

Unit Six

Observances

24. Saint Nicholas

Saint Nicholas is one of the most popular Eastern Saints. Most of our information about him has been given to us through stories of his humility and generosity. He is known as the patron Saint of many countries or occupations.

25. The Entrance into Jerusalem

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people greeted Him with branches from the olive tree as a symbol of victory. They were honoring him for bringing Lazarus back to life. Many were there because they wanted to see Lazarus.

26. Pascha

Everything we believe as Eastern Christians is based on our belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are called to live out our lives as "resurrection" people in thanksgiving to Christ for granting us eternal life.

27. Saint Peter and Saint Paul

Saint Peter and Saint Paul are known as "two great luminaries of the Church." Both of them were instrumental in the formation of the early Church.

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24—Saint Nicholas

Objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- identify Saint Nicholas as one of the most popular Saints of the Eastern Church.
- state that most of our information about him is from stories showing his generosity and humility.
- realize that Saint Nicholas is the patron Saint for many causes.

For the Catechists

Children hear about Saint Nicholas at a young age. They come to know him as the one who leaves something for them in their shoes or socks on the night of December 5. On his Feast Day, they wake up to the excitement of finding his gifts depending on your tradition. Legends have led to this tradition, and in this lesson the students will read about some of the stories. But catechists need to remind the students that these stories are ways to help us realize how we are to live as Christians. We are to help those less fortunate as Saint Nicholas did.

Regretfully, these stories have led to the creation of Santa Claus. Commercialism has used Santa Claus to sell more items and to keep people buying. We need to keep this image separate from Saint Nicholas, who was focused on sharing Christ's love with all people. In your church events honoring Saint Nicholas, try to avoid needless gift giving. Emphasize the giving of love through prayer and service rather than items to be consumed.

Some churches have a Saint Nicholas party to honor him. Encourage organizers to include the singing of the Saint Nicholas hymn and the telling of some of the stories about helping those less fortunate. Possibly include a donation center for food items or shoes that can be given to a local charity.

The "Prayers for the Journey" section asks the students to add a prayer asking for help to learn how to become generous and humble. Encourage them to include specific examples of what they can do to practice generosity and humility.

Materials Needed

Opening Prayer: "The Thanksgiving Hymn—May our Mouths be filled"

Icon: The Mystical Supper (*Come Bless the Lord* icon packet #10).

Closing Prayer: "Blessed be the name of the Lord" - in the Divine Liturgy books

Pens, pencils, markers, and white paper

1. Opening Prayer

Chant or recite "The Thanksgiving Hymn—May our Mouths be filled"

[Find this prayer in the Divine Liturgy books in your church. This hymn is sung after we receive Holy Eucharist.]

2. Introduction

Ask the students to share stories about Saint Nicholas. Then make a list showing the difference between Saint Nicholas and Santa Claus.

3. Guided Reading

- Before the reading, review last week's objectives. Then summarize this week's objectives of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad to use for review next week.
- Have students read text aloud and emphasize the importance of humility and generosity as shown to us by Saint Nicholas.
- Allow time to complete "Prayers for the Journey." Consider having the students share these prayer for the Closing Prayer section.

4. Scriptural Reflection

- Read Matthew 25:35-40.
- Before reading aloud, have students make the sign of the cross. Remind them that reading Scripture is praying.
- Look at the picture showing students helping. Ask them what picture from their life could they add showing them helping others.
- Give the students 3 minutes to answer the questions and read the passage again.
- Ask the students to work in groups of 2 and share their answers.
- Possible answers:
 - All people
 - Say a prayer, talk to the people, stay focused on helping—do not pass judgment or complain (Answers vary)

Background Reading (Our Whole Life)

"The martyrs and confessors for the faith are the true witnesses and guides. In them the sense of God's presence was nurtured until it grew so strong that it could not be denied. It shone forth in their words and actions. Even though they suffered and many were put to death, their witness continues to speak even after death. Their strength came not from themselves or their own innate goodness, but from their awareness of their weakness and sinfulness which required them to turn daily to God for His aid. It came from their powerful awareness of His dynamic presence in their lives, impelling them to act and to have a lasting impact on the culture and the society around them. My personal faith must never stay locked up in an inner world. Rather, I must respond to its challenge to live and to call others to image God's presence in the world. My faith pervades my life and calls me to an ever deeper fidelity" (LLI 99).

5. From the Teaching of the Church Fathers

- one student to read the words from Monk of the Eastern Church
- Possible answers:
 Saint Nicholas points to Jesus. All he did was for Jesus, and our prayers to him go to Jesus.
 Catechists should share one of their stories.

6. Liturgical Study

- Read the paragraphs aloud.
- Ask the students to explain why we should pray to Saints. Ask them to share a story about a situation in which they should consider asking Saint Nicholas to pray for them.

7. Closing Prayers

Sing or pray "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Find the words in the Divine Liturgy books of your church. This prayer is before the dismissal.

Supplemental Activities:

Review—At the end of the lesson, ask the students what they remember by using one of the following suggestions:

1. Make a poster listing the descriptions of Saint Nicholas (look at the last page of the lesson in the student book). Find pictures of the situation and paste them next to the words. Discuss the many ways Saint Nicholas helps us.
2. Find other legends about Saint Nicholas. Recreate them and present them during the Saint Nicholas party at your church or present them for a younger grade.
3. Make a list of ways you can practice humility and generosity. Combine the lists from all the students, and rework them into a calendar for the 40 days of Philip's Fast. Ask your priest if he would like to include this calendar in the bulletin.

Background Reading (Mature Christian Life)

"This awareness of communion becomes "incarnated" in a mature Christian life. If we are becoming transfigured in Christ through the Spirit, then His concerns must become ours. Christ presented Himself as a servant, who was to announce, bring about and facilitate communion with the Father and with one another. He envisions that this will be the rule of life for those who follow Him (*Light for Life III* 86).