

GABRIEL'S QUEST

The First Day

Lesson Link: God is a communion of love. He created us out of love to be loved and share love.

It was the morning of the first day of first grade.

Gabriel Romero did not want to start first grade. He did not want to start *any* grade. He had never been to school. He had been taught everything he knew at home.

Gabriel had lived with his grandmother since he was a baby. His mother had died when he was born. His dad was away doing special jobs for the army.

Today, he had to dress in a school uniform. That was a big change. He was used to wearing a T-shirt and jeans. Now the white dress shirt rubbed the back of his neck. The blue jacket hung heavy on his shoulders. The pants felt funny on his legs. The dark socks and stiff black shoes made his feet feel hot.

His grandmother kept saying, "Don't worry. You'll be okay."

But it didn't help.

His school was called St. Clare of Assisi Catholic School. Most of the teachers were called "sisters" because they were part of a religious order. His grandmother had raised him in the Catholic faith. But he was still scared of looking stupid. Maybe he would not make any friends. His teacher might be mean.

He knew his first day of school would be the worst day ever.

His grandmother drove him to the school. She looked confused about the long line of cars going into the school parking lot. She fretted about where to park. She said, "Oh dear, oh dear," a lot. Then she walked him to the big doors and gave him a big hug. "Don't worry; you'll be okay," she said.

It still didn't help.



A priest pointed him to a giant meeting room for the first-day-of-school assembly. He felt very small in the crowd. One of the sisters put a hand on his shoulder. She smiled at him. "I'm your teacher," she said. Her name was Sister Mary Evans. She sat next to him in the assembly. Then they went to class.

The classroom was filled with rows of desks and worktables. There were bulletin boards with posters of words, math problems, and pictures of people he did not know. Gabriel hung up his jacket in the wrong place. He put his lunchbox in someone else's cubby hole.

Sister Mary Evans talked about all the fun they would have while learning. Gabriel didn't think learning would be much fun.

Some of the other kids tried to talk to him. He answered with embarrassed shrugs.

Then things went horribly wrong. Sister Mary asked him to recite the alphabet. He got confused about whether “Q” came before “R” or whether “X” came before “Y.” Then he dropped a splotch of glue on his shoes. Then he said that one of the books in the Bible was written by Jeff. Then he spilled a cup of water all over the table at lunch.

Near the end of the day, Sister Mary Evans asked each student to stand up and tell what they thought about the first day of school. Some of the kids said they felt nervous. Some said they felt stupid. Some were scared. One girl burst into tears and put her head on her desk. Gabriel realized that most of the kids felt like he did.

Sister Mary Evans said, “You are here because you are loved. Your parents and guardians love you. They want you to learn and grow. This school is here because we want to share God’s love with you. We want you to share God’s love with each other.”

She smiled at them and said, “Sometimes school will make you feel happy and sometimes sad. You are not alone with your feelings. Sharing God’s love is also sharing those feelings and helping others when they feel bad.”

Gabriel looked at the other kids in the class. He did not feel so alone anymore. Then he thought, *Maybe school won’t be so bad after all.*

Questions:

1. **Where did Gabriel receive God’s love in this story?**
(Answers may include the priest helping him find his way, the teacher being kind, students trying to talk with him.)

OR: In what ways was Gabriel surprised by his first day at school? How did he experience God’s love? (Answers may vary.)

2. **What are some of the ways you will share and receive God’s love in class this year?** (Helping others find their way, using kind words, sharing the supplies.)