalèdomis

fröhliche Weihnachten bo Nadal

geseënde Kersfees Noheli nziza

Feliz Natal kala christougenna
Mừng Chúa Giáng Sinh



**Final reminder that the deadline for
the Father Ted Colleton Scholarship
program is November 30, 2011.**