



Hope to the Heights

Leader's guide

Aim of the session:

To help children understand how small acts of love and kindness can bring hope to others, and to inspire them to follow the example of Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati by putting their faith into action and climbing 'To the Heights' through service.

Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Printed story to read to children
- Paper and pens/pencils
- A3 sheets or poster materials
- Tea/coffee props or empty boxes (optional for role play)
- "What can we do?" action cards (optional)

Instructions:

Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Open with a short prayer:

Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of this new day and for bringing us together. Help us to open our hearts to others, especially those who are sad, lonely, or in need. Show us how to bring hope to others and help us to take small steps of love every day.

Story Sharing (5 minutes)

Read or summarise the story of hope and action from this Mini Vinnies' group. Highlight:

- Their awareness of others' suffering
- Their teamwork and planning
- Their generous response and success

Ask a few questions:

- What part of the story did you like best?
- Why do you think it gave people hope?
- What would you have liked to help with?

Group Reflection & Discussion (10 minutes)

Split into small groups (or pairs) and give them these prompts:

- "What does 'hope' mean to you?"
- "Why is it important to act when we see others suffering?"
- "What small thing could we do this term to bring hope to someone?"

Optional: Use sticky notes or speech bubbles to write ideas and stick them on a large HOPE poster.



Discussion: What Does “To the Heights” Mean? (7 minutes)

Explain:

This year, the SVP is thinking about how to go ‘To the Heights’- not by climbing a real mountain, but by growing in love, faith, and kindness like Pier Giorgio Frassati did.

Ask:

- What do you think it means to “go to the heights” in your faith?
- How did the Mini Vinnies in the story show they were climbing to the heights?
- What’s one small step we could take to follow their example?

(Use post-it notes or a whiteboard to collect ideas.)

Creative Response: Steps of Hope Poster (10 minutes)

Each group/pair creates a “Steps of Hope” poster:

Top of the poster: Draw a mountain and write the words “To the Heights-Hope in Action”

Bottom of the mountain:

- Write or draw a challenge someone might be facing (e.g. loneliness, hunger, war)

Steps going up the mountain:

- Write small acts of kindness we can do to bring hope (e.g. raise money, write a letter, invite someone to play, pray for peace)

Sharing and Call to Action (3 minutes)

Invite a few children to share their posters. Then say:

Even a small step of love, like a cup of tea for a good cause, can help us climb to the heights. Let’s choose one thing we can do as a group this term.

Write the chosen idea on a card labelled Our Step to the Heights and display it at future meetings.

Final Prayer (2 minutes)

Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati, you showed your love for God by helping the poor and standing up for others. Help us to take small steps of kindness each day, as we climb to the heights of love. Amen.



Hope to the Heights

The Mini Vinnies in one school were invited one December to visit the local care home and sing some carols for the residents. They practised hard and spent the day pulling crackers, wearing party hats and eating mince pies. The following Monday, at the whole school assembly, the head teacher congratulated them for how well they represented the school and said they should be proud to be Mini Vinnies.

The head teacher went on to say that one of the residents had even made the effort to ring her and tell her that "this was the best day of our year". As the head teacher was talking, a hand shot up. She was surprised and, not usually open to interruptions, asked whether there was a question. "Yes" answered one student, "when are we going back?" The head teacher replied, "We have been invited back to do the same thing next year". Suddenly three more hands shot up to join the first. Aware that interruptions have a way of multiplying, she said, "One last question and then we must move on".

Another student now asked what the other three were also thinking, "If this was the best day they've had for a whole year, shouldn't we go in more often?"

So, plans were put in place to go back for an Easter party. Sadly, a global pandemic had other ideas. However, one of the Mini Vinnies lived around the corner from that care home and during their daily exercise outside they would often walk past and wave at the residents if they could. The days turned into weeks, and they began to live for these walks. They cycled over, brought posters, waved and they wouldn't leave until they'd made someone smile through the window.

Then one day an opportunity presented itself. Commenting to their parent that the birdfeeders had run empty, they persuaded their parent to do an extra walk to the shops for seed. The parent wanted to encourage their child in this good work and so over the coming days they bought coconuts and made feeders to put the seeds in, so that every day the feeders were topped up. The Mini Vinnie continued to wave, and they noticed their audience of admirers growing.

One day, while doing their self-elected role, some of the staff from the home ran out and waved to them to stop. The parent was worried that they were about to be in trouble for trespassing, but the Mini Vinnie waved as usual. The staff seemed excited to have stopped them and because they wanted to ask them a question. "Please can you settle an argument for us? Every resident says you are their child or grandchild. Who are you related to?" The Mini Vinnie explained they had no relatives at the care home but that they were visiting every day because they "have permission to do good works in the world". A deep friendship was sparked that day, the residents universally adopting the Mini Vinnie, the parent, and an SVP member who was now bringing the staff a care package of good coffee.

When school returned after the pandemic, the head teacher had dozens of letters from the care home to read out. In assembly, she asked the mystery Mini Vinnie to raise their hand. Remarkably though, they never did.