The Saint Who Loved to Laugh

The story of Saint Philip Neri

Ages about 7-11 | Video 6:25 | Group lesson about 25-35 minutes

Central truth God's love gives us a reason for joy, and we can begin doing good today.

Learning goals Recall how Philip welcomed and helped others; distinguish kind laughter from teasing; choose one small act of service.

Gather Video access, one handout per child, pencils or crayons, and a Bible.

Watch online Open this video on Servus Dei

Before watching | 2 minutes

Ask: How can a friendly welcome help someone feel included? Explain that Philip loved God, prayer, friendship, and cheerful play. Invite children to notice how his joy helped other people.

Watch and notice

Notice Philip caring for the sick and poor, welcoming young people, praying, gathering friends in the Oratory, and walking with pilgrims to seven churches.

Talk together | 6-8 minutes

1. Why did Philip sometimes choose to look foolish?
According to a story about him, he shaved half his beard to guard against pride. He wanted to love God rather than become famous for being holy.

2. How did Philip and his friends do good?
They cared for people who were sick or poor, welcomed tired pilgrims, and helped people feel less alone.

3. What did friends do at the Oratory?
They read Scripture, sang, prayed, talked about following Jesus, and went out to serve others.

4. How can we begin today?
Offer a kind welcome, help with a small task, include someone in a game, pray for someone, or apologize and begin again.

Then respond and pray Allow 6-8 minutes for a handout or the activity on page 2; finish with the closing prayer.

Lead the response

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Short family lesson Watch the video, choose one recall question and one application question, then pray. About 12-18 minutes; the handout is optional.

Choose a handout

Draw & Tell Draw one way Philip helped others and one kind action you can try. Invite children to explain their pictures aloud.

Read & Write Use a detail from Philip's story to explain how prayer, joy, and helping others belong together. Accept thoughtful answers in the child's own words.

Adapt by readiness

Ages about 7-8: Read aloud; accept pictures, pointing, or short spoken answers. An adult may write down the child's idea.

Ages about 9-11: Ask for a story detail, a reason the action was kind, and one realistic plan for the coming week.

Make room for one more | Optional 4 minutes

In pairs, practice inviting another person into a game or shared task. Try a friendly greeting and a clear invitation. Notice the person's answer and respect it. Then name one safe way to help at home or school.

Look for understanding A child names one way Philip served and explains how a kind welcome differs from laughing at someone. The child identifies a practical act of service.

Closing prayer Lord Jesus, thank you for loving us. Help us pray, welcome others, and do good with humble and cheerful hearts. Stay close to us when we feel sad, too. Saint Philip Neri, pray for us. Amen.

At home Choose one small kindness with your family. Carry it out this week, then talk about how it helped. Ask an adult before helping in an unfamiliar or unsafe situation.

Handout answer notes Philip: humble humor, prayer, friendship, care for people. Oratory: Scripture, singing, prayer, conversation, service. Kind laughter includes others; teasing hurts or excludes.

Teach with care

Preview the film. Explain that saints can know sadness and still trust God's love. Children need not describe private family experiences. The half-beard episode is presented as a traditional story. Dialogue and visual details are dramatized. Philip's extraordinary experience in prayer is not something everyone must feel. Joy does not require constant laughter or hiding sadness; never use jokes to hurt another person.

Words to explain Humility: knowing we need God and treating others with respect. Oratory: a place and community for prayer. Pilgrimage: a journey made to grow closer to God.

Sources for the leader

Biography: Vatican News: Saint Philip Neri
Oratory history: Birmingham Oratory: Saint Philip Neri
Feast day: Vatican City State: May 26, Saint Philip Neri