

Unit 1

God Works in History

1. We Are Called to Grow Closer to God

In our families God helps us to grow in our physical and spiritual life. We have learned the basics of the Christian way of life and will continue to grow through what we learn this year.

2. We Are Called to Grow in the Church

In the Church God helps us to grow as members of His People. We have learned about God's People in the Old Covenant, and in the New Covenant. We became part of God's People through baptism and chrismation and are helped to grow through all its holy mysteries.

3. Salvation History: God Acting in the World

God helps His People to grow closer to Him through the past, present and future events of Salvation History. Christ is the focus of that History and the Liturgy is the place where we celebrate His savings acts.

4 The Bible: Our Record of Salvation History

God helps His People know the events of Salvation History by inspiring the writers of the Bible to record those events for us. We have learned how the New Testament tells of Christ and the early Church. This year we learn about the Old Testament, which prepared for Christ's coming.

5. The Life and Times of God's People

God chose the Middle East as the place where Salvation History would develop. We learn something of its customs and way of life and why God chose it for the coming of Christ.

Year-long Activities

The Guided Reading section in each lesson begins with the direction to look up in the **Glossary** any underlined words in the student's text. The Glossary is found at the end of the student's text and explains terms not defined in the body of the text itself. Students should be encouraged to ask for an explanation of other words with which they are not familiar and to add the explanation at the end of the Glossary.

The **Time Line** section at the end of the lesson includes a reference to two items in the curriculum packet: the brief Time Line on the Unit Pages in both the student's text and the teacher's manual beginning with Unit Two and the Time Line poster included with the teacher's manual and which should be displayed prominently in your meeting area. Both indicate the broad time period in which the subject of the lesson lived or occurred. The catechist may refer to the Unit Pages to help the student situate the subject of the day's lesson in relation to those which preceded it.

The **Time Line Poster** provides space under each heading to write in the names of the specific persons and events were important for Salvation History as well as the years in which they flourished. The catechist may have the students summarize each lesson by brainstorming the persons and events to be listed on the poster. Either or both time lines can also be used in the Review section at the beginning of each lesson.

At the end of each lesson in the student's text several topics are suggested for **Internet Research**, as most students have access to the Internet, either at home or at school. You may incorporate the results of their research in your review of the previous week's material.

Lesson 1 - We Are Called to Go Closer To God

Objectives

By the end of this lesson the student should know that:

- God has a plan for each of us: to grow closer to Him;
- We have already grown through the holy mysteries we have received and the teachings we have learned;
- We must continue to grow in order to become strong Christians;
- Saints Constantine and Vladimir first heard of Christ at home, then grew to serve Him as adults.

For the Catechist

By now your sixth graders are learning to recognize change and growth in their lives. They may realize that some change is good and that life has a purpose. They may understand this as getting into a good college, securing a good job and raising a family. Some may be focused on more immediate goals: making the team or even learning to drive! This lesson presents God as the Author of our life who has a plan for us. We are created in His image (Genesis 1:26) and are called to grow after His likeness, who is Christ: "Be rooted in Him [Christ] and built up in Him, growing ever stronger in faith" (Colossians 2:7).

In this lesson we seek to help the students realize that God has rooted us in Christ in Baptism and that He has built us up through the Eucharist and the first teachings in godly living we have received at home and in church. The Ten Commandments and the New Commandment are reviewed as important first steps in learning God's will for us. He calls us to grow continually in faith as we grow in age and abilities. In time God's plan for each of us will become clearer if we remain faithful to Him. A person who trusts God's plan for his or her life "...grows in knowledge as he is formed anew in the image of his Creator" (Colossians 3:10).

The lives of two great families of saints, Constantine and Helen along with Vladimir and Olga, are presented to show how God's plan for them as well as for the Roman Empire and the peoples of Kievan Rus' was revealed in their lives. God also worked through the many people strong in their faith who came to this country and established churches so that we who came after them could grow in Christ. All of us can help each other to grow in Christ by supporting one another in the Body of Christ, the Church.

Materials Needed:

Opening Prayer: Icon corner

Introduction: Student texts

Guided Reading: Easel or wall pad, markers

Activity Option B: Worksheets, pencils or pens

1. Opening Prayer

"We are beginning another year today to learn about some things about ourselves you won't hear in school. We believe that God has a divine plan for each of our lives - let's pray this part of Psalm 103 that reminds us how much He does for us every day."

All together read the verses from Psalm 103. [If your parish uses this Psalm in place of the First Antiphon at the Divine Liturgy, draw the students' attention to it.]

2. Introduction

Distribute the text and have the students open to the **Table of Contents**. Have the students identify what is common in the titles of Units 1-4 ("God Works...").

Ask: Do you think that's true? Is God working, doing something? Is God working in our lives? What has He done for us already? Do you have any ideas what God might have in store for us five or ten years from now? Let's think about it.

Have the students find the **Glossary** at the end of their book. Explain its purpose and direct the students to look up in the Glossary any words they find underlined in the lesson (*Eucharist, Divine Liturgy, Equals to the Apostles, Byzantine Church, Eastern Christianity, Antiphon, Prokimenon, Communion Hymn*).

Background Reading (Our Whole Life Is in Christ):

"Christianity, then, is not primarily a series of propositions or rites, but life: a new life to be lived in Christ. The Lord Jesus did not say that He had come to bring us a creed, a doctrine, or a liturgy; He did say that He came to bring us life, abundant life: the new life of the Resurrection, the vibrant life of the Kingdom of God. Our Church does not simply propose a creed and celebrate a liturgy; it affirms a tradition of living a particular way of life.

"Authentic Christian Spirituality must be understood as our whole life lived in union with God. Nothing can separate us from God, save sin, which is inherently unnatural and opposed to life. Our whole life is meant to be transfigured, because it has been assumed by the Son of God, just as we have assumed His life" (*LLIII 2*).

3. Guided Reading, Page 2 & 3



Have the students **read the text, pages 2 and 3**. Divide reading styles (aloud/silent; by one/all together).

Write the main points of the lesson on a wall pad or easel so that the page can be preserved and used for review next week.

After ¶ 5, have the students **reflect and discuss** their family with questions such as:

- What is best part of being in your family?
- What would you like to do in your future family that your family does for you?
- Who in your family do you rely on the most for direction? Why?

You may wish to write important questions on the board or wall pad in advance.



After ¶ 8, have the students **reflect on the ABC's** (sidebar). Elicit what they mean to students and why keeping them are only the first steps in leading a godly life.

(Note that the Ten Commandments are not numbered. There are two systems used in listing the commandments. Roman Catholics and Lutherans use one, combining or completely omitting the ban on idols or "graven images." Orthodox and most Protestants use another, in which the ban on idols becomes the Second Commandment and the final commandments on coveting are considered as one.)

Divide the class into two groups. Have one group read the three paragraphs on page 4 about SS Constantine and Helen and the second group read the two paragraphs about SS Vladimir and Olga. Have one person from each group summarize what they had read then reflect together on their witness with questions such as:

4. Witness of the Saints Pages 4-5

We learned what Jesus called the Great Commission, to love God and to love others. We also found out that many people do not love this way and make fun of us if we do. We learned Christ's New Commandment that we should love the love for everyone, but we should love that it is not always easy to love others.

We heard about other Christians like the saints who have grown to be strong and faithful followers of Christ. We may admire them, but wonder if we can live as they did. Perhaps we have come to realize that we need to dig deeper into our faith to discover how to be strong Christians.

Two Christians Who Grew

Our Church remembers as "Ligands to the Apostles" two families of men who changed the course of history. The first of them, SS Constantine and Helen, lived at the beginning of the fourth century. Constantine was a military officer who wanted to lead the Roman Empire. He was not a Christian, but his mother Helen was. He had learned something about Christianity from her, but he was more interested in other things.

The night before an important battle — one that would either make him emperor or lead to his death — Constantine had the following experience. In the night sky he saw a cross and the words "Crux in Vitis." He felt that this was a sign from his mother's God and had the cross painted on the shields of all his soldiers as they prepared for battle. Constantine's army defeated his enemy and declared him emperor. That battle affected every Christian who lived since then, including such as:




Until the time of Constantine, Christians had often been persecuted and even martyred in the Roman Empire. We may remember being told about some of these early martyrs. Because of the wonder he had seen, Constantine stopped the persecution of Christians. He ordered the Church, built the city of Constantinople as a Christian capital for the Roman Empire, and promoted the growth of the Byzantine Church like no one else had ever done.

The second family lived many centuries later in another part of the world. Vladimir, the tenth-century Prince of Kiev (Kyiv), was not a Christian either. It was his grandmother, the Princess Olga, who had become a Christian. He had wanted her whole country to become Christian but she did not seem to succeed. Three years after Olga died, her grandson became ruler. He had seen his grandmother's witness of faith. He also saw how the pagan priests in his own family were continually at war with one

4

- What did SS Constantine and Helen or SS Vladimir and Olga accomplish for Christ and his Church in their first 11-12 years? Before the end of their life?
- How have we been touched by their heritage?
- What good things have you accomplished in your first 11-12 years? Might God want you to accomplish something for Him in the years ahead?



another. He decided to seek another way. Finally in 988, he accepted baptism from the Byzantine Church and converted his entire people.

Over the next thousand years Eastern Christianity would spread from Kiev (Kyiv) throughout Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine then into Asia and the countries of the Pacific rim including Alaska. Most Eastern Christians today trace their heritage to SS Vladimir and Olga and, through them, to SS Constantine and Helen and through them to the first Apostles and martyrs and then to Christ.

Research These Topics on the Internet -

Divine Liturgy
Great Commission
Constantine and Helen
Vladimir and Olga
Praxis

Encourage Each Other!

St. John Chrysostom said this to people who did not come to church regularly:

Let each person visit the Church accompanied by a member of his family. Let them receive and give the service to one another here. We father his son and the son his father, the brother his sister and the sister her brother, the man his wife, brother his brother, friend his friend. Make sure that let us not maintain friends only, but also members, for the Treasury of Heaven is for all.

(St. Theophylact on the Lord's commandment)

5

Display the Time Line poster and point out that during this year we will learn more about the godly lives of people who followed Christ and also of those who came before Him and prepared the way for Him on earth.

Background Reading (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" (LLIII 94).

5. Activity Option A

Have the students **read the sidebar "Encourage Each Other"** (p.5) then plan a skit on how this might be acted out in their family.

Use the skit to springboard a discussion of how our family helps us to grow in faith with questions such as:

- Where has family been a source of encouragement for you?
- Where has family guided you? How has family guided you?
- When has your family intervened to help you live up to your Christian calling?

(Note that every family gives directions, rules, boundaries ... God has done the same with His directions for a godly life).

6. Activity Option B

Indicate that we are connected to Christ through the saints but also through our ancestors who came to this country and established their churches so that we might worship God in the ways they did.

Distribute the Worksheet and have the students fill in as much as they can. Direct them to ask their parents to help them. Don't forget to have the students thank God for these ancestors who continued the work of the founders of their Church and brought us to Christ.

Background Reading (Inheriting our Faith):

"If, for whatever reason we decide to find the roots of our personal beliefs, we find that more than one influence was working simultaneously in our life to produce this set of beliefs. As we investigate our past, we realize that our ideas are often the product of group thinking. This group has been amassing a wealth of experience during its existence and systematizing it. The group presents it to us as a legacy, which we can accept or reject or modify for ourselves. By the time we become sufficiently aware of it to accept or reject it, it has already molded us to a great extent, and we can never be completely free of its influences" (*SLW*, 1)

7. Time Line

Display the time line poster. Have the students **brainstorm the names of people mentioned in this lesson** (*Moses, David, Jeremiah, Constantine and Helen, Vladimir and Olga, the students and their families*) and indicate the period in which each lived. Write in the names and dates under each appropriate heading.

8. Summary

End the lesson by summarizing the lesson from the aims on page 75, from the elements in the student text on which you focused and/or any other points raised in the lesson.

9. Closing Prayer

Read the material on the Psalms (p. 6) and point out that we will frequently pray from the Psalms during this year. Close with the verses from Psalm 100.

Note: There is a difference in the way most psalms are numbered in the Greek and Hebrew versions. In the Septuagint (Greek) version, most psalms are numbered one less than the Masoretic (Hebrew) version. Thus Psalm 50 in the Septuagint is Psalm 51 in the Masoretic.

Byzantine liturgical texts follow the Septuagint numbering while the New American Bible and most Western translations follow the Masoretic version. The numbers referred to in this program are those in the New American Bible.

Background Reading (The Psalms):

Thus far we have considered the Psalms only as hymns and prayers. Because they are part of God's inspired Word, the Psalms are likewise as rich a source of revealed truth and doctrine as any other book of the Bible. The New Testament repeatedly indicates that Jesus and the Apostles used the Psalms in their debates with Jews over the Messiah. One of the most commonly employed 'proof texts is Ps 109: 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right until I make your enemies your footstool... from the womb before the daystar I have begotten you. The Lord has sworn and he will not repent: 'You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek'" (*OTB 179*).

IT'S INTERESTING TO KNOW WHY THEY CAME

How much do you know about your family history? Ask your parents to help you complete this information about your ancestors.

ON MY MOTHER'S SIDE

The first person to come to this country was _____.
name

He/she came from _____
town

in _____
province-country

and arrived at _____
place

on _____ . He/she
date

travelled to this country by _____
means

_____. The reason
of transportation

why he/she came was _____

_____. It took
amount of time _____ to get here

and cost \$ _____.

After arriving, he /she settled in _____

_____ And later lived

in _____.

Languages he/she spoke: _____

ON MY FATHER'S SIDE

The first person to come to this country was _____.
name

He/she came from _____
town

in _____
province-country

and arrived at _____
place

on _____ . He/she
date

travelled to this country by _____
means

_____. The reason
of transportation

why he/she came was _____

_____. It took
amount of time _____ to get here

and cost \$ _____.

After arriving, he /she settled in _____

_____ And later lived

in _____.

Languages he/she spoke: _____
