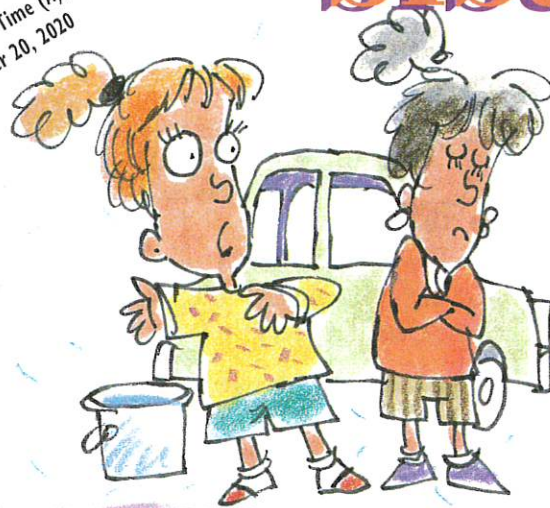


a tale of two sisters

GOSPEL THEME
 The first shall be last,
 the last shall be first.



Alicia and Angelina are sisters, but they are very different from each other. Alicia is a very hard worker. Every weekend she goes around the neighborhood looking for errands to run or small jobs to do for money. Her grandmother helped her open a savings account at the bank. Alicia has already saved six hundred dollars, and she is very proud of that.

Angelina is happy and carefree. She likes to play with her friends and do favors for her neighbors. When she gets money, she likes to spend it. Angelina doesn't have a bank account, but she doesn't really seem to care.

Mr. Menendez lives next door to the girls. He likes both of them very much. He admires Alicia's initiative and willingness to work hard, and he enjoys Angelina's delightful company.

One day Alicia told Mr. Menendez that she would wash his car for three dollars. It had been raining all week and the car was a mess. Mr. Menendez was happy to agree.

After Alicia had been working hard on Mr. Menendez's car for over 45 minutes, Angelina came by. She stopped to talk to Mr. Menendez for a while. Then she went over to help Alicia with the car. In no time, the car was clean and shining.

"What a good job you did," Mr. Menendez said as he handed each girl three dollars. Angelina was thrilled.

Alicia was angry! "I worked for a whole hour and Angelina only worked for fifteen minutes. How come you gave us both three dollars?" she pouted, emphasizing her words with a stomp of her foot.

"I gave you three dollars, Alicia, because that's what you said you wanted to wash my car. I gave Angelina three dollars because I wanted to. She didn't ask me for anything. Isn't it all right for me to be generous with my own money?"

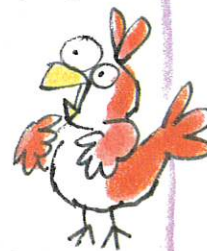
Tears welling up, Alicia quickly left.

Angelina ran after her. "Alicia," she shouted, "let's go get some ice cream. My treat!"

Decode the Secret

Here is an acrostic that will help you understand the secret of this week's message. Solve the clues, then transfer the letters to their numbered spaces below. (Letters with a zero are not used in the message.)

- 1 A mountain animal with horns 5 2 18 16
- 2 Where cars are kept 1 10 22 7 27 24
- 3 Ten things you can count on 21 28 11 13 30 6 4
- 4 Border for a picture 15 19 10 0 24
- 5 A fancy container for flowers 29 7 17 23
- 6 Fancy trim on a dress 25 18 8 9
- 7 Where baby birds sleep 31 20 4 16
- 8 Where baseball is played 3 14 7 0 2 11 12
- 9 It follows the night 12 7 26



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

Talk about it!

- After reading the story about Alicia and Angelina, what do you think of the way Mr. Menendez handled the situation?
- How would you have felt if you were Alicia? if you were Angelina?
- Have you ever had something like this happen to you?
- Do you think gifts should be earned?
- When you give a gift, do you expect something in return?
- Do you think God expects us to work hard in order to receive God's gifts?



God offers us a love that cannot be compared or equaled. God's gifts and grace are freely given without regard to one's "worthiness." It is difficult for us to love one another without question, but no one should be expected to "earn" love. Love should be freely given.

We often think a parent loves our sister or brother best. This may happen because an older brother has more freedom or because a younger sister receives more attention. In the same way, we often feel another student is favored in the classroom because we believe ourselves to be less intelligent, or less attractive than the other student. Take some time to think about the following questions, then talk about them with your family or your classmates. Listen to one another's feelings.

SHARING the GOOD NEWS Activity for Class or Family

1. WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER A HARD CHORE OR A DIFFICULT ASSIGNMENT?
2. HOW MUCH RESPONSIBILITY CAN YOU HANDLE AROUND THE HOME?
3. HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE YOU TO DO YOUR HOMEWORK?
4. HOW MUCH ALLOWANCE DO YOU THINK YOU NEED?
5. HOW LATE SHOULD YOU BE ALLOWED TO STAY OUT?
6. WHAT IS A REASONABLE BEDTIME FOR YOU?
7. DO YOU THINK THE BOUNDARIES AND RULES SET FOR YOU ARE FAIR?

Mother Teresa's secret



when we need them. God doesn't make us earn these wonderful gifts. We are only invited to love God and believe in Jesus.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India, knew this. She spent her entire life sharing her own happiness and God's love with others. She made sad lives beautiful by living in God's great love.

But some people misunderstand this. They say, "Mother Teresa worked hard for God. No wonder God gave her such spiritual peace and joy. If I go out and do some-

thing wonderful for God, I will get special graces too."

Wrong!

God did not give Mother Teresa special graces to "pay her back" for working hard. The graces came first. Because she was so filled with grace, she wanted to show her love and gratitude to a very generous God. She did this by loving others as God loved her.

Love God and believe in Jesus. Nothing else is asked of you. Once you know how really generous God is, you will understand Mother Teresa's secret of happiness.

God is very generous. The entire universe was created just for us. God gives us sunshine and flowers for our pleasure. God even gave us the Son, Jesus, so we could know what a good God we have. And Jesus died so we could spend eternity with him in heaven. Best of all, God gives us special graces

