

THEME: The propagation of Christianity – aspects, characters.

2- OBJECTIVE: The child must recognize, the first Christian workers were missionaries in charge of preserving and spreading the message of Jesus.

3- BIOGRAPHY: Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, Epistolas

ESE, cap 1

On the Path of Light (Emmanuel/F.C. Xavier); Paul and Estevan??
(Emmanuel/F.C. Xavier)

4- CLASS:

a) Initial Incentive: Eliciting

The teacher must start the class by asking the children if they know the meaning of the word "Apostle". Afterwards, ask them to talk about the work they accomplished; then ask them to name some of the Apostles of Jesus.

b) Development: Description

Jesus had sent many missionaries to prepare the atmosphere for the development of his Mission before he even came to Earth. His word, referring to Emmanuel "intended to unify all creatures in the same fraternal vibration and in the same illuminated path of love". (On the Path of Light, cap 12.) As we have already studied, Jesus came to the world to bring a new concept of religion, a new way of understanding the God and Man relationship, and to teach how God acts in relation to men. His teachings were indeed ground-breaking as they changed the old concept of a God who rewards the ones who have bribed him with offers while punishing the ones who have behaved indifferent towards him or have disobeyed him. Jesus came to teach us that the Father is loving, fair and merciful and that the best thing we can offer God is to love one another.

During his preaching, Jesus reunited a group of Spirits who had already committed to the development of his mission before incarnating. Consequently, when Jesus asked them to join him in the propagation of the Good Tidings, they accepted immediately. They became known as the "Apostles", which means "messengers". They were simple men who had not had the opportunity to attend advanced schools, and who worked manual labors, but who demonstrated a high spiritual evolution, for they continued with much dedication and courage the work of spreading the Gospel, after Jesus returned to the Spiritual Plane.

The apostles, initially in number of twelve, became well-known for their devotion to spreading the Teachings of Jesus to various regions, beyond Palestine. In addition to these twelve we know as Apostles, other followers, whose names were not registered in history, also contributed to the propagation of the principles of the Gospel. The first Apostles were: Simon, whom Jesus called Peter, Andrew whom Jesus called Peter's brother, James, John, his brother, sons of Zebedeu; Philip, Bartholomew (or Natanael), Thomas, Matthew (or Levi), James, Menor, Tadeu, Simon Cananita and Judas Iscariotes.

John and Matthew were the ones who wrote the Gospel (which means the "Good Tidings, the good news"), and which narrates the Life of Jesus and his teachings.

Two other followers of Jesus' teachings, Marcos and Luca, also wrote their "Gospels. Marcos was young when he met Jesus. He came along with Pedro and later traveled with Paul. Lucas was the only one from the four Gospel messengers who did not meet Jesus personally. For this reason, he wrote his Gospel based on the research he conducted with people who had lived with the Master, and notes, specially Marcos' notes.

The Gospels were written many years after Jesus' death. However, the dissemination of his teachings continued. Initially, it was disseminated not only verbally, but also through the studies promoted based on the Levi's notes (whose name would later be changed to Matthew), according to what Emmanuel says in the book "Paul and Stephen". It must be taken into consideration the Jewish tradition of studying the sacred words much contributed to the recording and the dissemination of the teachings of Jesus.

Even though Jesus was incarnated amongst the Jewish, his teachings were not just aimed to those, who mistakenly, called themselves "God's people", or "elected people", as if God wasn't the father of all creatures, of all people and races. Jesus wanted his message to reach the world, and he knew that it was not going to be easy. "Go, be that I send you in the world like a sheep among wolves."(Lc, 10:3) However, in spite of Jesus' advices, the Apostles felt it very difficult to preach the Gospel outside the Jewish circles, and among the other people who were called "heathen".

Thus, in the beginning, the teachings were disseminated verbally by the disciples who travelled around all the known regions. Later, they started the written Gospels, and the Epistles (letters). Here we need to highlight Paul's work, whom Christ himself called upon at **the Damasco** Road, to do this work. Paul became known as the Apostle of the Heathen "people" on account of his work accomplished outside the Jewish circles. Through the fulfillment of his mission, he traveled to various cities of Asia, Greece, all the way to Rome. He was persecuted frequently, imprisoned, beaten and even stoned. His work was fundamental in the propagation of Jesus teachings, and most definitely contributed to make Jesus ' consoling message live and influential. In addition to being the founder of many Christian Nucleus in the homes of some good will people, he also wrote fourteen epistles (letters), encouraging, urging and enlightening the newborn Christian communities. We must stress the fundamental roles of these domestic nucleus in continuing the task of studying Jesus Gospel.

When reading in "the new testament" which says that Paul founded many churches, we need to remember that "church" in those times meant "nucleus", not an organization nor the house where they conducted the studies. This can be found in the following text from Paul's letter to the Romans: "Welcome **Priscila and Aquila**, my collaborators in Jesus Christ, (...) welcome also the church which is in your home."(Rm, 16:3 and 5). The same is noticed in the letter to **Filemon**: "...and our sister **Afia, and Arquipo**, our comrade, and the church in her home."(Fm, 1:2).

Jesus' teachings were wide spread amongst the Roman society, and many became followers of these new ideas, in spite of persecutions which had began

to take place. These persecutions were ordered by the Roman governors who felt very uneasy with the postulates emerged by this new doctrine. Millions of Christians were eliminated by the means of beatings, fire, lions and other ways. However, Emmanuel says: "The Christian doctrine will find in these persecutions its best ally as ways of propagating its expansion".

Thanks to the first Christian workers' work, perseverance, bravery and faith was it possible for the Gospel of Jesus and its consoling and liberating message to be disseminated around the world, and welcome millions of creatures to the good tidings. Later on, in the XIX century, after many difficulties, Christ's message re-emerged renewed and revived in the promised Consoler: The Spiritism doctrine, the III Revelation, subject we will study later on.

c) Evaluation: Questioning

The teacher, at the end of the class, may say to the children something like this: "Well, up to now, you have asked questions. Now it's my time to ask you if you really took advantage of the class".

01- What did the Jewish people meant by calling themselves the "elected people"?

02-What is the importance of the work accomplished by the Apostles and the other Jesus followers?

03- How many of the Apostles got to know Jesus personally?

04- Let's remember some of the Apostles' names.

05- What did the word "church" meant back in those times?

06- Why was Paul referred as "the Apostle of the Heathen people"?

07- As we disseminate Spiritism, are we continuing the work of the Apostles?

08- What can we do as Spiritists, to help disseminate the Gospel of Jesus?

09- Which one of the four Apostles, didn't meet Jesus personally?

10- for what reason did Paul write four letters?

d) Educational material: Prints of places and characters from the time period of Jesus.
Map (to be colored).