

The Saints Are with God

Objective: The students will be able to define Saints as those who have been filled with God's love and are with Him in glory

For the Catechist

For most people a saint has come to mean a Christian who was extremely holy, has died and is in heaven, and has been declared or "canonized" by the Church. We think of saints as living perhaps in a world apart from ours. But they, like us, lived in a world filled with temptations and trials. What singles them out is that they remained open to the Holy Spirit. For this reason they grew in the Christian life, became holy persons, and manifested the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The work of the Holy Spirit continues in them and us.

On the Sunday after Pentecost the Church honors all the Saints. This is the Sunday of All Saints. Appropriately, this feast comes on the eighth day after the coming of the Holy Spirit. The eighth day is a sign of fulfillment, and the Sunday of All Saints celebrates the fulfillment of the work of the Holy Spirit. It honors all the faithful who shared in Christ's suffering and entered into His life and glory.

Our icons of Saints help us remember that the Saints were filled with God's love and they are now with Him in glory. We venerate these icons, especially on the feast day of the Saint, to honor these Holy Ones. One of the most frequently heard liturgical hymns remembering the saints is the Third Antiphon used at the Divine Liturgy on weekdays. It is used in the opening and closing prayers of this lesson.

Children in third grade like to listen to stories, and each Saint has a story. One way the children can relate to the Saints is by hearing these stories. For that reason a book of the Saints' lives would be good to use for a reference for this lesson.

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: O Heavenly King

Introduction: Discuss Saints' lives
Need: Icons of Saints

Read Text Aloud: Have students volunteer to read the text. Use questions in the teacher manual to discuss the lesson with the students.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- *Basic:* The Holy Ones
- *Group:* World Collage
- *Craft:* My Prayer to Jesus

Closing: O Heavenly King

Icon Packets:

Come Bless the Lord: Saint George
Saints Peter and Paul

Teaching Pics:

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

Imitating the Saints

"Often we hear the phrase 'imitating the saints.' Caution must be advised here. We definitely imitate their zeal and dedication. However, we are not to copy their actions in the sense of sitting on a pillar, abandoning our families or even striving to reproduce anything they did. Indeed, each of us is an 'original'—we must become saints according to the way that each of us reflects God uniquely. There will never be another St. Anthony of Egypt, nor St. George, nor St. Catherine; rather we may imitate their zeal in imitating Christ.

"If we look at the panoply of saints in the Menaion, each of us will find several individuals who had the same vocation, life situation, personality (with its strong and weak points), challenges or difficulties as we do. We can see how they dealt with similar situations in their lives: better yet, how they saw such situations, the perspective in which they viewed them, the dynamics involved, and their response. This can help us in living out our own particular life situation. We see that we are not alone in this, and that brothers and sisters before us dealt with similar issues successfully in Christ using the same Scriptures, Mysteries and graces that we have been given.

"Finally, the saints' love for the whole Church, and for all creation, transcends their early life. Now in glory the saints join their prayers to Christ's unceasing intercession for us. The history of the Church also recounts numberless instances of the saints' intervention on our behalf in response to prayer or the veneration of their icons and relics" (*LLIII* 94-95).

The Saints, the Holy Ones

"The Church also celebrates the feasts of its heroes of faith, the saints, based on this understanding of God's glorification of humanity. Through their holiness and their heroism for the sake of the faith, they reveal the ongoing action of the Spirit in the life of the people of God, deifying them and exalting them by riches of faith and love. The saints do not replace Christ as the one mediator between God and humanity (ref 2 Tim 2:5-6). The rule of worship once again determines our faith. We ask the saints to pray and to intercede for us with God. Their ability to help us comes only from their union with God. Just as we ask others to pray for us, we can ask those who have already achieved unity with God to pray for us. We also pray for the saints, that their share in the divine life be continually deepened. Our veneration of the saints is actually a sign of our faith in the resurrection and of the solidarity of all faithful through God. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is the God of the living and not the dead (Lk 20:37-38). Our veneration of the saints is a mark of our trust in God, who always keeps His covenant with us, 'so that in [Christ] we might become the very holiness of God' (2 Cor 5:21)" (*LLII* 46-47).

"Modern Church calendars have at least one saint commemorated each day of the year. One day commemorates all saints, both canonized and unknown. This Feast of All Saints is observed in the Byzantine Churches on the first Sunday after Pentecost as a sign that the gift of holiness is the greatest of the charisms given to the Church through the Holy Spirit" (*LLII* 4S).

Named in Christ

"Christians have long chosen the names of saints from the liturgical calendar to proclaim their link with their spiritual family, the Church ... One's 'Nameday' is an occasion to honor the memory of the saint whose name we bear and to give thanks for his or her daily intercession on our behalf" (*DC* 77-78).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Let's make the sign of the cross and say our prayer, "O Heavenly King." This prayer is one of the first ones we learned this year.

Introduction

Today we are going to look at a special book I brought in. It is a book that tells us stories about Saints. Do you know any stories about a Saint? [Use the stories at the end of this lesson or use one of your books that include stories of Saints.] Now let's look at the icons of these Saints. What do you see circling the face of these Saints? (A bright light—gold or yellow) This light shows that the Saints have been filled with God's love and are with Him in glory.

We are looking at friends of Jesus. The Saints are our friends too. That means every time we are looking at the icons in church or at home we are looking at the friends of Jesus. Do we want to be a friend of Jesus?

Many of you have something in common with at least one Saint. Does anyone know what it is? (Your name) Do you know the name of the Saint for whom you were named? My patron Saint is... [If possible start with your name.]


[If your church is named after a Saint, say the following:] Our church also has a patron Saint. What is the name of our church's patron Saint? Does anyone know anything about that Saint? [If possible find information or the life story that you can read.]

Let's turn to our books to read more about Saints.

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The Saints Are with God

Jesus gave the Church His Holy Spirit to be with us always. The Holy Spirit guides us in our new life with God. Many people have been filled with the Holy Spirit during their life. Now they are with God in glory. Our Church calls these people "Saints." Saints are those who have been filled with God's love and are with Him in glory.



There have been Saints in every age and in every country. They lived and worked just as people today do. There is no definite age or job that guarantees you will become a saint. Some of the Saints were priests and religious. Others were farmers, fishermen, soldiers, and sailors. We have mothers and children who are Saints. They are Saints because of the way they lived their life. In their lifetime they thought about God. They believed in Christ. They remained faithful to God no matter how difficult that was.

Our Church wants us to follow the good example of these Saints. Just as they did, we are to trust in God. We are to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us grow in our love of God. We are to look to the Saints to learn how to live our life with God.

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Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

Who are the saints with Jesus in the icon on this page? (the apostles/disciples) Do you remember the name of some of them? Are there icons of the apostles in our church? [In most Byzantine churches this icon is on the icon screen.]

... and are with Him in glory.

Where are the Saints now? (With God in heaven) Who helped them live out their new life with God? (The Holy Spirit) Who is a Saint? (Those who have been filled with God's love and are with Him in glory)

... to learn how to live our life with God.

Why are the Saints good examples for us to follow? (They show us how to live our life with God.)

... in faith and love as we offer our prayers to God.

Why do we have icons of Saints? (To help us remember to follow the example of their lives)


... to protect them and pray for the church and the church family.

What do we call the Saint after whom a church is named? (Patron Saint) [If your church is named after a Saint, try to find more details about the Saint to add to this discussion.] Our church family honors our patron saint on his/her feast day. [Find the date on the church calendar and tell the children. In the Greek Tradition the icon of patron Saint of the church is on the left side of the Icon Screen. In the Slav Tradition, the icon is on the right. Have the children look for the icon in your church.]

Our Church gives us icons of Saints to help us remember to follow the example of their lives. In church we see their icons on the icon screen and on the walls of the church. On feast days we venerate the saint's icon placed on the icon stand or table. During the Divine Liturgy, the priest incenses the icons and us. The Saints are together with us in faith and love as we offer our prayers to God.

The icon of the Mother of God is on the icon screen in all of our churches. We look to the Theotokos to learn how to say "Yes" to God. We are to follow her example of how we are to live our lives with God.

Some of our churches have a patron Saint. If a church is named after a Saint, that Saint is its patron. The icon of the church's patron Saint is on the icon screen or on the icon stand. The patron Saint is the model for the people of that church. The people ask their patron Saint to protect them and pray for the church and the church family.



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Some people celebrate the name day or feast day of their patron Saint.

When were some of you given the name of a Saint? (At baptism) Do any of you celebrate your name day? Some people have a party. They are celebrating the feast day and the Saint with whom they share a name.

We want to learn to live like the Saints.

What is the name of the Sunday that honors all the Saints? (The Sunday of All Saints) When do we celebrate it? (The Sunday after Pentecost)

Let's review: *Who are the Saints? (Those who have been filled with God's love and are with Him in glory) Why should we try to live the way they did? (So we can be filled with God's love and be with Him in glory)*

Our Church helps us remember the Saints throughout the year. The Church gives us a liturgical calendar that identifies the Saints' feast days. Some church calendars identify the Saint remembered for each day of the year. Not all the saints are listed on the calendar.

The names of Saints are important in our Church. The names recall the person who said "Yes" to God. At baptism many of us are given a name that honors a Saint. We get our first name or middle name from our patron Saint. At our baptism we say "Yes" to God just as the Saints did many years ago. Some people celebrate the name day or feast day of their patron Saint.

On the Sunday after Pentecost we remember all of the Saints. We honor the Saints on that day called the Sunday of All Saints. Their good works and their lives show us the power of the Holy Spirit. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out our new life given to us at our baptism. We want to learn to live like the saints.

The Saints have been filled with God's love.
They are with Him in glory.

Words to Remember:
Saints: Those who have been filled with God's love and are with Him in glory.
Sunday of All Saints: First Sunday after Pentecost. This is the day to honor all Saints.
Patron Saint: The Saint whose name you have. If a church is named after a Saint, that Saint is its patron.

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Activity Tracks

Basic: The Holy Ones

[This worksheet is in the student text.]

After you figure out the message on this worksheet, list three ways you can be an example of how to live the way God wants us to live. [Let the children share their answers if there is enough time.]

The Holy Ones

G O D ' S H O L Y O N E S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Using the key above, match the numbers and letters to complete the following message:

 T H E S A I N T S A R E
 5 11 12 10 12 11

 E X A M P L E S F O R U S
11 7 11 12 9 12

 T O F O L L O W
 6 9 7 7 6

Now write three ways in which you can be an example to others.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Group: World Collage

Materials: Extra large piece of paper, "Jesus and the World" worksheet, magazines, scissors, yarn or magic marker, an outline taken from a map of the world, glue

Today we learned about the Saints or Holy Ones. Each one lived filled with God's love. Today we are going to show that Saints come from all over the world. I have drawn an outline of the world on this large sheet of paper. [This should be done in advance. You can enlarge the map on the worksheet if you cannot find an outline of the whole world.] Now we are going to cut out pictures of people and glue them in the different land areas. Then let's outline the world either with the yarn or magic marker. Let's add the icon of Jesus to the top of the page. Why? (Jesus calls everyone to follow Him.)

Craft: My Prayer to Jesus

Materials: Prayer worksheet, heavier white paper or construction paper, markers, stickers or stars

Today we are going to make another page for our prayer book. We are going to make a page for our prayer to Jesus. Write your own prayer on the sheet of paper. Paste the prayer on a half sheet of construction paper or the heavier white paper. You can draw pictures around the prayer, or you can add the stars or stickers I have here. This is our last prayer to add to our prayer book. Punch two holes to match the ones on the prayer cover. Untie the yarn on our prayer book cover and add this new page. Now pull the yarn through the holes and tie.

Closing: *Let's pray: "O Heavenly King."* [Start with the sign of the cross.]



My Prayer to Jesus

My Prayer to Jesus