Blog



by Gail DeGeorge

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Today, we're pleased to introduce GSR in the Classroom, a supplementary curriculum that adapts articles and columns published in Global Sisters Report for use in Catholic middle and high schools and faith formation programs. We're confident the stories about the ministries of sisters across the world and the spiritual insights and reflections sisters offer on a spectrum of topics, including religious life, will resonate with young people.



We're starting by offering six lessons in four topic areas: race relations, migration, human trafficking, and the environment. We will soon roll out a segment about vocations in time for National Vocation Awareness Week, Nov. 3 to 9, which could also be used for National Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 26 to Feb. 1, or any time teachers, catechists or youth group directors want to explore more deeply the special call to religious life.

Each lesson includes questions for students to reflect on before and after they read; a vocabulary section; a section that ties the lesson to the Catholic social teaching exemplified by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Pope Francis; a section that highlights the sisters' congregations; action steps; and a prayer. Supplemental teacher guides offer background on the issues, more suggestions for classroom activities, discussion prompts and additional prayers.

The materials are free. They can be used as online course materials or downloaded as PDFs and printed for distribution. To access the guides, educators will need to provide their email address.

We invite comments and suggestions be sent to education@globalsistersreport.org. We are also looking for early adopters willing to give us detailed feedback. If you are interested in participating or know someone who would be, let us know.

While the lessons are intended for U.S. classes, we welcome feedback from teachers in other countries who may be interested in using the materials or have ideas for future units.

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We want to thank Pat Finan, our curriculum writer, who has written for Saint Mary's Press and Education for Justice, and Ursuline Sr. Dianna Ortiz, our curriculum coordinator, former director/editor at Education for Justice, for their work and enthusiasm for this project. GSR staff members Brittany Wilmes and Tracy Abeln went beyond their usual responsibilities at Global Sisters Report and National Catholic Reporter to help make this project a reality and deserve recognition for

their efforts.

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A spotlight on how women live the Gospel

This project is the culmination of an idea conceived even before I joined Global Sisters Report in January 2016. I volunteered to teach eighth-grade catechism and confirmation classes for more than 10 years, one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences I have had. I am not a trained teacher, but I was a passionate catechist and spent hours on the internet looking for appropriate resources to supplement the curriculum we were instructed to teach.

As a mother of two sons who had been in both Catholic and public schools and from discussions with other mothers, I knew some materials were lacking or even out of date by the time the long process of publishing a curriculum is completed. The students wanted and deserved more.

As I was preparing to interview as editor of GSR, I was struck by the potential for stories of the sisters to be told in classrooms. There is no better way to describe the breadth and depth of the global church than through the courageous and selfless ministries of Catholic sisters. I often have said that had GSR been around, I certainly would have incorporated it into my classes.

With fewer sisters in active teaching roles, it's even more important that their stories are told and students realize the contribution women make to living the Gospel message Jesus taught.

About a year ago, I received a welcome affirmation that we were on the right track. I gave a presentation about GSR to an eighth-grade class at my home parish of St. John the Baptist in Silver Spring, Maryland. Without the benefit of the classroom-ready lessons, I relied on PowerPoint slides that depicted the sisters in a variety of ministries and countries.

After the class, I saw a Haitian-American student from the class tossing one of the GSR stress balls I'd given out against a wall. I overheard her telling her dad about the "cool things" sisters were doing in his homeland of Haiti. Clearly, some of the sister stories we discussed had resonated with her.

I don't know where these lessons will lead for her or for other students. I do know their knowledge will be broadened: about the church, about sisters' lives and religious life, about taking risks for what you believe in, about living the Gospel message to minister to "the least of these" in radical ways.

My prayer is that the lessons will stay with them and help guide them through the often-treacherous time of adolescence, teenage years and young adulthood. And perhaps, if they hear a call in their heart and spirit, they will remember the lessons from the sisters and respond, "Yes."

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