

## The Mustard Seed: 4 Lessons (plus Prayer Time)

### Aims:

To explain the Parable of the Mustard Seed in the context of the Mustard Seed Centre in Syria.

To learn about the work of ACN.

To link with Aid to the Church in Need to help the children at the Mustard Seed project and other similar projects across the world.

To enable pupils to understand that their prayers and fundraising will make a real difference for children in other parts of the world.

To encourage pupils to see that they can be like 'mustard seeds' and give them the opportunity to respond prayerfully and by action.

### Overview

<b>A01: Learning About (pupils will be able to):</b> <b>All:</b>	<b>A02: Learning From (Pupils will be able to):</b> <b>All:</b>
Retell the Parable of the Mustard Seed Explain what the Mustard Seed Centre in Syria is Explain what Aid to the Church in Need is Respond through prayer and fundraising	Decide how they can help a child another part of the world through sacrifice, fund-raising, awareness and prayer
<b>Most:</b> Say what Parable of the Mustard Seed means Say why Sr Samia and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Syria are helping children Link Jesus' teaching in the Parable of The Mustard Seed to the work of the centre in Syria, ACN and themselves	<b>Most:</b> Understand how their efforts can produce fruit when they give them to God Be inspired by Fr Werenfried and Sr Samia to build up the Kingdom of God
<b>Some:</b> Articulate how the Kingdom of God is the Mustard Seed and how all Christians are called to have faith and participate in God's plan	<b>Some:</b> Will begin to reflect on the mystery of how God uses ordinary people and means to build the Kingdom of God

### About Us

Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is a Pontifical Charity at the service of the Catholic Church, providing support to the Catholic faithful and other Christians where they may be persecuted or oppressed or in need of pastoral care.

### Who We Help

Each year we fund over 5,000 projects in more than 140 countries around world, helping to support the Church in its mission, and bringing hope and solidarity to millions of people.



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## LESSON 1: SMALL BEGINNINGS

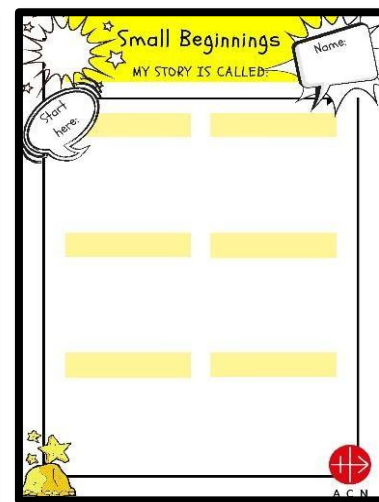
This lesson introduces the idea that things can begin very small and become huge

### YOU WILL NEED:

- Lesson 1 Presentation
- Worksheet 1 (Animals: The Mustard Seed)
- Worksheet 2 (Small Beginnings)
- Fr Werenfried van Straaten & ACN Notes



Worksheet 1  
(Animals: The Mustard Seed)



Worksheet 2 (Small Beginnings)

<p><b>A01: Learning About (pupils will be able to):</b> <b>All:</b></p>	<p><b>A02: Learning From (Pupils will be able to):</b> <b>All:</b></p>
<p>Give examples of things which start tiny and become large.</p>	<p>Reflect on what in their own lives had small beginnings.</p>
<p><b>Most:</b> Retell Fr Werenfried van Straaten’s story about how ACN began.</p>	<p><b>Most:</b> Understand that no matter how small our efforts seem, they can have a big difference in the world and to other people.</p>
<p><b>Some:</b> Say why Fr Werenfried’s quote: “Someone must begin. Let it be us!” is relevant to the theme of the lesson.</p>	<p><b>Some:</b> Articulate why doing what you can in a situation is important.</p>

### STARTER

The starter focuses on animals that grow to be very large comparative to their size at birth. It is unlikely that pupils will know this, but this should be a fun activity where they can compete to find as many similarities between the animals as possible. For more detailed information on the relative sizes of the animals, see: <http://mentalfloss.com/article/55739/11-animals-are-super-small-birth>

#### 1. PLAY ANIMATION (slide 2)

Instructions for teachers: Play the presentation and start by asking the pupils to name as many differences as they can between the animals.

#### 2. WORKSHEET 1 - Starter Task: Spot the difference & find the similarities (slide 3)

Ask them to write the differences in the speech bubbles around the animals on their worksheet. Next, ask them to name as many similarities as possible – they can add these to their sheets in a different colour. At the end, tell

them that there is one thing they all have which will be the theme of the lesson. This similarity is that they have tiny babies comparative to their fully-grown size.

### **LEARNING**

Explain that for the next few lessons they are going to be learning things that seem so tiny no one notices them, but that these things can grow to be huge. Explain that these lessons are from the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need and at the end of these lessons they will be asked to help with its work.

#### **LEARNING 1: EXPLAIN & DISCUSS (slide 4)**

What in their lives started small and became big: why is that important – what did it teach you?

Ask the pupils to think of things around them that begin very small (e.g. acorns, babies etc.)

#### **LEARNING 2: MAKING LINKS ACTIVITY & SHARING**

MY STORY: STORYBOARD WORKSHEET 2 & SHARING OF STORIES (slide 5)

**CONSOLIDATION:** Story/Animation: The start of ACN Fr Werenfried's (founder of ACN) small beginnings: from the article he wrote on Christmas Day 1947 to the International Charity ACN. (slides 6-7)

### **PLENARY**

Explain that for the next few lessons they are going to be learning about lots of small things that seem so tiny that no one notices them, but that these things can grow to be huge and help many people.

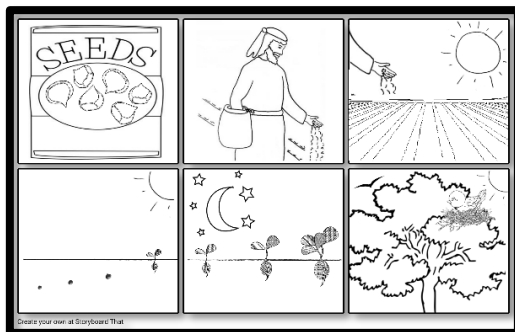
Ask each child to say one word to explain Fr Werenfried's story.

## LESSON 2: THE MUSTARD SEED

This lesson is about understanding *The Parable of the Mustard Seed*

### YOU WILL NEED:

- Lesson 2 Presentation
- Some mustard seeds from the spices section of a supermarket
- Worksheet 3 (The Parable)
- Worksheet 4 (God and Us)
- Set of Mustard Seed Cards



Worksheet 3 (The Parable)



Set of Mustard Seed Cards

<b>A01: Learning About (pupils will be able to):</b>	<b>A02: Learning From (Pupils will be able to):</b>
<b>All:</b> Retell the Parable of the Mustard Seed	<b>All:</b> Will reflect on the reality that we work with God through the Holy Spirit
<b>Most:</b> Say what each bit of the Parable of the Mustard Seed means	<b>Most:</b> Understand that when we do good, God takes our efforts, blesses them and makes them fruitful
<b>Some:</b> Link Jesus' teaching in the Parable of The Mustard Seed to the work of Fr Werenfried	<b>Some:</b> Be able to apply the symbolism to their own lives

### STARTER: ACTIVITY (slides 2&3)

Pass a Mustard Seed around the class.

Ask the following questions:

- What do you think this is?
- What is it for?
- Would you find it easily if you dropped it?
- Could something this small be significant for us, birds or nature in any way?

### LEARNING 1: THE PARABLE

Play the video clip animation and discuss the parable (slide 4)

Hand out the storyboard (slides 5-12)

You may want to cut this up for the pupils to put it in order and/or put them face down so pupils can turn them over and explain each part of the story in turn.



Worksheet 4 (God and Us)

*Other options:* colour in the storyboard, write a sentence explaining each image or to draw their own version.

### LEARNING 2: UNDERSTANDING THE PARABLE

Discuss what the parable is about (slides 13-16) and explain what it is about using slides (slides 17-19)

This worksheet (**slide 18**) may be completed in stages over the next couple of lessons. For the meaning, use the presentation to explain it is about the Kingdom of God.

The parable is explained in terms of “What we do” and “What God does”. They will only be able to complete the first vertical column at this stage – the aim is that they add to it in subsequent lessons.

**PLENARY:**

Use the Set of Mustard Seed Cards to hold up and ask questions such as:

‘What do the seeds represent?’

‘What does God provide?’

‘How is the parable like Fr Werenfried’s work?’ etc.



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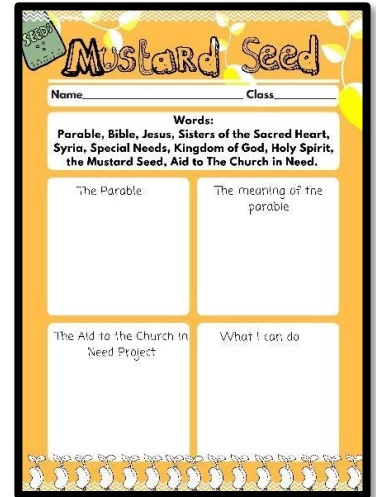
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# LESSON 3: THE MUSTARD SEED CENTRE AND ACN

This lesson is about understanding the work of Sr Samia and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart at the Mustard Seed Centre in Syria

**YOU WILL NEED:**

- Lesson 3 Presentation
- Worksheet 5 (Mustard Seed)
- Worksheet 6 (Sr Samia and the Centre)
- Sr Samia and the Mustard Seed Notes



Worksheet 5 (Mustard Seed)

<b>A01: Learning About (pupils will be able to):</b>	<b>A02: Learning From (Pupils will be able to):</b>
<b>All:</b> Give some facts about the beginning of the Mustard Seed Centre and whom it helps	<b>All:</b> Will have engaged with the story and thought about the children in Syria
<b>Most:</b> Link Sr Samia’s work and Aid to the Church in Need to the message in the Parable of the Mustard Seed	<b>Most:</b> Understand that when we do good, God takes our efforts, blesses them and makes them fruitful
<b>Some:</b> Link Jesus’ teaching in the Parable of The Mustard Seed to the work of Fr Werenfried	<b>Some:</b> Relate the calling to Fr Werenfried and Sr Samia to their own experience

**STARTER: ACTIVITY (slides 2-3)**

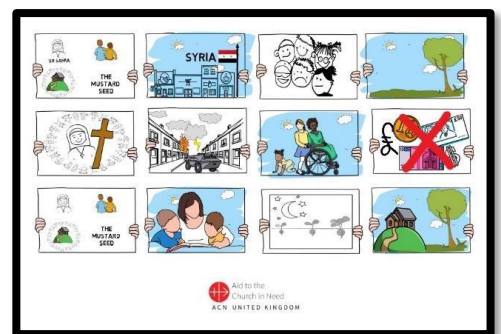
Starter and recap: Worksheet 5: Look at the worksheet and explain that this lesson is about a project in Syria where Jesus’ teaching in the Mustard Seed was made real. Fill in the first two boxes and explain that they will be able to fill in the third by the end of this lesson.

**LEARNING 1: THE CENTRE IN SYRIA (slide 4)**

Play the animation, read the story and discuss using the questions below:

**Discussion Questions**

1. Why did the Sisters want to help the children?
2. What did the Sisters do?
3. What difficulties did they have?
4. What happened in Syria in 2011?
5. Why did they have to trust God?
6. How did the Mustard Seed Centre get its name?
7. Can you see any similarities with the parable?
8. How did Aid to the Church in Need help the Sisters?
  
9. What did the Sisters do to make The Mustard Seed a reality? What did God do?
10. How did it change the lives of the children and their families?



Worksheet 6 (Sr Samia and the Centre)

**LEARNING 2: STORY (slides 6-10)**

Read the following true account of Mahere Mansor and show the pictures from The Mustard Seed (slides 11-23)

Mahere Mansor is a young adult of 18 years; he is general learning disability. His father died as a martyr (he was killed for his faithfulness to his Christian faith) during the war. Mahere was with his father when he died, he saw everything and seeing what happened made him very sad and depressed. When he came to the Mustard Seed Centre he only ever spoke of his Dad.

Sr Samia and the staff have given him specific educational and social help and have even supported his family. Today, Mahere has made a lot of progress and works in the workshop with the adults. His mother even takes part in the Mothers' Club which is helping her to recover from the sadness of her husband being martyred. All this, thanks to the perseverance of people who support him and his presence at The Mustard Seed Club, which for him, is his lifeblood.

### **CONSOLIDATION ACTIVITY (slide 24)**

Fill in the third box ("The Aid to the Church in Need Project") of the worksheet outlining how the Mustard Seed Centre began.

Using the images on Worksheet 6, either draw a storyboard explaining The Mustard Seed Project, or write a poem or prayer about the centre.

### **PLENARY:**

Show the video clip on **(slide 25)** which is another example of how ACN has helped the children in Syria.

### **Sr Samia and the Mustard Seed Notes (Sr Samia writes):**

*In 2006 in the old town of Homs we opened "The Mustard Seed" which is a day-care centre for mentally disabled children, suffering from Down's syndrome, autism and other illnesses.*

*At first we started with three children. Each beginning brings challenges and hope at the same time: for this reason I named the centre The Mustard Seed which starts small but will become a great tree according to the Gospel.*

*When we started in 2006 we had no money and I was not paid for my work. The image that was before me was that there are children with disabilities who need this service and it is necessary to continue. I had faith like the sower of the seeds and knew that God would make the small grains to grow.*

*By 2009 the centre had grown through faith and hope. We were able to look after 30 children in classes every day. I felt joy in this growth like the birds that sing and live in the Mustard Tree.*

*In 2011 the war in Syria caused many difficulties and great sadness. It wasn't safe to stay in Homs so we had to leave the neighbourhood with the children. It became impossible to continue our activities. The centre closed after it was destroyed by bombs in March 2012.*

*In May 2012, with the support of associations and ACN, the centre reopened its doors in an area less affected by the violence. We had continuous hope despite all the difficulties. In this dangerous period with the bombings and explosions we created four centres in four neighbourhoods in the city which was safer for the children. At that time, the Centre and the area was barricaded – no one could enter.*

*In 2014 we were able to go back to the Centre, which was completely destroyed.*

*In December 2015, the rebuilding of the Centre destroyed by the war and began. We worked to make the building fit for purpose for children's activities. Today the Mustard Seed Centre is always open. This year we welcome 90 children and young adults and offer them a programme adapted to all academic and social levels and which improve their independence and develop their talents.*

*Our Centre has defied violence and destruction and continues its mission despite the difficult years and all the setbacks. We continue to work with people with disabilities to support them and offer them a safe haven in the middle of fearful times. This helps them grow more confident in their abilities. Through our work we aim to develop their abilities at all levels to help them assimilate within the community and have their needs responded to.*

### **Final Word:**

*"I always say that The Mustard Seed has grown through faith, as Jesus said in the Bible and all the birds of heaven rest in its branches.*

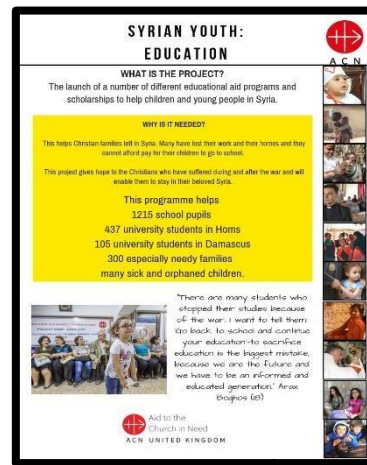
*That we are still here, after seven years of war, in a destroyed town, is a sign of hope. Finally, I thank God for all the fruits and that we can offer fruits despite everything that has happened."*

# LESSON 4: MY RESPONSE

*This lesson is about showing pupils that they can be like mustard seeds. The emphasis is on prayer and the things they can actually do to make a difference. During this time, they should decide what activities and prayer commitments they would like to undertake for ACN projects around the world that help children.*

**YOU WILL NEED:**

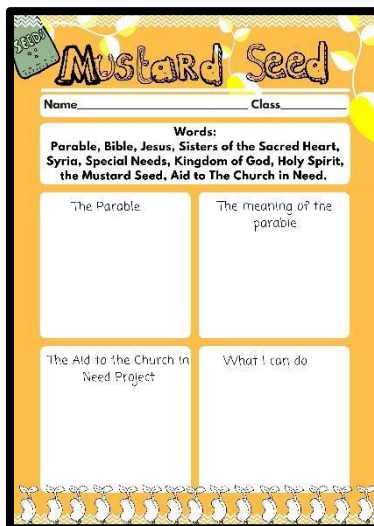
- Presentation Lesson 4
- Worksheet 5 (Mustard Seed)
- ACN Project Cards
- The Mustard Seed Response Cards
- Card/pencils



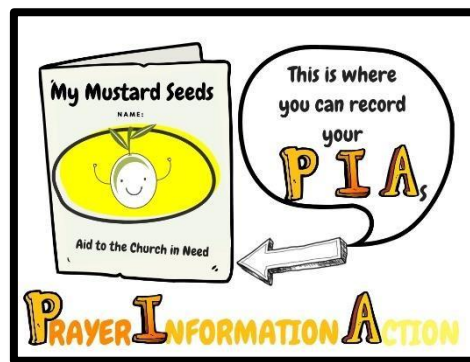
ACN Project Cards



The Mustard Seed Response Cards



Worksheet 5 (Mustard Seed)



Example of cards

<p><b>A01: Learning About (pupils will be able to):</b></p>	<p><b>A02: Learning From (Pupils will be able to):</b></p>
<p><b>All:</b> Will have decided and planned what they might do to help children in other parts of the world</p>	<p><b>All:</b> Respond to the invitation to help others</p>
<p><b>Most:</b> Link the Sr Samia's work/ Aid to the Church in Need to the message in the Parable of the Mustard Seed</p>	<p><b>Most:</b> Understand that their prayers and acts of charity will be blessed by God, even if they can't see it (like the Mustard Seed growing and Sr Samia when they had to leave the centre)</p>
<p><b>Some:</b> Articulate how ACN's Prayer/Information &amp; Action corresponds with the Church's call to Prayer/Fasting and Almsgiving in Lent</p>	<p><b>Some:</b> Grasp how following Jesus has given meaning and purpose and begin to think critically about their own questions of meaning and purpose</p>



**STARTER (slide 2)**

Put up the large images around the room or on the floor. Play the music on the slide and pause it intermittently (a bit like musical statues). Ask pupils to stand on or next to the nearest image to them. If they are not near an image they are out. If they are, ask them what part of the story it related to. If they get a question right they have a life.

**LEARNING 1: ACTIVITY (slide 3)**

Group task – Give out one of the project cards to each group/table. Each group reports back to the class:

1. What is the project is
2. Where it is
3. How has ACN supported the project
4. How the project is like the Parable of The Mustard Seed

**RESPONSE (slide 4):** Each table/group brainstorm how they might respond during Lent (or at another time if using this resource outside Lent) use these three headings:

Prayer (what prayers they could say, can they 'Go to Mass for Someone Who Can't' see information below)  
Action

After they have collected some ideas give out the Mustard Seed Response Cards and ask them to choose one or two concrete actions they can do **(slides 5-6)**.

Make cards similar to the ones on the presentation so that they can record their P.I.A s throughout Lent.

Use the rest of the lesson for planning. **(slides 7-11)**

P.I.As are the three

**PLENARY**

Share ideas and look at **(slides 12-16)** for information about what else ACN does in the world.



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## Teachers' Notes: Fr Werenfried

Aid to the Church in Need came into being in 1947 when a young Norbertine priest, Father Werenfried van Straaten – whose name means “Warrior for Peace” – responded to an appeal for reconciliation made by Pope Pius XII in the bitter early years after World War II. He set out to organise emergency relief to meet the material and spiritual needs of the suffering German people.

With the help of thousands of concerned and compassionate people he more than succeeded. His impassioned preaching and calls for reconciliation touched hearts and supplies of clothes and food poured in – particularly sides of pork – earning him his nickname, the Bacon Priest.

At the same time, recognising a deep spiritual hunger, he launched a ‘Rucksack Priest’ campaign to send priests out on motorbikes and early Volkswagen Beetles to people still displaced, bereft and in need of spiritual comfort. This was soon followed by a Chapel Truck initiative using decommissioned army trucks which were adapted as mobile chapels from which Mass could be said.

### Building a worldwide network of support for the suffering Church

In the 1950s, Father Werenfried worked tirelessly to assist religious serving within Communist countries, especially in Hungary, to help contemplative Sisters in Poland and to launch a massive aid campaign. His passion and commitment helped Aid to the Church in Need to build “fortresses of God” – churches constructed along the length of the Iron Curtain. From this time onwards he began his drive to bring Christ not only to Russia and Eastern Europe, but to all those being “tested in faith” around the world. Aid to the Church in Need began to grow in size and scope.

### Becoming “one of the most important Catholic charities”

Such has been the impact of Aid to the Church in Need’s work worldwide that in June 2002 the charity was described by the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) as “a gift of Providence for our time”. He stated that Aid to the Church in Need had “...turned out to be one of the most important Catholic charities... It is working in a worthwhile manner all over the world.

“Our world is hungering and thirsting for witnesses of the risen Lord, for human beings who pass on the Faith in word and deed as well as for human beings who stand by those in need.”

During his pontificate, in December 2011, Benedict XVI recognised the importance of Aid to the Church in Need’s work by elevating the charity to a Pontifical Foundation of the Catholic Church.

### Staying true to Father Werenfried’s vision

Thanks to the generous support of our Aid to the Church in Need family of faithful, Father Werenfried’s vision lives on. Today, our General Secretariat and Project Headquarters is based in Königstein, Germany. With 23 national offices, Aid to the Church in Need continues to reach out wherever the need is greatest, bringing spiritual and material aid to millions of poor, forgotten and persecuted faithful in more than 140 countries around the world.

### Father Werenfried’s charism

Father Werenfried’s inspirational and powerful charism is reflected in the Spiritual Guidelines which he wrote to guide the charity’s work. These are still one of the foundations our work.

Aid to the Church in Need’s mission is to make known the pastoral and spiritual needs of the faithful to Catholics and other Christians in the UK and around the world.

As well as supporting Christians who suffer for the Faith and are in pastoral need, we also encourage our benefactors to keep the Faith in an increasingly secularised and materialistic world. Through Aid to the Church in Need we are linked together heart to heart, in a chain of faith, hope and charity across the world.

### Our Founding Vision

Father Werenfried van Straaten, the late Founder of Aid to the Church in Need, once said that our organisation was established to help the Church “**wherever she is persecuted, threatened, undermined or destroyed and suffers need as a result**”.



**Teachers' Notes: Go to Mass/Adoration for Someone who Cant #Go2Mass****Will you go to one extra Mass and offer it for a persecuted Christian?**

*There is nothing so great, as the Eucharist! Put all the good works in the world against one good Communion; they will be like a grain of dust beside a mountain.* – St John Vianney

Aid to the Church in Need is asking every Catholic to make the small sacrifice of going to one extra Mass to pray for one of the 200 million Christians who are facing the threat of persecution for their faith and even risking death to receive Jesus in The Eucharist. It is time for us to re-discover that *“most powerful force in human history is prayer joined to sacrifice.”* – St Pope John Paul II.

Imagine the immense power of our prayers offered for our persecuted brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, imagine how we can renew our faith in the power of the Eucharist which where *“violence is transformed into love, and death into life ...”* – Pope Benedict XVI.

This simple campaign is about interceding for those suffering injustice, assault, kidnap, forced conversion, torture and death and answering Pope Francis' call to pray for the persecuted when he reminded us that, *“Today there are more [martyrs] than in the first ages – but the media says nothing about them, because it's not news.”*

**How to Get Involved**

**Go to a Mass or a time of Adoration** you wouldn't normally go to. If you already go on Sundays go to an extra Mass in the week. If you don't go on a Sunday, go then.

**Offer the Mass** for all persecuted Christians/a particular person being persecuted/a country e.g. North Korea, Syria, Nigeria etc.

**Share your #Go2Mass post** – Take a selfie outside the Church and share your post using #Go2Mass

Bring hope to the persecuted Church with trust in the transforming love of Jesus, which through the Eucharist is an *“intimate explosion of good conquering evil [that] can then trigger off the series of transformations that little by little will change the world.”* Be part of this wave of prayer and make the 'Go to Mass for Someone Who Can't' the real news of Jesus' victory of love over hate.

You can support priests bringing Christ to the faithful by offering a Mass.

**God's Bakery**

Pupils may also want to join <https://acnuk.org/resource/gods-bakery/>

**God's Bakery teaches about the incredible ways in which religious sisters around the world support the Church and its faithful.**

These include baking the altar breads that become the Body of Our Lord during the Mass. You can finish up this unit with a 'God's Bakery' themed cake sale; your school will be helping to support religious sisters who, without the funds provided by parishes and schools like yours, might not be able to continue the important work that they do for others.



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