



Seeing with the Heart

Leader's guide

Aim of the session:

To help children understand that people's needs aren't always visible from the outside, and to encourage them to respond with love and compassion rather than judgement, just as the SVP members did.

Time: 20–30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Printed copies of the story (or one printed to read aloud)
- Large paper or whiteboard
- Pens or markers
- "Kind Action Cards" (optional-provided below)

Instructions:

Welcome & Opening Reflection (3–5 mins)

Ask:

- Have you ever seen someone being judged unfairly? How did it feel?
- Have you ever made a quick judgement about someone, and then found out more that changed your mind?

Invite the children to hold a moment of silence and say together:

Jesus, help us to see others the way You see them. Amen.

Story Time (5 mins)

Read the story aloud, or have a child read sections (adapt for age). Afterward, ask:

- What do you think the person who wrote the letter believed?
- Did the SVP group respond in an unkind way?
- What did they do instead?

Summarise:

Sometimes, people only see part of the story. The SVP group didn't get angry. They listened, learned, and changed how they helped, with kindness and care.

Activity: "What's Behind the Door?" (5 mins)

Draw a simple house with a door on the board or paper. Explain:

On the outside, people might see a family who ordered takeaway. But what might be behind the door that they can't see?

Let the children suggest ideas (e.g. "sadness", "no cooker", "feeling lonely", "a child's birthday", "recent illness", etc.)

Write these ideas behind the door (or on the inside of a paper flap if using worksheets).

Key Message: *We don't always know what people are facing. But we can always be kind.*



Call to Action: "Kind Action Cards" (5 mins)

Hand out small blank cards or paper slips. Ask:

What is one thing you can do this week to help someone feel seen, supported, or not judged?

They can write or draw things like:

- "I will invite someone sitting alone to play."
- "I will smile and say hello to the new person."
- "I will pray for people who feel left out."

Collect them and make a "Mini Vinnies Kindness Pledge Wall", or let children take them home.

Closing Prayer (1 min)

Jesus, You loved and welcomed everyone. Help us to be kind and thoughtful, to listen and not judge, and to bring Your love to everyone we meet. Amen.

Optional Extension Activities

Speak with Compassion (5 minutes)

Give each child a post-it note or slip of paper.

Ask:

If you were writing a kind reply to the person who sent the letter, what would you say to help them see the full story?

Invite them to write a sentence or draw a picture that shows kindness or explains that people might need help in different ways.

Stick these on a large heart shape or poster titled "We See with the Eyes of Christ".

Look Deeper with Love (3 minutes)

Share with the children:

Sometimes we only see part of the story, like the person who wrote the letter. But Jesus teaches us to look deeper, with love. What could we do to make sure people feel cared for, not judged?

Ask the group:

- Could we ask our parish to support personalised hampers?
- Could we make "Welcome Cards" for families the SVP visits?
- Could we learn about food and cultures different from our own?

Action: Choose one action as a group to take this month, e.g. making kind cards, learning about another culture's food, or collecting specific food items.



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"I am writing to advise you that one someone is taking more than they need from one of your parish groups. I know the work that the SVP do in supporting families in need, but I am sorry to tell you that our neighbour is just using you. On Monday, two of your members visited this family, bringing a food hamper. I saw them as they came in, but later that evening the family ordered kebabs, so they can't really be in need."

We do occasionally get letters of concern from the public, but this one was a little unusual. We contacted the adult SVP group and let them know the neighbour's concern. The adult SVP group already had an idea of who had contacted us. They knew the family that they were supporting had recently been going through a terrible time. When they brought this food parcel to them, they knew that there were several unfamiliar ingredients to them, but they never felt that the family weren't thankful for these, or taking what they didn't need. They also knew that the family were in desperate need of the friendship the SVP could give.

As a result of the letter, a long conversation took place about perhaps changing what the SVP group did for new visits, resulting in the following reply to the original message:

"Thank you for bringing your concern to our attention. I have spoken to the Parish SVP members, and we have discussed a number of ways to support those who are in need. They recognise that they do not always know what the most useful and helpful food is to put into a hamper to help a family going through a hard time. Inspired by your feedback, they have now changed their process for first visits and will now be asking those they visit to name a few food preferences. They will also now be using an online food app to make an order for the evening after the first visit. Thank you for your very useful feedback."