


GOD THE GOOD SHEPHERD

UNIT ONE: God's Heroes

Lesson 4:**Gideon and the God of Peace!****CONTENT:**

1. After many peaceful years in the Promised Land, the Israelites were troubled by the people from Midian. They had to hide in the hills and caves. They cried out to God for help.
2. One day, an Israelite called Gideon was threshing wheat in secret when a man met him and told him that he was the one to go and fight the Midianites.
3. Gideon made a meal and placed it on a rock. Fire consumed the food and the man disappeared. Then Gideon realised that he was an angel from God. He was afraid he would die. But God said to him, "Peace be to you! You will not die!" Gideon built an altar and called it 'The Lord is Peace.'
4. Before Jesus' death he said to his apostles, "Peace I leave with you!" On Easter he appeared to them again and said, "Peace be with you!" The apostles realised that Jesus had brought peace between God and them by dying for them. [CCC 2305]
-  5. At Mass, the priest repeats Jesus' words and asks him to give us peace. Then he offers us peace and we reply. After that we share God's peace with each other.

ASSIGNMENT: Read handout at home. Learn the peace prayer from Mass.

REFERENCES: Judges 6:11-24. John 14:27; Luke 24:36-49.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts.

I. STARTER:

- Have you ever hidden from anyone? From whom? Why did you hide? [*Students share an experience with their neighbours. Some students could share with the rest of the class.*]
- Sometimes you hide while playing a game like 'Chor-Police' Or you hide because you don't want your classmate to see you eating something. Or maybe you hide from Mummy when she wants you to do some work. If someone always bullies you and takes your things you might hide from him.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- Today we are going to hear about How the Israelites had to hide in the hills and caves.

The last time we heard about the Israelites they were living peacefully in the Promised Land. But after some years the people from the neighbouring land started troubling them. The Midianites [*Write on blackboard*] were very powerful. Thousands of them would come with their animals and put up tents in the Israelites' land. Then they would take all the wheat and corn, sheep and donkeys and cows and go away again. The Israelites had no food left after the Midianites left. They cried out to God to save them from their enemies.

One day, a young man called Gideon was beating the stalks of wheat in a hiding place. He didn't want anyone to know what he was doing, otherwise the Midianites would get to know and come and rob his wheat. Suddenly he heard a voice saying, "The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior!" (Mighty warrior means 'powerful soldier')

Gideon looked up and saw a man standing in front of him. He shook his head as he thought of the words. "Sir, what you are saying is not right at all! If God is with us then why does he let our enemies trouble us? Why can't God do some great miracles like he did in Egypt long ago?"

The man said, "Go with your might and save Israel from the Midianites. This is your job!"

But Gideon shook his head again. "Don't call me mighty! Our tribe is the smallest of all the 12 tribes. My family is the weakest in my tribe. And I am the youngest in my family. I can't fight the Midianites!"

"God will be with you. He will strike down the Midianites!" the man said.

Now Gideon wondered, "Who is this man? Could he be an angel? Is he really giving me a message from God?"

He said to the man, "I want to give you something to eat. Please will you stay here till I come back?" The man agreed. (Can you remember someone who did the same as Gideon? *Abraham!*)

Gideon went quickly in to his house and made some mutton, bread and soup. He brought these out. The man said, "Put the meat and the bread on this rock and pour the soup over it." Gideon did it.

Then the man stretched out his stick and touched the food. At once fire came up out of the rock and burned up all the food. At that moment the man disappeared.

Gideon was very frightened. He cried out, "I have seen the angel of God face to face! Now I will die, because I am just a sinful man! Help me Lord God!"

A voice came from heaven, "Peace be with you. Don't be afraid. You shall not die!"

Gideon got up. He stopped feeling afraid. Instead, he felt very peaceful and thankful. He did what Noah and Abraham and Jacob did, to show how thankful he was. (What do you think he did?) Collected some rocks and built an altar to the Lord. He called the altar, 'The Lord is Peace!'

[Give out handouts. The students fill in the answers to the questions.]

1. Who was troubling the Israelites and robbing their food? *The Midianites.*
2. What was Gideon doing when the angel appeared to him? *Beating stalks of wheat.*
3. What did God want Gideon to do? *Fight the Midianites.*
4. What was the angel's greeting? *The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior!*
5. What happened to the food that Gideon had made for the angel? *Fire came out of the rock and burned it up.*
6. Why did Gideon think that he would die? *Because he was a sinful man and he had just seen God's angel.*
7. What did Gideon name the altar? *THE LORD IS PEACE.*

NEXT CLASS:

[Recapitulate the story of Gideon and the angel by asking the questions from the handout. The students try to answer without looking at the handout.]

Today I will tell you another story about peace.

Jesus was with his disciples in a room. They had just eaten supper. Jesus knew that in a few hours he would be caught and would suffer and die in a terrible way. He said to his friends, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you! Don't be troubled and afraid!"

But when Jesus was caught by the soldiers, the disciples all ran away; they were so frightened. Even Peter was so scared that he said, "I don't know Jesus! He's not my friend!"

So after Jesus died and after they had buried him, all the apostles were sad and ashamed. They felt very bad that they had let their dear Master die. They knew they were sinners and had done wrong. At the same time they were afraid that they would also be caught.

One day they were sitting together with the door locked. Suddenly Jesus himself appeared in front of them. (Now Jesus had a new body, which could go through locked doors!) He looked at them lovingly and said, "Peace be with you!" (He knew what they were feeling.)

But the disciples still looked frightened. They thought that it was Jesus' ghost, come to punish them.

Jesus smiled and said, "Why are you frightened? Look, touch me! It's really me!" Then he asked them for food and ate it in front of them.

As the disciples watched, they slowly realised, "It's really Jesus! He has become alive again. He has forgiven us. We don't have to be sad or ashamed anymore!"

God's peace came into their hearts and they became happy.

[Students fill in Jesus' words in the picture]

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- Do you also feel like Gideon and the disciples sometimes? Do you do wrong things and hurt God and other people? *[Yes, we all sin.]*
- Who can forgive our sins and give us peace? *[Jesus. Because he took our punishment.]*
- Because we are all sinners and need God's peace, we have a special prayer at Mass asking Jesus for his peace.

[Read the prayer together and explain difficult words and ideas:]

- '**Graciously grant her peace**' means 'Even though we don't deserve it, even though we sin, be kind to us. Forgive us and help us to be peaceful and happy.'
- '**give us unity**' means 'let us all be friends'
- '**reign**' means 'rule'. Jesus is a king and so he will rule forever.

[The students read the Rite of Peace aloud. Half the class could take the part of the priest and the other half the congregation. Read it again, switching parts.]

- Close your eyes. Remember all the times you have done wrong, hurt others, been mean or lazy... Now imagine that Jesus has suddenly come into the room. He is looking at you. He says, "Peace be with you!"...As you see him smiling at you and hear his words, let his peace come into your heart. Say to him, "Thank you Jesus! Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you that I can be your friend again."

IV. ACTIVITY:

[Divide the students into groups. Some could enact the story of Gideon and others the story of Jesus and his disciples.]

Home assignment: Read handout at home. Learn the Peace Prayer from Mass.
