Make: Unmasking Our Hidden Potential

At a Glance:

The New Church teaches that at the dawn of humankind people had direct contact with angels and the Lord. They had an innate knowledge and perception about spiritual things, and their beliefs radiated through their faces. Like the angels, their faces could not express one thing while their minds were thinking another—they had no desire to hide anything.



In time the human mind was re-formed. Desire was separated from knowledge and thought. People could then hide their thoughts and intentions, preventing others from seeing their true feelings on their faces. They were also able to consider actions they did not delight in and see things they did not like.

Students will read about *Unmasking Our Hidden Potential* and then create masks to develop an understanding of the difference between the parts of our lives that others see and the parts they do not.

Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- supplies for making 2-sided masks e.g. paper plates, stiff paper, or fabric; scissors; pens or markers; pictures from magazines; "fancy" supplies to make the activity fun, etc.
- *Unmasking Our Hidden Potential* reading page



Teacher Preparation:

- Create a 2-sided mask about yourself to model the activity (see directions)

Directions:

1. Read *Unmasking Our Hidden Potential* with students.
2. Show students the mask you have made. Explain what your pictures or symbols represent. Sharing a few personal details may empower students to create a more meaningful mask of their own.
3. Distribute mask-making supplies.

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Unmasking Our Hidden Potential Continued





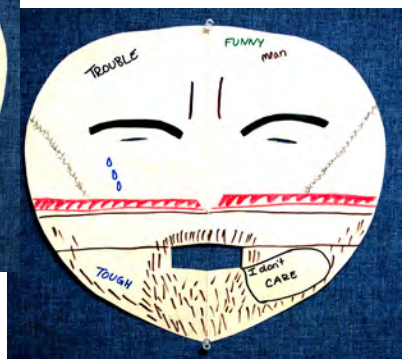
4. Tell students that the outside of the mask represents the side of us that we believe people see, including how we want others to see us (our reputation). The inside explains who you really are, including aspects of your life that many people may not know, such as goals, dreams and interests.

5. Invite students to decorate the outside of the mask using pictures, symbols or cut-out pictures to show how they appear or wish to appear to others. If this feels uncomfortable, tell students they may use symbols. Here are some prompts to get students started: the image I try to portray is (tough, cool, funny, strong…); others (friends/family) see me as (quiet, leader, trouble-maker, perfect...).

6. Decorate the inside of the mask. Encourage honesty about things that people may not know. Prompts: When nobody's around I'm (funny, have lots to say, serious…) What I really love to do is (swim, sing, read….) My life really has (struggles, questions about God, worries…)

7. Encourage students to share their masks on a volunteer basis.





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Unmasking Our Hidden Potential

Isaac and Rebekah's twins, Esau and Jacob, represent two forces in the human mind: desires (will) and thoughts (understanding). At the dawn of humankind, people's desires always made one with their thoughts, and their speech and actions did as well. People could tell what others were thinking just by looking at their faces because their faces expressed whatever they thought and desired. No one wanted to hide anything.

In time the human mind changed. Desire became separated from knowledge and thought. People could intend harm but say something nice. Faces could be used as masks, hiding evil intentions.

People's minds change after they die. At first people can mask their intentions and thoughts. But as they prepare to move into their eternal home this stops. At that point they can no longer control their facial expressions. Everyone sees what they really think. Emanuel Swedenborg met many people after they had died. Some had led exemplary lives. But if selfishness had motivated their good actions, their polite habits slowly vanished and eventually everyone could see what they were really like.

People living in heaven are unselfish and love thinking truthfully. People in hell are selfish and embrace false ways of thinking. Finding a place in heaven or hell involves cultivating loves and thoughts that agree. The story of Esau and Jacob pictures the steps needed to make this happen. Desires, like Esau, are born first. But those desires are self-centered at first. That is why truth needs to take the lead, like Jacob, and must guide our thinking.

> The human mind—which is where the actual person lives—has two powers. One is devoted to the truths of faith and the other to the good of charity. The mental power devoted to the truths of faith is called the understanding, while the one dedicated to the good of charity is called the will. If a person is to be truly human these two powers have to be united (see *Arcana Coelestia* 5835).
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> If a person's will and understanding were not united when he enters the next life, the truth he understands would lift him up towards heaven, while his evil intentions would drag him down toward hell and he would hang suspended between the two. Eventually his will, which is his actual life, would pull him downward and he would inevitably end up in hell. To prevent this, those two mental powers have to be united. The Lord accomplishes this through regeneration—through planting faith's truth within charity's goodness. A person receives the gift of a new understanding through faith's truth, and the gift of a new will through charity's goodness. As a result the two mental powers make one mind (see *Arcana Coelestia* 5835).
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> All the good with a person is formed by means of truth (*Arcana Coelestia* 9995).
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> When good and truth have been joined in a person he then has a new will and a new understanding and so a new life (see *Arcana Coelestia* 10143:3).