

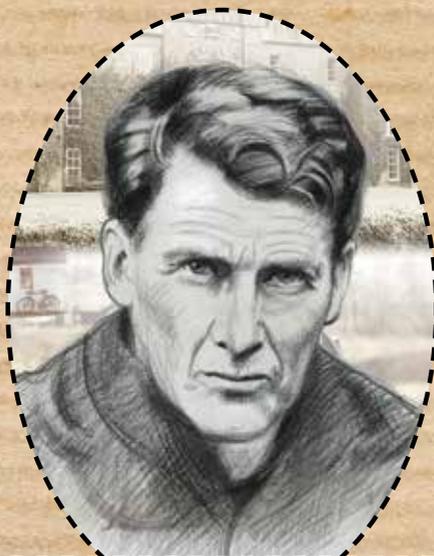
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SAMPLE LESSON PLAN



Blessed
John Sullivan SJ

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Sample Lesson Plan

Suggestions for a lesson:

Suitable for adaptation for Junior Certificate students studying Section A: Communities of Faith.

Key concept

Inspiring Vision, Religious Commitment, Service, Leadership.

Preparation

Several large blank pages attached to the walls of the classroom, post it note for every student in the class, small red dot sticker for every student in the class)

Introduction to Class

In today's lesson we are going to learn about someone who has inspired others. This Saturday will be a very special day for the Jesuit order as Fr. John Sullivan will be recognised by the church as someone whose life is an example to others.

(hand out a post it note to every student in the class and a red sticker, tell them to hold onto the sticker as they will need it in a few minutes)

On your post it note I want you to write about someone who has inspired you in your life. It can be someone you know or someone you have learned about. Write down their name and one way in which they have inspired you.

When you are finished put your post it on one of the poster pages on the wall, a maximum of five notes to each page.

(allow a few moments for the students to put up their post it notes)

Brief teacher exposition stressing that each note contains information about

someone who is an inspirational person. Tell the students that they are to move around the room and read all the notes, they have one red sticker and they are to put their sticker on the post it note they found the most interesting/moving/challenging (*they do not put the sticker on their own post it note*).

When they have finished read out the notes that have the most stickers. Write 'Inspiration' on the board and jot down any answers that reinforce being inspired by the actions/words of another person.

Key questions

Are the majority of people mentioned on the notes people known to the group or are we inspired by others? How do people inspire us, is it through their personality, their words or their actions? What shaped them into an inspirational person? Do you think they realise they are inspirational?

Fr. John Sullivan is probably someone you have never heard of until today, yet he has continued to inspire many people of faith. The church recognises significant people whose vision changes the lives of many through a process called beatification, when someone is beatified they can be called Blessed and may one day be declared a saint. On Saturday Fr. John Sullivan will be beatified. We are going to learn a little about his life and why he is such a significant person of faith.

(Distribute handout on Fr. John Sullivan, adapted from An article for Living Word, by Fr. Donal Neary S.J.)

Blessed John Sullivan SJ Hand Out

Born in Dublin in 1861, son of the last Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he grew up in an Anglican/RC family. The custom of the time was that the boys were brought up in the church of the father, and the girls of the mother. Thus the first thirty or so years of his life were lived in the Anglican Church. Educated in Portora, Enniskillen, he was a top classical scholar in school, and in law in Trinity College. He was called to the Bar in London but never practised.

He converted to Roman Catholicism in 1900. It's hard to know what brought him to the RC church. Maybe the faith of his mother, and the work with Sisters for the poor in Dublin. Whatever it was, he went a step further and in 1903 joined the Jesuits in Tullabeg, Rahan, Offaly. Pre-ordination studies were in England and Milltown Park, Dublin. His life also changed from the well-to-do very sought after bachelor of Dublin to Jesuit life where he practised simplicity and poverty to a heroic degree.

After ordination in 1907, he spent most of his years until his death in 1933 in Clongowes, a boarding school near Naas.

He was not a good teacher but was loved by the pupils. Called Johnny-O, his long hours of prayer in the college church did not go unnoticed. One boy said they would go into the chapel to watch him pray. That's like the disciples saying – teach us to pray as your disciples do. We learn prayer from each other. His role in the school was also spiritual father, one who looked after the non-academic concerns of the pupils.

He never claimed to have all the answers but he had faith that gave meaning to many questions. He had a wide view of the human person, a sympathy for the pupils away from home, and a conviction that God's love is bigger

than any problem we have.

John Sullivan took really seriously the words 'when I was sick, you came to visit me'. Most of his spare time outside of prayer was spent on his rounds, sometimes cycling from Clane to Dublin to visit a sick Kildare man or woman.

This was before the days of A and E; days when people died at home often in great pain. John Sullivan was a living reminder that God had not forgotten the poorest of the poor.

They called him to pray for the sick person. He would do this, always inviting those in the house to pray with him. He seemed to leave behind him a gift of peace and acceptance.

With few words he communicated the tenderness of God to people at a very needy time of their life, when they were seriously ill or close to death.

He was a priest mindful of God in the here and now.

One of Fr. John Sullivan's sayings is:

Have the courage to swim against the tide. Have the courage to be truly happy.

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Sample Questions

- Do you think it took courage for Fr. John to convert to Catholicism as an adult?
- What changes did he make to his life after his conversion?
- What inspired him to make these changes?
- Why did his students love him?
- What other actions showed that he had a vision of life inspired by the love of God.
- From what you have learned so far why is Fr. John Sullivan described as an inspirational person? Why did he inspire and why?

Prayer Response

Lord,

It is difficult to have the courage to swim against the tide.

My life can seem confusing and difficult at times.

I want to fit in; I want to be seen as part of the group.

It can be difficult to stand out from the crowd

When I am only just finding out who I really am.

Give me courage Lord, to swim at my own pace,

To navigate stormy waters,

Just as you calmed the sea of Galilee, and told your disciples not to worry,

Calm the seas of doubt and anxiety.

Help me to make good friendships and to be a good friend,

Be at my side during difficult times at school and at home,

Celebrate my successes with me and give me the gift of gratitude.

I pray for the wisdom to be truly happy in the here and now,

To live in the moment with peace and to look forward with joy.

Amen.