

Our Media World

**Teaching Kids K–8
about Faith and Media**

Gretchen Hailer, RSHM,
and Rose Pacatte, FSP

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By Gretchen Hailer, RSHM,
and Rose Pacatte, FSP

The authors wish to dedicate this book to all those who, perhaps without even knowing it, have been teaching children to question media in the light of faith. May this resource reinforce the emphasis on media literacy education and media mindfulness begun in *Aetatis Novae*.¹

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INTRODUCTION

We live in a world that is mediated by information technology and entertainment media. In general, parents in developed countries, such as in North America and Europe, let their children begin watching television as soon as they can sit up. Many children have access to the Internet and video games from a very young age. Children everywhere hear music, see signs, and are exposed to advertising on food packaging. We live in a world in which media are pervasive.

Since 1936, the Catholic Church has taught consistently that the media are gifts of God.¹ Often it does not seem that profit-driven information and entertainment media industries realize this, nor do they always have the lived reality or the needs of children in mind. Consumerism, promoted by the media, can undermine the meaning and the value of family and the integrity of the human person.

Busy parents have differing approaches regarding their children and media. Some find it easier to “just say no” rather than to take the time to watch and listen with their children and to talk about what a program or movie means for them. Other parents, perhaps overwhelmed by daily life and the prevailing

culture, allow their kids to engage in media activities indiscriminately. Still other parents have discovered the importance of not only consuming media with their children, but also talking about media messages together. Shared media experiences provide them with unending opportunities to share their values and criteria for making good media choices with their children.

Our Media World offers a strategy to navigate the media world through the lens of faith. This strategy is rooted in media literacy education and is called “media mindfulness” in faith communities. *Our Media World* is designed for use by catechists, Catholic school teachers, religious educators, and parents as they help their children develop the skills they need to navigate the media world and to integrate their faith and daily life.

The basic strategy for media literacy education and media mindfulness is inquiry: asking questions about what we see and hear, and then talking together to find the answers. This strategy reflects the *Core Concepts and Key Questions of Media Literacy Education* that the Center for Media Literacy has developed and that are accepted as the standard in the

United States and internationally (see Appendixes 3 and 4; and www.signis.net). Even as traditional media converge and new technologies such as those supported by Web 2.0 make it increasingly possible for everyone to create media messages via social networking sites and blogs, questioning the media remains an essential life skill in our culture.

Each lesson of *Our Media World* offers catechists, teachers, and parents information to understand both how media work and media's potential to reveal positive aspects of the world we live in.

The premise of *Our Media World* is simple: We live in a world permeated by all kinds of media programs and technologies. These are imbued with and communicate ideologies and values that are often in conflict with those of believing communities. It is, therefore, important that children be educated about the dynamics of these media and the culture they create. It is also vital for them to begin thinking critically by asking questions about the media from an early age. This is what media literacy education, or media mindfulness, is all about.

Media also tell stories in many ways, ranging, for example, from brief commercials to songs, from novels to feature films. Our faith community is rooted in story, and we value narrative. The Bible is a sacred collection of the stories of God's creation, redemption of humanity, and continuing presence with us. It's appropriate for us to ask, then, how we can find seeds of the Gospel, in particular, in the media. At the same time, we also need to choose our media wisely, question what we choose and experience, and examine the meaning we make from these experiences. Media mindfulness skills can empower young people to be wise consumers and producers of media. Media mindfulness also offers parents and teachers a methodology that encourages open communication and the sharing of values.

What is media mindfulness?

Media mindfulness is media literacy education in the context of faith communities and faith formation.

Media and Children

We know that by the age of eighteen, most of our youth have consumed about 20,000 hours of television. This breaks down to three to four hours per day.² Preschool and primary-age children watch the most television. But television programming is not the only medium children and adults consume. As children grow older they engage in other means of entertainment, such as movies, music, comics, computer games, and the Internet.

The Internet is now an extremely important source of information, entertainment, and communication for young people. With the merging of technologies, the Internet is fast becoming a significant place where people can go for movies and television, music and gaming. Computer games and video games are increasingly popular, with new applications in continual development. We are on the threshold of emerging technologies we can only imagine now.

By preadolescence, young people around the world are immersed in a popular culture that is largely defined by any entertainment that is accepted as "cool" in North America. During their teen years, youth are spending an increasing amount of time communicating with their peers via technology. And when they get together, they often go to movies, listen to music, and hang out in malls. By the age of sixteen, many teens have jobs. Rather than diminishing their use of media, teens and adults maintain their engagement with media by taking time from sleep.³ It is unknown what

societal consequences such as sleep deprivation may have. The lack of physical exercise because of time spent with various media, together with other factors, is evidenced by the obesity epidemic among young people in the United States in particular.⁴

Increased exposure to and participation in popular culture through information and entertainment media give rise to a relatively new phenomenon called *developmental compression*.⁵

Children are becoming older faster, their development compressed into fewer years. For example, eight-year-old girls, instead of twelve- and fourteen-year-olds, now flock to rock concerts and want to imitate the behavior and fashions of favorite female singers and after-school television stars. Adolescents, especially boys, already have computer skills that could provide them with well-paying jobs if they were old enough. These young people have the potential to become hackers or otherwise misuse the Internet, and because they can, some of them do. However, these children are often too young to have developed the emotional maturity, ethical formation, and moral discernment to make responsible choices.

Developmental compression is a concept worth knowing about because there are moral consequences for the choices young people make regarding media and technology. This phenomenon raises questions that call for a faith response.

“The relationship of children, media, and education can be considered from two perspectives: the formation of children by the media; and the formation of children to respond appropriately to the media. A kind of reciprocity emerges which points to the responsibilities of the media as an

industry and to the need for active and critical participation of readers, viewers, and listeners. Within this framework, training in the proper use of the media is essential for the cultural, moral and spiritual development of children.”

— Pope Benedict XVI⁶

A Faith Response

What is the response of the faith community to these realities? What changes in attitudes and practice can teachers, catechists, and parents make in the faith development and moral formation of children in light of the influence of media and popular culture? Where is our living, loving relationship with Jesus and others in all of this?

For believers and people of good will, entertainment and information media have the potential to bring the human family closer together in justice and peace. Television, print, radio, film, music, the Internet, and emerging media can help people exercise their moral imagination, ask questions, seek meaning, and make good choices in keeping with their faith values. The challenge is to better articulate the values that guide us. Adults are the most effective models for children when they are able to communicate their values clearly and articulate what motivates their media choices and decisions.

The Role of Teachers and Catechists

Catechists and religious educators are in a unique position to bring the contemporary dynamic of pervasive and persuasive media into the religious education arena. This is because faith and life inform each other and belong together. At the same time, the believing community is faced with many challenges in attempting to integrate faith and

media in everyday life. We compete for the time and interest of our students. Increased technological sophistication is required for classroom credibility, and many of us are aware that youngsters often know more about operating the remote control than we do.

Sometimes classroom technology is not available to catechists, or it is too expensive for the program or parish to provide. Yet the principles of media literacy education and media mindfulness can be applied in every learning space, using ordinary media that are already all around us. The photos in religion textbooks, magazines, newspapers, advertisements—even cereal boxes and other product packaging—that teachers or children bring to class offer practical and easy places to start.

How We Teach Is as Important as What We Teach

No matter what their age, we are called to honor our students. We are also challenged to enter into respectful dialogue with them about the information and entertainment media products they consume. This respect is necessary not only because children enjoy media, but also because they often like media for reasons different from our own. Respect for the opinions of others, including children, is called for because no two people interpret the same media production in the same way.

It is important to keep in mind that any negative attitudes on the part of teachers toward media productions and student media consumption only serve to block conversation and effective teaching. *Our Media World* offers practical suggestions throughout that will enable you to teach media mindfulness skills that will facilitate your interaction with young people.

Although sometimes it might seem better to turn off the television for a week, or boy-

cott a particular program or movie, these strategies have limited educational value or lasting economic impact. Ratings are useful as information for guidance, but many adults are not aware of their actual meaning. Electronic devices or so-called V-chips for television in homes, while perhaps effective with very young children, are also of limited value, especially if used without parental interaction. Soon enough, children will figure out the passwords, go to a friend's house to watch TV, or go online—without the benefit of parental guidance.

Without parental involvement in their media experiences, children are deprived of a rich opportunity to learn or begin to internalize their parents' values. Children need to develop moral reasoning and the critical thinking skills necessary to make healthy media choices. Then, once they make a choice, children need their parents' input through conversation, questioning, and good example to find and construct meaning about life and faith.

Children benefit from knowing *why* their parents change the channel or won't take them to a 'tween concert because learning what motivates their parents' decisions is how they learn the values of their parents or caregivers. This means that parents and teachers—first and foremost—need to be aware of and be able to articulate the values that guide their own lives and how these values relate to their media choices.

Creating media mindfulness is not an easy task. Some teachers, catechists, parents, and clergy think entertainment and information media do not have a place in the classroom because the focus of religious instruction and formation is the content of the faith. It can seem to them that media contradict this end. Yet the incarnation, Jesus' becoming a human being like us, reminds us that our life in God is rooted in the world around us. Catechesis about the media and using appropriate media

in catechesis are valid and effective ways to help children deepen their lives with God—one of the key goals of catechesis.⁷

Although media are gifts of God, they are not always used to reflect what is true, good, and beautiful. Media literacy education and media mindfulness can teach the skills children need to begin telling the difference. The storytellers of tomorrow, the media makers of tomorrow, are in our pews, living rooms, and classrooms today. What better reason, then, to incorporate media mindfulness into our religious education curriculum? Developing media literacy and media mindfulness skills is an educational and faith-formation imperative for the twenty-first century.

If our teaching about God, the Church, the human person, and the world is faith-filled, hopeful, and loving, these attributes will color everything we teach. This is true regarding media mindfulness in a particular way, because often people believe the Church has a negative view of the media. This is not the case, however, as the consistent teaching of the Church shows. The Church teaches that the media are gifts of God that have great potential for good, although they frequently carry risks. The Church advises wisdom over fear and, rather than flight, suggests engaging the modern world through critical awareness.

How we teach *is* what we teach.

What Media Literacy Is NOT

The following is a list of ideas to help explore and understand how media literacy is different from other literacies. These concepts include some of the basic elements of a comprehensive media education.

Media “bashing” is NOT media literacy.

However, media literacy sometimes involves *criticizing the media*.

Merely producing media is NOT media literacy, although media literacy should include *media production*.

Just teaching with videos or CD-ROMs or other mediated content is NOT media literacy; one must also *teach about media*.

Simply looking for political agendas, stereotypes, or misrepresentations is NOT media literacy; there should also be an *exploration* of the systems making those representations appear “normal.”

Looking at a media message or a mediated experience from just one perspective is NOT media literacy because media should be examined from *multiple positions*.

Media Literacy does NOT mean “don’t watch”; it means “*watch carefully, think critically*.”

— Center for Media Literacy⁸

The National Directory for Catechesis

The *National Directory for Catechesis*, based on the Vatican’s *General Directory for Catechesis*, builds on Church teaching about the media, communication, and popular culture. By acknowledging the media’s role in the lives of children, and the media’s good—and sometimes problematic—influence on the moral development and faith formation of young people, the *National Directory* points out how important media catechesis is for today’s children.

The directory contains five main recommendations for teaching about media:

Developing critical thinking skills through media literacy education (media mindfulness);

Making the media the subject of catechesis and evangelization;

Using media in catechesis;

Producing media for catechesis and evangelization;

Advocating for media that promote human dignity and the common good.⁹

Our Media World seeks to help catechists and those involved in evangelization put these recommendations into effect.

“Television and the Internet now occupy so much time in the lives of the people of the United States that catechesis should focus especially on developing critical understanding of these media. Television viewers and Internet users need to know who sponsors, plans, and produces the programs and websites. An awareness of the techniques used by advertisers and others to influence, persuade, and manipulate is critical, as is the ability to distinguish between the image presented and the reality or distortion of reality that it represents. It is necessary that viewers understand the profit motives of commercial television and the Internet.”

— *National Directory for Catechesis*¹⁰

Media Literacy Education and Media Mindfulness

“Media literacy is a twenty-first-century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms—from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.”

— *Center for Media Literacy*¹¹

Media mindfulness is media literacy education in the context of faith formation. Mindfulness adds a quality of reflection to the

above definition, a sense of responsibility and respect for oneself and others.

Media literacy education began in the United States in the 1950s when the National Telemedia Council was formed in Madison, Wisconsin, by a group of teachers. In 1964 John Culkin, SJ (1928–1993), wrote a film study curriculum, adding to the growing field of media literacy in the United States. Television Awareness Training (TAT) from the Media Action Resource Center in New York was popular in faith communities in the 1970s.

The Center for Media Literacy was founded in Los Angeles in 1977 by Sister Elizabeth Thoman, CHM. *Media & Values* magazine, published by the center for many years, helped frame media literacy in the minds of teachers and pastoral ministers in particular. In the 1980s media literacy was launched in the United Kingdom with the publication of Len Masterman’s seminal work, *Teaching the Media* (London: Routledge, 1985). Its focus on the pedagogy of media education remains valid today. Also, in the 1980s and 1990s, Canadian teachers organized and held conferences on media literacy that resulted in the subject being included in school standards for each province.

Today, all fifty states include either critical thinking skills or media literacy standards in their English or language arts curricula. Media literacy education is also taught and practiced in other countries, including Italy, the Philippines, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, Malaysia, India, Japan, Korea, Uruguay, Russia, and Brazil.

Believing in a Media Culture by Gretchen Hailer, RSHM (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 1996), first introduced the media mindfulness strategy that this book integrates beginning in grade four. In 2007 Saint Mary’s Press published *Media Mindfulness: Educating Teens about Faith and Media*, the

first comprehensive guide to media literacy for Catholics and other faith communities published in the United States. This book now introduces these valuable concepts to children. Together, these books can help teachers, parents, clergy, and pastoral ministers develop media mindfulness and literacy curricula from kindergarten through high school.

How to Teach *Our Media World* Successfully

Some attitudes are useful for teaching media literacy or media mindfulness successfully in the faith community:

Teachers are co-learners with students because we all interpret media messages according to age, experience, education, stage of moral development, and faith formation. A teacher does not have to be an expert in the use of technology to teach media mindfulness (though some familiarity is highly recommended).

Each viewer sees a program in a unique way. We do not all have the same “lenses” for viewing or listening and making meaning. There is no right or wrong way to *interpret* media productions; therefore each one’s opinion is valid.

Respect for the opinions of young people regarding media and popular culture is paramount for teaching credibly and effectively. When teachers respect the opinions of students, it gives students permission to respect the views of their teachers. Let us honor our students.

To develop critical thinking skills at any level, good questions are essential, especially those that probe media with the words *why*, *what*, and *how*. Some questions¹² include:

- ▣ Is this program trying to tell me something? Why? What? How?
- ▣ What is this program trying to sell me? Why?
- ▣ Who benefits from this program, advertisement, or product?
- ▣ Who profits, and why?
- ▣ What is this program about?
- ▣ Who put this program together? Why?
- ▣ What do I hear? What do I see?
- ▣ How does this show, game, or program engage my imagination?
- ▣ What do I like or dislike about it? Why?
- ▣ What media techniques are used to tell a story or send a message?
- ▣ What does this program tell me about how other people live and what they believe?
- ▣ Is anything or anyone left out? What, who, and why?
- ▣ Do I see myself, my friends, or my family in TV programs, ads, songs, or movies? How?
- ▣ Why did this blogger write this? Is it opinion? Gossip? Facts? Does the blogger support the facts with references?

- ▣ What information is missing and why?
- ▣ What do I think and feel about this game, story, song, or picture? How might other people feel about it?
- ▣ Which values do the media promote in this program? (For example: that achieving a certain body image makes you acceptable, or that having things makes you popular.)
- ▣ Which human and Gospel values do the media seldom promote? (For example: that people matter, that there are consequences for the choices we make, or that sexual activity belongs in a committed marital relationship.)
- ▣ In video games or other media, is violence the only way presented to resolve conflict? Why?
- ▣ As a believer, what alternatives would you suggest to resolve the conflict?
- ▣ How would you feel if what happened in the story or game happened to you? Why?
- ▣ What is the purpose of texting or sending instant messages? What are the rules that guide texting etiquette?

Our Media World begins in kindergarten by inviting children to pay attention to their world and understand it in an age-appropriate way. The complete strategy is introduced in fourth grade, where the media mindfulness wheel is presented.

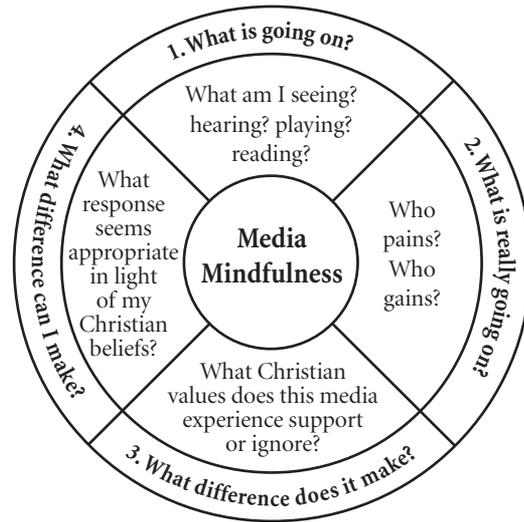
What's going on?

What's really going on?

Does it make any difference?

How can I make a difference?

The media mindfulness wheel appears in each of the grades 4 through 8.



This diagram is adapted from *Believing in a Media Culture*, by Gretchen Hailer, Thomas Zanzig, and Marilyn Kielbasa (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1996), page 38. Copyright ©1996 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

How to Use This Book

To make teaching media mindfulness as easy and engaging as possible for you and your students, we've chosen one important media topic to study with each grade level from kindergarten through eighth grade. As they focus on one area of the media, students are introduced to the core concepts of media mindfulness and learn how to apply them. Ideally, one grade level builds upon another, but the lesson plans for each grade level have been written so that students—and teachers—with no previous media mindfulness experience can dive right in.

Teachers and parents may find it easiest to follow each lesson in sequential order. However,

lessons and activities can easily be adapted for different grade levels. Each chapter consists of several lessons. You may choose to use a lesson each day during a certain week (for schools) or month (in parish catechetical programs), or you may scatter the lessons throughout the school year, correlating the material with your religious education curriculum.

Each chapter has reproducible handouts to be copied ahead of time: an explanatory letter for parents and four or more activity pages for the students. You can copy these on separate sheets to place in a folder or to send home after each lesson. You may want to copy the handouts on 11 x 17-inch sheets that can serve as a folder to keep students' work together.

The Scripture passage that begins each chapter is a specific way of bringing God's word into the daily media experiences of young people—and to each lesson.

The "Introduction" to each chapter provides important background information and context for the teacher.

Quotations from ecclesial documents follow in "What the Church Says." This section provides an encounter with Church teaching that can promote a comprehensive understanding of media, catechesis, and evangelization in today's culture.

The "Objective" for each chapter provides the focus for the lessons.

"Words to Know" features important media vocabulary students should be familiar with.

Each grade level also features "Our Media Hero"—an exemplary man or woman, often a saint, who can serve as the class's patron and role model. Students can learn from the hero's example about how faith relates to the way the heroes use the media.

The "Remote Preparation" section will help you prepare for each lesson. This includes making photocopies, arranging the learning space, and gathering materials, including any

necessary audiovisual equipment or media selections.

"For Your Reflection" questions are for you, the teacher. These questions are intended to help you reflect on your own experience with the media. If you keep a journal, you may want to record your reflection and then read it over when the lessons are completed and the experience evaluated.

The "Lesson Plans" provide detailed instructions for each lesson. Be sure to read these over as you plan teaching *Our Media World*.

"Homework" is suggested where appropriate. Most often, children are encouraged to talk with their parents or caregivers about what they are learning, to experience a form of media together, and to talk about that experience.

"Assessment" is always a challenge in media literacy education because it is difficult to gauge how well and to what extent children have internalized what they have been taught. We have provided a question or two for you to ask the children at the end of the lessons. Another approach, especially for middle grades through junior high, is to measure how well students can support their responses with appropriate reasons or data.

"Curricular Connections" provide suggestions for integrating the material into a variety of learning areas.

The "Additional Activities" section offers more projects for the class to do.

In some units, we suggest that you view popular movies. Some films suggested in the text are *Spy Kids 3D: Game Over*; *Finding Nemo*; *Fantasia*; *The Nativity Story*; and *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. You may decide to refer to these films, use clips, or see them in their entirety. You may also use others at your discretion. (See Appendix 6 for copyright information.)

For each *Our Media World* lesson, we suggest preparing a prayer table in your classroom and lighting a candle. Light is a powerful symbol in the context of media mindfulness. Light is the first medium that God created (Genesis 1:3), and without light we can see nothing. Jesus told us that we are the “light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). If lighted candles are not permitted in your classroom or learning space, battery operated “candles” are a safe alternative, especially for younger grades. These may be found in a craft store.

Our Media World:
A Rewarding Experience

Teaching students that Christian behavior (morality) is all about learning, asking, and

discerning what kinds of choices Jesus would make in life’s situations, and then choosing to do likewise, is a powerful goal of catechesis. This ideal forms the basis of media mindfulness in two ways: it can become part of the very act of choosing what we watch and read, and it can become a lens to view and make meaning from the stories we watch, hear, read, and experience.

Our Media World lessons are designed to be engaging and rewarding and to give you new ideas and skills as you continue to bring Jesus alive for your students.

KINDERGARTEN

The World of Sound

“Sing to the LORD a new song...”

(Psalm 98:1)

Introduction

Young children love music. Brain-based multiple intelligences theory, developed by Howard Gardner, proposes that humans express learning potential in eight ways. Gardner maintains that musical intelligence is the first to develop.¹ Music plays a large role in the way children are socialized into play groups and in preschool and peer groups.

When he was a missionary in India, Saint Francis Xavier would make up catchy songs to teach the faith to children. Pastoral music ministry and children’s choirs are important parts of the community in every parish. The secular music industry in North America alone is worth billions of dollars a year.

Children’s programming uses theme songs to invite children to join the television or DVD “community.” The key idea kindergartners will learn in the following lessons is the role of sound and music in their media. For example, TV shows use sound effects (and some use laugh tracks) to cue emotional responses.

Find out what shows your students like to watch before beginning these lessons. Watching one of these programs for a week may help you to prepare for the lessons. You

will begin to identify the particular sounds for each character and how happiness, sadness, danger, and resolution of conflict are cued—just through the use of sound effects or music. Watching what your students watch will help you to identify with their experiences and to talk with them about characters and stories that are important to them.

What the Church Says

“Contemporary communications media do not merely transmit information; they generate visual, audible, emotional, and, in some cases, entirely virtual experiences for individuals and communities. Well-planned catechesis must employ these media so that the message of Jesus Christ can be effectively communicated in the real circumstances and cultures of those who seek him.”

— *National Directory for Catechesis*²

“Singing must be regarded as an asset to any celebration, and in view of the fondness children have for music, it is especially recommended in the celebration of children’s Masses . . . in children’s Masses, too, the use of musical instruments can be very valuable, especially when played by the children themselves. They help to sustain singing,

evoke meditative prayer, and are particularly expressive of festive joy and the praise of God.”

— *Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship*³

Objective

Children will become aware of the variety of sounds around them and begin to understand the various roles of music, including how it cues our emotions.

Words to Know

sound

music

song

radio

CD

television

Our Media Hero

Saint Cecilia (third century)

Cecilia was a Roman noblewoman who is said to have been “singing in her heart a hymn of love for Jesus.” Married at a young age, she persuaded her husband and his brother to convert to Christianity. At that time, it was considered a crime to believe in Jesus. Cecilia’s husband and his brother were arrested for their beliefs. Later, Cecilia was arrested, too. Her captors demanded that she make a sacrifice to false gods. Cecilia bravely refused. Saint Cecilia is the patron saint of musicians and singers.

Remote Preparation

- ❑ Photocopy the letter to parents regarding *Our Media World* and send it home with

the children before you begin the unit.

- ❑ Photocopy the handouts for *The World of Sound*.
- ❑ Prepare a prayer table and place it in front of or near the classroom TV or computer. In addition to a Bible and candle, place on it some of the items represented on the first page of student handout 1. If you choose to begin the lessons with instrumental music (as suggested), you will need a CD player and appropriate reflection music.
- ❑ Be sure the children have crayons or markers available.

Lesson 1

- ❑ You will need a CD player and a CD of hymns the children are familiar with. The *God, Butterflies, and Miracles* CDs (see page 144 for CD resources) contain many age-appropriate hymns.
- ❑ You may wish to make one enlarged copy of handout 1 for the entire class to look at together.

Lesson 2

- ❑ You will need a CD player and CD of hymns that the children are familiar with, such as the *God, Butterflies, and Miracles* CDs.
- ❑ Assemble an assortment of pots and pans and kitchen utensils for an orchestra. Add to them any musical instruments you already use in music class (such as drums, whistles, triangles, bells, or tambourines).

Lesson 3

- ❑ Before presenting this lesson, ask your students to tell you about their favorite

television program. Tape episodes of one or two of these programs for one-time use in the classroom, or rent a DVD. Identify the clip(s) you want to show the children. (See Appendix 6 for copyright information.)

- ▣ You will need a CD player and CD containing sounds or music that evoke a variety of emotions. Classical music may be a good choice for this age group. If you choose to end the lesson with a song, you will need a CD of hymns the children are familiar with.

Lesson 4

- ▣ If desired, have a CD player available, as well as a CD of service music for the Mass.

For Your Reflection

What advertising jingles or other songs do you remember from your childhood? As an adult, what is the role of music in your life? What are your favorite kinds of music, your favorite songs?

Lesson Plans

You can begin each lesson the same way, by quieting the class and gathering them around the prayer table. As you play soft instrumental music, light the candle. Read this chapter's guiding Scripture passage, Psalm 98:1.

Lesson 1

Sounds, Music, and Media

As the music plays, introduce the lesson by explaining that we live in a world full of media—different ways of communicating with each other, such as television, the Internet, newspapers, radio, and music—and that we are going to learn about being media mindful. This means to notice the media around us and to think about the stories they tell and how we use them. You may wish to repeat the term “media mindful” frequently throughout the lessons so that the children become familiar with it.

With the instrumental music still playing in the background, introduce *The World of Sound* by explaining that we are going to learn about sounds and music in our lives and in our media world. We are also going to learn about a special young woman, Saint Cecilia, who loved music, too.

Let the children know that every day we can think about God by singing and listening to music.

Invite the children to sing a favorite God song (hymn) that they know.

Then give each child a copy of handout 1, or display the enlarged copy of the handout you made.

Ask the children to look at the pictures carefully and quietly. After a few moments invite them to say aloud the things they recognize. Solicit volunteers to imitate the sounds the pictures might evoke.

Encourage the children to color the scene.

Collect the papers and display them.

Homework

Ask the children to look around their home

tonight and find all the things there that make sounds or music. Invite them to draw pictures of three of these things. The children can write about their drawings below each picture, then bring their work to school to share with the class.

Lesson 2

Make a Joyful Sound

Remind the children that this lesson is about the sounds around us. We are learning to become aware of our media world by paying attention to sound.

If the children have completed the previous lesson's homework, invite them to thank God for the sound and music makers they found at home. Let them talk about their discoveries.

Sing a song of praise and thanks from one of the CDs you have collected. Encourage the children to add gestures to the song: clapping for joy, folding their hands, or using the *orans* position (hands extended and lifted up).

Pass out the kitchen utensils and musical instruments you have gathered.

As orchestra director, invite each child to "play" his or her instrument alone. After you have heard from each one, ask certain instruments to join together. Finally, invite all the children to play together. The children could become a band and march around the room.

After a few minutes of making music (noise), ask them to sing a tune they know (such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or "Mary Had a Little Lamb"). Then invite the children to approach the prayer table, holding their instruments high in the air while they say, "Thanks, God, for the gift of music! Amen!"

Lesson 3

Song Prayers

As you begin this lesson, you may wish to review with the students the many sounds that are around us: scary (siren), loud (car horn), and pretty (classical piece) sounds. Play a variety of sounds, sound effects, sad songs, and happy songs.

Remind the children that they have been experiencing all the ways sounds can become music by repeating a pattern; this is called rhythm or a melody. Ask the children: What do we call music to which we've added words? When they answer "songs," mention that some songs are glad songs; some songs are sad songs.

Now explain that you are going to show them some parts of their favorite television shows to see how music helps make the show more enjoyable.

Show them the clips that you have previewed and ask them to tell you what they notice about the music in the show. Do certain characters have their own music or song? Does some music make the show scarier? What kind of music makes them feel happy?

Invite the children to pray for all those who are sad and for all those who are happy, or sing a song from *God, Butterflies, and Miracles* or another children's CD.

Lesson 4

Saint Cecilia, Patron Saint of Music

Ask the children if they have ever heard people sing at Mass. If so, what kind of songs have they heard them sing?

Tell the children that at Mass there are two songs we sing that have only one word! Teach them a simple "Alleluia" and

“Amen,” reminding them that “alleluia” means “praise God” and “amen” means “I believe it.” You might want to encourage them to sing, using a CD as an accompaniment.

Now tell them the story of Saint Cecilia, this unit’s media hero.

Teach them the song about Saint Cecilia found on handout 2 (sung to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”).

Pass out handout 2 and crayons and colored markers as needed. Encourage the children to color the picture of Saint Cecilia. When they have finished, invite them to sing the song about Saint Cecilia.

Assessment

After the children have finished coloring, ask them what they remember from these lessons about The World of Sound.

Curriculum Connections

Music

Play a section from an instrumental version of Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf*, which tells a story only with music, each character having its own theme or melody. Help the children identify the different characters. Then play a version with the narration, and compare the two.

Additional Activities

Music recording

Make a recording of the sounds the children make during these lessons, and play it back so they can learn that everyone can create music.

DVD/video clips

Play one of the video clips that were used in lesson 3 again, first without sound, and then with sound. Ask the children what they notice about the difference.

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

One of the important areas that your child is studying in religious education is media mindfulness. We are using *Our Media World*, a K–8 program designed to help students understand the ways various kinds of media work so they can become more discerning in the way they interact with the media world.

We will be studying The World of Sound. The activities are planned to help your child understand the ways sound, music, and songs make us feel. Our special role model will be Saint Cecilia, a young woman who loved Jesus and expressed her faith through music and song. She is the patron saint of music, and we celebrate her feast day on November 22.

One of the main reinforcements that you can offer your child as he or she is studying sound, music, and song is to become aware of the music and sounds we hear in all kinds of settings, including in movies and television. You may wish to sing some songs as a family or ask your kindergartener about the theme songs of favorite television shows. You could also ask your child what he or she is learning about happy songs and sad songs, as well as the one-word songs we sing at Mass (“Alleluia,” “Amen”). As you ask these questions, your child becomes the teacher and is proud to share what he or she is learning. Be a co-learner, and he or she will be delighted that you care about what he or she knows.

If you have any questions about the *Our Media World* program, please feel free to contact me.

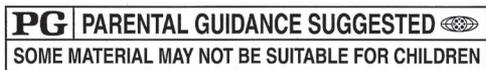
Sincerely,

P.S. Media ratings provide information to guide you in making media decisions for your family. On the reverse of this sheet are rating guides that you might find helpful in your important role of parenting.

MEDIA RATINGS GUIDE

Information for Guidance

MOTION PICTURE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



RECORDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

ESRB Rating Categories (on the front of the box)



(3+) Contains no material that parents would find inappropriate.



(6+) May contain minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence and/or infrequent use of mild language.



(10+) May contain more cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language and/or minimal suggestive themes.



(13+) May contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling and/or infrequent use of strong language.



(17+) May contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content and/or strong language.



(18+) May include prolonged scenes of intense violence and/or graphic sexual content and nudity.

ESRB Content Descriptors (on the back of the box)



For more information, visit www.esrb.org

TV Parental Guidelines



All Children



Directed to Older Children



Directed to Older Children
Fantasy Violence



General Audience



Parental Guidance Suggested



Parents Strongly Cautioned



Mature Audience Only

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Office for Film and Broadcasting

A-I—General Patronage

A-II—Adults and Adolescents

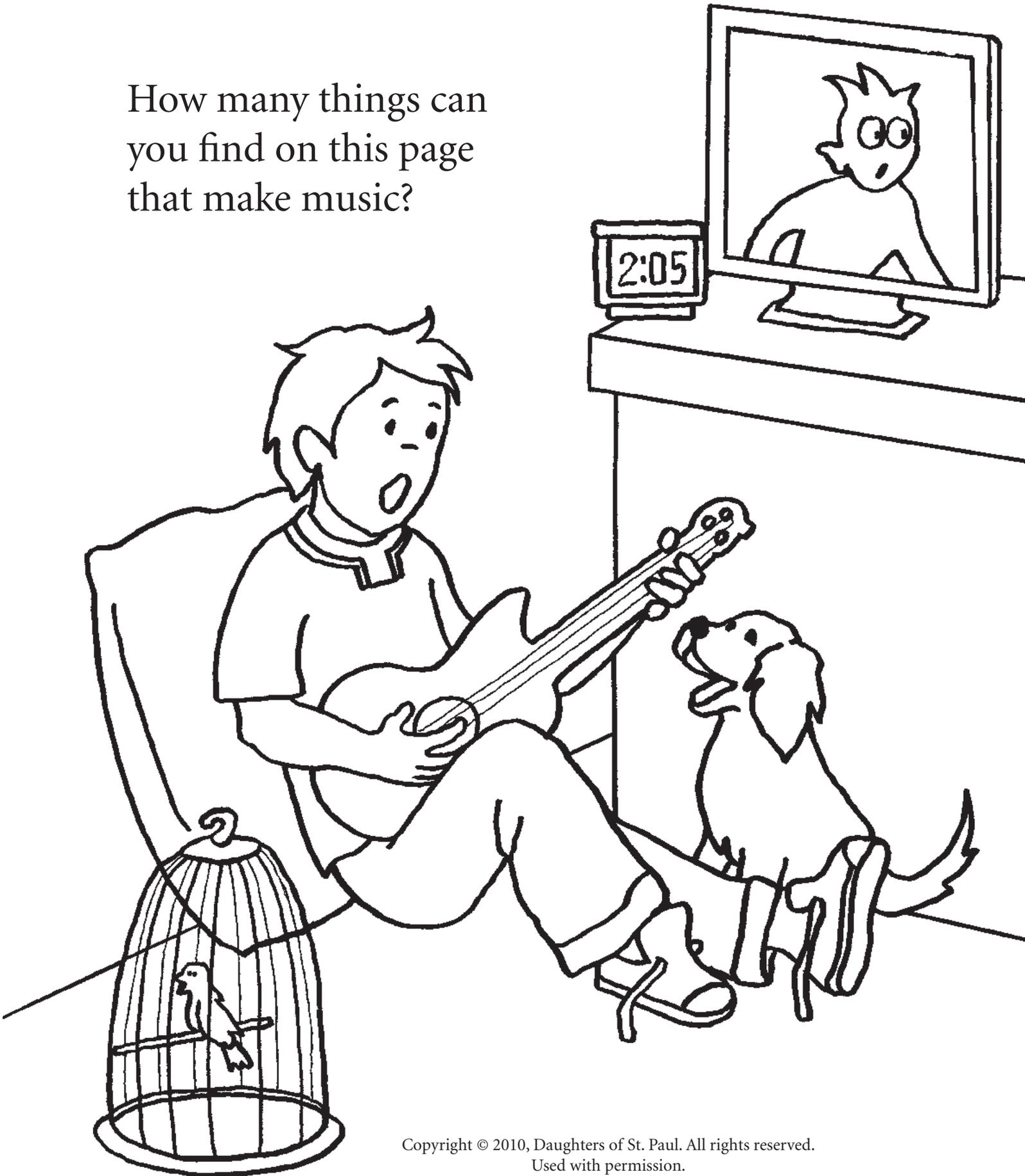
A-III—Adults

L—Limited Adult Audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling

O—Morally Offensive

Sounds, Music, and Media

How many things can you find on this page that make music?



Saint Cecilia, Patron Saint of Music

Song About Saint Cecilia

(Sung to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”)

Cecilia was a lovely girl,
lovely girl, lovely girl;
Cecilia was a lovely girl,
who loved to sing to God.

