

Part of the whole picture

TALKING:

Bring to class a quilt, if possible, and/or several pictures of quilts. (Good pictures are always available in "country" decorating magazines, encyclopedias, and specialized quilting magazines and manuals. If preparation time allows, consider sending for quilting catalogues advertised in the back of decorating magazines.) Allow the students to look through the various patterns and select their favorites. Perhaps they like the traditional patterns, the elaborate appliqued designs, or the random "crazy quilts." Ask students what makes these quilts so special and so beautiful? (Prompt them, if necessary, to notice the precise patterning, or the variety of colors, shapes, sizes, and patterns.) Allow students to tell the group about quilts they might have in their homes. Briefly explain the quilting process: Pieces of fabric are sewn together in a precisely patterned or random manner to form a quilt top. A batting is used as the middle layer to create the warmth and softness, and a backing forms the bottom layer of the quilt. The actual quilting is the patterned placement of small stitches (by hand or machine) to join the three layers. Tell the students that the process of quilting is a complicated and time-consuming one, but that the spectacular finished product makes all of the work worthwhile.

Suggest to the students that we are all a part of a patchwork quilt that is God's church. The beauty of our community life, our life as a group, is its infinite variety, a variety that miraculously transfers itself into a beautiful pattern. We contribute to the beauty of the design when we live our Christian values such as love for others, joyfulness, peace, patience, generosity, justice, reverence for life. We serve others best when we live the vocation that allows us to make our unique gifts most available to the community. Some of us contribute best as married persons, raising children and developing strong families; others serve as single persons, having the freedom to respond to the needs of the people of God; and others dedicate themselves to God and the Church as religious men and women — priests, deacons, brothers, and sisters, serving in a variety of ways that contribute to the pattern of love, hope, and salvation

that is God's design for creation. Brainstorm now with the students on particular services or ministries with which they are familiar. Help them to identify both sacramental and human service ministries in which ordained and religious people contribute their talents. Move from typical to less-well-known lifestyles. Begin with parish priest, teacher, nurse, missionary, then move to contemplative monks and nuns. Make students aware that there are sisters, priests and brothers who are doctors, professors, theologians, mechanics (and other manual workers who serve their religious communities), cooks, family counselors, writers, retreat directors, etc. Open up for students the wide variety of ministries and service available to religious people.

DOING:

In order to appreciate the beauty of a quilt, students will piece together a simple patterned quilt top out of construction paper.

Option 1: The pieces for the quilt top should be pre-cut according to a selected pattern. There are many quilting books which feature patterns. Select a very simple pattern; 4" or 6" squares work well. Achieve variety by choosing coordinating solid colors. Allow each student to select two favorite squares and decorate them with markers. Suggest to the students that they make the piece uniquely theirs by creating a word, symbol, or picture that reveals something about their own personality, character, dreams, or goals as Christians. On the second square have them use a symbol, word or drawing to reveal a way in which a priest, sister, deacon or brother contributes to the Christian community. For instance, a symbol for a religious brother who teaches could be an open book; a symbol for a priest who operates a shelter for the homeless could be a simple drawing of a house; a symbol for a sister who visits the sick as a chaplain in a hospital could be a smiling face or sun. Encourage the students to use their imaginations and have them discuss ideas with you and with one another as they work. Use a large piece or pieces of poster board,

butcher paper or white shelf paper as background for the squares. Each square should be glued in place. A broken line representing stitches could be put around each square with a marker, if you choose.

Option 2: If time permits, this "quilt" project could be done with 4" or 6" fabric squares in solid colors. Have students use fabric paint in squirt bottles to make their symbols. If students have the time and ability to do the sewing, allow them to do so. Fabric glue or spray glue will work well without sewing. Student's individual pieces can be attached to a large white or solid color sheet for backing. This would be a good opportunity for parents to be involved in completing not only the quilt top but the entire quilt. Display the finished product in the classroom, the church, or any appropriate setting.

PRAYING:

Leader: O most gracious and loving God, we give you thanks for those people who learned early to develop the pattern of saying "yes" to the needs of others. They have formed and are still forming the quilt of your creation. Thank you for all of the pieces of the quilt, every individual who hears your call and forms a life in accordance with your pattern of life. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE SPOTLIGHT:

Romans 12:4-8 — We have many gifts...