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With a foreword by Dr Jack Dominian

# A Journey in L O V E

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A developmental programme  
for children in the primary years



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# Contents

	FOREWORD	4
	A VISION STATEMENT	5
	INTRODUCTION	6
<b>N</b>	NURSERY Wonder at God's Love	7
<b>R</b>	RECEPTION YEAR God loves each of us in our uniqueness	11
<b>1</b>	YEAR ONE We meet God's love in our family	15
<b>2</b>	YEAR TWO We meet God's love in the community	19
<b>3</b>	YEAR THREE How we live in love	23
<b>4</b>	YEAR FOUR God loves us in our differences	28
<b>5</b>	YEAR FIVE God loves me in my changing and development	33
<b>6</b>	YEAR SIX The wonder of God's love in creating new life	38
	JOURNEY OF LIFE	46
	SOME PERSPECTIVES ON MARRIAGE	47
	GLOSSARY	50

# Foreword

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**A**T THE HEART of Christian faith is love, St John says that God is love (1 John 4:8) and the whole purpose of Christianity is to live it as fully as possible in and through love. This means we have to link every aspect of our being, from birth to death, with love.

Love starts to enter our life the moment of birth when we are held tenderly in the arms of our mother and developed throughout our first intimate relationship of childhood with our parents, family members, friends and teachers. At puberty the secondary sexual characteristics arise. Now we begin to seek someone from outside our family and, armed with our first relationship, we explore our second intimate relationship of love usually ending in marriage.

The whole purpose of education at home, in the primary school is to connect every aspect of growth, physical, emotional, intellectual and social with love. The ultimate goal is to enable adults to fully love themselves i.e. accept themselves positively, and in turn able to love their neighbour i.e. make themselves fully available to others.

The alliance of the fullness of ourselves with love links us with God the Father, through Jesus Christ his Son, and through the Spirit. Jesus accepted himself totally in the Incarnation and made himself fully available to the world and to each and everyone of us, especially on the Cross, the pinnacle of his love.

Parents and teachers are privileged to assist children every moment of their lives to further this link of love with their humanity and thus with God. The programme outlined in a Journey in Love is a brilliant reconciliation between the human and divine aspects of love and is truly fully Christian in its vision.

This vision is none other than the Kingdom of God, summed up by Jesus in the double commandments of loving God and our neighbour as ourselves. In its realisation the teacher in the primary education has a necessary and vital role to play.

Dr. Jack Dominionian

# A vision statement

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**T**O BE MADE in the image of God means to be a person in relationship. It is in this context that our sexuality grows and develops from the moment of our conception. From early childhood we are on a journey of exploration of the richness various patterns of relationship offer and the appropriate tokens of exchange that they demand or admit.

In childhood, we love, we hate, we play, we fight and within all this we discover that selfishness and an unwillingness to share, not only those things precious to us, but something of ourselves, brings loneliness and bitterness. Isolation robs us of self-knowledge and a sense of fulfilment. Within this journey of exploration is God Himself, Who is Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – One God, Who is Love and Love is the highest form of relationship. So God is at the heart of love. He is at the heart of our family ties and our friendships. He reveals Himself through our pattern of interdependence. And all our interdependences operate from our sexuality.

As puberty advances we become more aware of ourselves as sexual beings and some of the relationships we share become more emotionally charged. We need to find new and appropriate expressions for them. This can be a very confusing time, but even in the confusion, God is there. The young person is exploring the whole business of belonging, being part of, identifying with others. For many, this will be the first experience of “falling in love”. New tokens of exchange require to be found, new means of expression are sought, and as this search continues, there is a growing awareness that none are really satisfying, none bring that sense of fulfilment and completeness. The young person needs these experiences of the joy of beginning and the heartbreak of ending such highly charged relationships and, for many, they form the foundation for that life-long commitment to another in marriage.

The discovery of the right partner for life is like discovering “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” as the Book of Genesis has it, and as this relationship grows so grows also the desire to commit one’s whole being to the other. The Sacrament of Marriage declares the commitment of each spouse to the other permanently in the acknowledgement that it is God-given. The sexuality of each complements the other’s. In sexual union, husband and wife offer themselves selflessly to one another in the deepest expression of love possible and in that act the Sacrament is made real; each experience the depth of God’s love.

Mgr. George Stokes

# Introduction

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'God's love for us is fundamental for our lives, and it raises important questions about who God is and who we are.'

Deus Caritas Est 2

**T**HIS TEACHERS' RESOURCE, *A Journey in Love*, has as its foundational premise the belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God and, as a consequence, gender and sexuality are God's gift, reflect God's beauty and share in the divine creativity.

In order that children may grow and develop healthily and holistically towards an understanding of their gender and its implications for successful relationships, they must be at ease with themselves and grow in self-knowledge.

An aspect of the mystery of love is treated in each year group; children and young people are encouraged to marvel at the wonder and beauty of God's creative love. This is reflected in each stage of a person's growth in the Primary years through a series of suggested, progressive and developmental tasks, activities and reflections which focus on physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development.

This text is the result of much study, discussion and shared reflection. It was a very talented team with interdisciplinary skills, drawing upon the diverse experience of educators, in consultation with parents and different experts in various fields: Corinne Adams, Tony Castle, Dawn Collis, Colette Dawson, Delia Doyle, Imelda Gunn, Katrina Karwacinski and Bozena Laraway.

I am extremely grateful to all who have collaborated in the production of this script, sponsored by Brentwood Religious Education Service. It is enriched by the artwork of Gunver Edwards and the foreword by Dr Jack Dominian.

The team of compilers is greatly assured that this resource does not contradict Catholic teaching and we are therefore, most grateful for the canonical permission given by Bishop Thomas McMahon after consultation with Monsignor George Stokes.

Sr Jude Groden RSM  
PRIMARY R.E. ADVISER

'Love is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working.

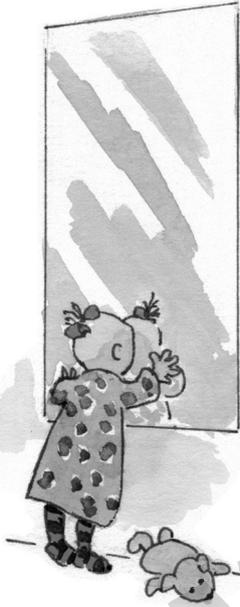
Love is possible, and we are able to practise it because we are created in the image of God.'

Deus Caritas Est 39

# NURSERY

## Wonder at God's love

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### PHYSICAL

- (1) Children focus on their hands e.g. size, length of fingers, nails.
- (2) Children focus on each others eyes and note colour and shape.
- (3) Children focus on their faces and whole body shapes, size, shape, features.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

*Children begin to know and understand that they are part of the wonder of God's love and creation*

### ACTIVITIES

- Children draw round their hands, decorate and display in circle, dove, tree, flower, shapes etc.
- Children look at themselves in the mirror and concentrate on their own eyes - colour, shape etc.
- Look at the faces of other children. Look in the mirror at own face, note shape, size, colour, lips, nose, etc.
- Draw themselves using the correct colour for skin and features (using people pencils) and display.

### PAUSE and REFLECT

Music - drawings placed in circle shape on carpet and all sing 'WE ARE SPECIAL'.

### PRAYER

*Loving God,  
thank you for the wonder of me.  
Amen.*

### KEYWORDS

*God  
Wonder  
Love  
Creation  
Hands  
Fingers  
Nails  
Faces  
Noses  
Lips  
Ears  
Hair  
Features  
Colour  
Shape  
Size*

## N

## S O C I A L

- (1) Children look at the pictures from previous session.  
Do they all look the same? Reinforce that all pictures disclose difference but each one is special.
- (2) How many boys and girls in the class?
- (3) Divide children into groups for a play activity.

## SKILLS

Listening  
Observing  
Praying  
Relating

**ACTIVITIES**

- Encourage children to share their observances, e.g. are they happy with the pictures of themselves/their friends?
- All children, boys and girls are friends together.
- Group activities to music, e.g. clap/stamp/jump etc.  
Taking turns to observe each other.

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

All children sing:  
*'HEADS, SHOULDERS, KNEES AND TOES.'*  
Assemble quietly on carpet and pray.

**PRAYER**

*Loving God,  
thank you for all that I can do  
Amen.*

## E M O T I O N A L

- (1) Children begin to observe and become sensitive to facial expressions.
- (2) Focus on individual expression.
- (3) Help children to discover the beauty of their smile.



**ACTIVITIES**

- Ask children how they feel and write/display responses with symbols, e.g. happy, sad etc.
- Use mirrors - how do I look today?
- Look in the mirror and show biggest smile to self (for as long as they like). Put mirrors down and show big smile to each other. Repeat activity with sad faces.

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

Music - assemble quietly on the carpet.  
Think about my smiley face.  
Think about my sad face.  
Children hold hands and pray.

**PRAYER**

*Loving God,  
whether I am happy or sad you love me. Amen.*

INTELLECTUAL

- .....
- (1) Children focus on the cause of happy and sad feelings.
  - (2) Identify the signs of feeling happy/sad.
  - (3) Observe expressions in photographs/newspapers etc.

**ACTIVITIES**

- Go round the circle and ask each child what makes them happy and what makes them sad.
- Hide face with hands and draw apart and disclose happy/sad faces. Can the children guess how you are feeling? Repeat with different children.
- Discuss the signs of happiness/sadness as evidenced in pictures and television, e.g. face, body language, posture.

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

Music - stand in a circle and link arms in a chain of love and pray.

**PRAYER**

*Loving God,  
be close to all of us in happy times and sad times. Amen.*

## N

## SPIRITUAL

- (1) Children focus on the wonders of God's world, e.g. people, animals, trees, land, seas etc.
- (2) Children see their special place as part of the wonder of God's creation.
- (3) Read scripture text –  
You created every part of me;  
and put me together in my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13

Sing: 'IF I WERE A BUTTERFLY'

Celebration Hymnal for Everyone no.298

**PRAYER**

Loving God,  
you gave me my hands,  
my eyes and my hair.  
You made me in love  
and with love.  
I thank you that I am part  
of the wonder of your creation.  
Amen.

# R E C E P T I O N

## God loves each of us in our uniqueness

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### PHYSICAL

- (1) Does it matter if we are different?
- (2) Look at me –  
How am I different from you?
- (3) Look at you –  
How are you different from me?

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Children know and understand that God has made them unique and that although we are all different we are all special to him.

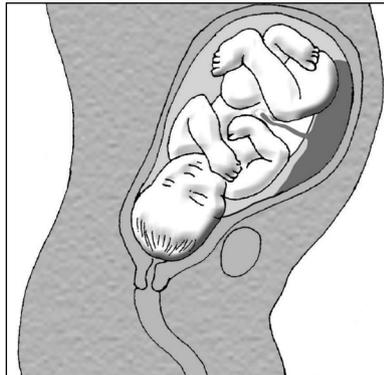
### ACTIVITIES

- Children close their eyes and describe themselves to the person next to them. Focusing on describing words.
- Children look in mirrors and describe themselves to each other. Focusing on eye colour, hair colour, etc.
- Make a picture graph of eye colours in the class. Repeat finger prints/hand prints.
- Count how many girls/boys are in the class.
- Present each child with his/her name. Why were you given your special name?

■ My Daddy's name is:

■ My Mummy's name is:

I grew for 9 months in my mummy's womb before I was born.



### KEYWORDS

God  
Unique  
Different  
Special  
Eyes  
Hair  
Boy / Girl  
Hands  
Fingers  
Name  
Family  
Love  
Womb  
Describe

# R

**SKILLS**

- Listening
- Observing
- Relating
- Speaking
- Respecting
- Reflecting
- Praying
- Understanding

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

Music - Candle - each child is called by name and places name around the lighted candle and all pray...

**PRAYER**

*Loving God,  
thank you for your gifts of love and  
for making me special  
with my own name.*

*Amen.*

S O C I A L

- (1) With whom do I play with at school/home?
- (2) Why does [x] play with me?
- (3) Name favourite games.

**ACTIVITIES**

- Children pick a name from a box and name one thing that person is good at.
- List all the good qualities mentioned, e.g. *kind, helpful*

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

Music - assemble quietly on the carpet.

The appropriate name placed in front of each child.

Assign a 'quality' card to each pupil who places it beside name.

**PRAYER**

*Loving God,  
thank you for the gift  
of my friends at home  
and at school.*

*Amen.*

EMOTIONAL



- (1) How do you feel about your friend?
- (2) Do you both have other friends at school/home?
- (3) Why do you play with them?

**ACTIVITIES**

- Children asked to say one thing they like about the person sitting next to them, e.g. 'you are good at...'
- How do I show love and care for others who are not my special friends?

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

Music... Assemble quietly on the carpet.

Each child says in turn...

*'I feel happy when I play with . . . . .  
I feel sad when I am left out'.*

**PRAYER**

*Loving God,  
thank you for my friends.  
Help me to be a good friend  
to everyone.  
Amen.*

INTELLECTUAL

- (1) Is it important to have friends?
- (2) Describe a good friend.

**ACTIVITIES**

- Read 'The Rainbow Fish' by Marcus Pfister
- Each child makes a rainbow fish scale to create a class fish for display.
- Read and dramatise/role play 'The Good Samaritan'.
- Talk about who was a good friend.

R

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

Music... Assemble quietly on the carpet.

Children listen to the story of the Good Samaritan and pass the Bible to each other and place in the centre and pray together.

*Loving God,  
thank you for being my friend.  
Amen.*

**SPIRITUAL**

- (1) Is Jesus our friend?
- (2) Read the story 'Jesus Welcomes the Little Children' ('LISTEN' Bible p.64) and talk about children being special to God.

**Jesus makes the children welcome**

*Here is a story which shows us how much Jesus liked to meet children.*

*The Reading comes from the Gospel of Saint Mark.*

People often used to bring children to Jesus and when they did, Jesus always gave them his blessing.

One day, however, some of the friends of Jesus told the children to go away.

Jesus was angry when he saw this happening, and he said: 'Don't stop the children from coming to me. Don't send them away like that! Bring them back.'

Then he put his arms round the children and he blessed them.

- (3) Who is the Mother of Jesus? Why is she special?  
Jesus grew for nine months in Mary's womb.

**PRAYER**

*Loving God, we know that we are unique. Although we are different from one another  
we are all special to you. Amen*

# Y E A R O N E

## We meet God's love in our family



### PHYSICAL

- (1) Who is in my family?  
eg. mother, father, brothers,  
sisters, grandparents etc.
- (2) How many children have babies in  
their family?

(3) Remind children that babies come in different sizes:  
some have long legs, some with hair,  
some without hair, some big, some small.

(4) Talk about how fast babies change and grow.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Children know and understand that they are growing and developing as members of their own family and God's family.

### KEYWORDS

Unique  
Friend  
God  
Important  
Different  
Special

### SKILLS

Listening  
Observing  
Relating  
Speaking  
Respecting  
Praying  
Reflecting  
Understanding

### ACTIVITIES

- Draw your family.  
If time permits show each family picture to each other.
- Draw you as a baby in your family.
- Turn to the child next to you and name the thing you can do now that you couldn't do as a baby (babies have special needs).
- Find out what age you learned to crawl, take first steps, speak first words etc.

### PAUSE and REFLECT

Music - assemble quietly on the carpet.

Place candle safely in centre and arrange family pictures around it and pray for families.

### PRAYER

Loving Father,  
thank you for my mum, dad,  
brothers, sisters  
and all who love and care for me.  
Amen.

## 1

## SOCIAL

## BACKGROUND NOTES

The reason children were asked to find out what age first steps/first words occurred was to draw out the social dimension of human growth and development within the family and the development of social skills.

- (1) Invite children to share their home research.
- (2) Parents share the wonder and excitement of these moments of growth and development for them.

**ACTIVITIES**

- How do we help and care for others at home e.g. Help with baby, tidy room, lay the table, wash up?
- Talk about safe and realistic ways of helping at home.
- Write on card each identified quality and give each child a card.

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

Music - assemble quietly and think about all the wonderful things we have heard about the wonder and beauty of our first steps, words etc.

In the quiet of our hearts we share in our families.

**PRAYER**

*Thank you Lord,  
for all who love and care for us.*

*Amen.*

## EMOTIONAL

- (1) What are the happiest moments in your family?  
e.g. birthdays, christenings, weddings.
- (2) What are the saddest moments in your family?  
e.g. death of pets, leaving home.
- (3) How is love shown in your family?

**ACTIVITIES**

- Divide children into four groups to create:
  - a) *two happy experiences of family and*
  - b) *two sad experiences of family.*
- Share each role play with class.
- Talk about the ideas expressed in each role play.

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

Stand and form a circle, hold hands and sing:

*'WE ARE THE CHURCH'*

CHRISTOPHER WALKER

**PRAYER**

*Thank you, Lord,  
for all the happy moments we  
share in our families.*

*Amen.*

INTELLECTUAL

BACKGROUND NOTES

The family is the children's first experience of love and loving relationships.

- (1) Why do we need to grow up in families?
- (2) What happens if you grow up without a family?  
Would it be a happy experience?
- (3) What would you miss? How would life be different?

**ACTIVITIES**

- Read or show a relevant clip from *Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling ...the need for family as exemplified in this story.
- Need for family - who takes the place of mum and dad for Mowgli?
- What other family do you belong to besides your personal family.
- Bring in reminders of Baptism e.g. candle, photograph.

**PAUSE and REFLECT**

Reflective music.

**PRAYER**

*Loving Father,  
we thank you that we are  
growing and developing as  
members of our own family  
and your family -  
and so we pray our family  
prayer: Our Father...*

## 1

## SPIRITUAL



## BACKGROUND NOTES

It is assumed that children will have covered Baptism in 'Here I Am'.

- (1) We are members of God's family.
- (2) How were we born into God's family?
- (3) What special title do we give to God as members of God's family?  
e.g. Our Father, Jesus our Brother,  
Holy Spirit our Friend and Guide.

**PLENARY**

Music, artefact / pictures of Holy Family, own families, class family, candle.

Give thanks for all our families.

**PRAYER**

Sign of the Cross using the following:

From my head to my heart,  
from my shoulder to my  
shoulder,  
I believe in you my God,  
my Father.  
Amen.



'Love is an art to be learned.

It is a giving experience,  
a selfless act.

Every experience of love  
gives us yet another glimpse  
of the meaning of love in God himself.

Human love is the instrument we can use  
to explore the mystery of love  
which God is.'

Cardinal Basil Hume