

2008 Christian Education Curriculum

Camp Transfiguration

Diocese of Ottawa
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

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Lesson 1: Purity

“See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil”



Lesson 1: Purity

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Know and present the following stories from the life of the Theotokos:
 - a) Her life in the Temple
 - b) The Annunciation Scandal
 - c) The Withered Hand (Nativity)
 - 2) Discuss what purity of body, mind, and soul means
 - 3) Bring out how God blesses those who want and try to be chaste
 - 4) Make connections between the above stories of the Theotokos' life and the campers' lives
 - a. She shows us how to build and maintain purity in our lives
 - b. She gives us strength and encouragement from her example
 - c. She is a very powerful intercessor (before the throne of God) who beseeches Him to help us; He listens to her because she was granted this blessing as His mother.
 - d. Discuss what the campers can do to maintain a pure life at home, in school, with their friends, etc.
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1. Activity (3 min)

- : begin with the question of ‘What does purity look like to you?’
- : hand out 2 pieces of paper and markers to the kids and instruct them to draw what purity looks like to them (some will not want to do this because they can't draw well but don't worry, just tell them the time is passing quickly)
- : time this activity for **60 sec.**
- : **NO PEEKING** at their neighbor's work
- : have the kids turn over their papers to look at later
- : now also draw what you think her purity looked like on the 2nd paper
- : turn that paper over also, so both are face down

2. Introduction (5-7 min)

- Theotokos thought purity was one of the most important things for her, next to God.
- she spent so much time and hard work on it that people wondered about her all the time
- this is what she did:
 - she prayed quietly in her mind every moment of the day (she never stopped) (unceasing prayer)

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- she prayed the required daily prayers every day (she didn't miss any of them)
- she prayed for others (intercessory prayer)
- she fasted a lot (everyday), eating only once a day and that was bread sent from heaven and given to her by an angel
- each day, the food that she was given (by the priests) was sent to the poor (almsgiving)
- she worked without complaining even if she was tired (she slept for only a few hours each day)
- she was obedient to all she lived with, e.g. If they asked her to get them something and she was occupied with something else, she got up and did it happily
- she made a huge effort not to offend anyone by her words, the way she looked at them, etc
- she was modest in how she dressed so she wouldn't be the cause of sin to men
- she was friendly
- she didn't talk a lot and her conversations were about spiritual things mostly
- she spoke softly and didn't talk crudely
- she studied really hard
- she smiled gently and always had an encouraging word
- she kept her thoughts on holy, good and beautiful things
- she loved to study scripture and go to Church services (these gave her strength)
- her face was radiantly beautiful but she didn't look at herself except to examine her soul to see if it was the way God wanted it to be
- she worked at purity of her mind, her heart and her body so much that her face shone with heavenly light
- there's lots more but you get the idea

In all her studies of scripture (they had the first 5 books of the Old Testament called the Pentateuch at that time) and thinking about Godly things, she realized that her purity could be 'captured' by Satan and all of her efforts in keeping herself pure could be lost in the 'twinkling of an eye' if she didn't stay diligent in working on it and vigilant about what she allowed into her mind and soul (her body wasn't as much the focus).

3. Activity (15-20 min)

'Stuck in the Mud' or 'Capture'

1. Stick a sticky note to each campers' back
2. The object of the game is for the campers to snatch the paper off everyone else's back without losing their own
3. If a camper loses their paper, they must sit down on the ground (they are 'stuck in the mud' or 'captured')

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4. If the counselor tags those who are sitting down with a fresh sticky note, they can get up and continue playing (the counselor is the lifeline)
5. After 5-7 minutes (depending on camper enthusiasm) the counselor calls “time” and those who still have their sticky notes are the winners (surprise them with a piece of candy) and they get a star beside their name (for the scavenger hunt)

Discussion: (5-10 minutes)

1. Ask campers what they thought of the game
2. Did they think it was easy perhaps what they were thinking while they played the game (ie: were some competitive about keeping their paper? did it not matter to others? did some give up quickly? etc.) --- counselor can write some of these down if appropriate to the lesson
 - o The point here is to bring out our attitudes about keeping something important (eg: there are those who are indifferent about it, others who want to lose it, and others who are serious about keeping this important thing) These attitudes will be incorporated into any discussion as you go along.
 - o Brain-storm other meanings and names of purity
 - have them call them out randomly
 - write on a bristol board the other names for purity (eg. chastity, virginity, modesty, clean, white, innocent, etc.)

Teaching Tip!!! use different colored markers, large and small sized letters, have a camper do the writing making it look ‘cool’.

4. Activity 2 (15 min)

“This Anatomy Class is Brought to You by God”

*Materials: ‘Body’ kit (bag with a brain, heart and small body)
: tape (to tape body parts on camper’s clothing)
: mad scientist costume (wig, lab coat, large glasses, laser pointer)

*Intro: “Purity is something that can really only be understood through living examples. So here’s our living example.” --- Counselor chooses a taller camper to be the ‘dummy’.

“Now for zee anatomy class, class.”

*Counselor can dress up as a mad scientist who is going to teach the class a ‘very important lesson by zee most famous scientist of all time, GOD’. Use a cool accent to talk. Counselor can write points on a separate poster board if they want in goofy handwriting.

Explanation:

1. mind – is the place where ideas come to us, either from outside or our own desires
-it takes ideas and makes them into thoughts

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- it is the guardian of our souls and controls

what goes into the soul

2. soul - two of the parts of the soul are:

a) the heart of the soul- the ‘heart’ is not our physical heart but rather the deepest part of our soul, where the Holy Spirit lives; it’s the part that we want to protect so that the Holy Spirit will continue to live there

b) the part that makes us want or desire something (appetitive part)

3. body

- the body is the part of us that expresses things to others through what we say and do (movements and actions)

- physical feelings and sensations can help us in keeping pure or trap us into bad habits

- its because the sensations make us feel good (and we all want to feel good)

- the one part of it that can be spiritual is the tongue (its the only part of the body that can pray and praise God, as well as, say evil things.)

Counselors: explain concepts of mind, soul and body in as creative/goofy way as you can, modifying the explanation according to the age group you are teaching, while getting the points across

*divide campers into 3 groups after explanation is finished and have them brain-storm “Which of these body parts do they think has the most influence on purity and why?” (2-3 min. out of the total 10 min., no more)

Discussion: (5-10 min.)

*Have some or all of the groups share their ideas and praise them for great answers.

*to lead them into the next concept **a suggested approach** is, “So now we’re all getting the idea that purity involves our minds, our souls and our bodies. It’s a lot of hard work (if you judge it by the efforts of the Virgin Mary). So I if we want to understand about how we get purity, we have to realize that

- **‘IT STARTS IN OUR MINDS, OUR SOUL THEN WANTS IT, AND THEN OUR BODY DOES IT’.**

*have campers shout it out (optional) or make it into a catchy rap if they’re good at it

5. Wrap-Up (5-10 min)

*God always rewards our efforts when we try hard because we love Him. He sees every single one of them even if no one else does. The Theotokos understood this even though she didn’t expect it.

*She understood how the relationship between her mind, soul and body works in making good or bad habits. As a result, she struggled to keep them pure all her life (even when she was little). She experienced temptations like we do but she made sure that she didn’t give in to them. What was the result? God rewarded her efforts by giving her the highest honour, becoming the Birth-giver and Mother of His Holy Son, Jesus Christ.

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*Many people have tried to tell us that it’s a lie that she was pure and that even her Holy Son was not pure (had children from Mary Magdalene). They have also said that He is not the Son of God. We know differently.

*God knew that people would doubt the truth about the Holy Virgin Mary (Vierge Mary) and so He gave us proof of her purity. Here are 2 of the miracles that happened in her life and were recorded.

*Ask the question to the campers, has your idea of purity changed (what they originally drew on the papers at the beginning)?

Stories:

-counselors can get campers to help them if there’s time (counselor’s choice of campers in order to save time)

1. **-The Annunciation Scandal** (props – wine goblet, colored water)

2. **The Withered Hand (Nativity)** (props – a size medium or large black glove, a flashlight, a large Bristol board cloud, a baby doll wrapped in a plain white cloth)

- Indicate on the Icon of Theotokos the 3 stars of her virginity

*Ask trivia questions from the lesson especially from her life stories! (if there’s time)

Note: A fantastic idea would be for the counselor to organize a support group (for outside of camp) amongst the campers whereby they can call each other or their counselor when they are struggling with temptations, or if they need to talk about potential problems, or if they just need to know they’re not alone in their struggle (Note: This can be used for prayer and obedience also.)

- It’s better not to do this online since it is less personal – telephone or letters are preferable (they are also more private and intimate)
- Can do a phone exchange

Lesson 2: Pray

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Goals:

1. Know the stories of:
 - a) The Flight to Egypt: Robbers on the Way (Gestus and Dismas)
 - b) Pentecost: She was there! (Athos)
2. Understand the role of quiet in prayer
3. Understand what God expects of us in our personal prayer life and in Church ('Just do it!'---'Just be there!')
4. Discuss contemporary distractions to prayer (especially media-oriented ones)

SECTION #1: Personal Prayer

Activity: (5-7 min.)

- On a poster board in large letters, have the Jesus Prayer ('Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.') written out in large, black letters
- have the campers sit down
- Have campers repeat 'the Prayer' to themselves for 30 sec.
- Next, have them close their eyes and whisper the 'Jesus Prayer' for about 1-2 min.
- It is recommended to time it (up to 3min. maximum); if campers get really fidgety and disruptive, refocus them by saying it with them
- NO PEEKING!
- Have them stop and open their eyes.

Discussion: (5-10 min.)

- Counsellors can discuss with the campers what they felt and experienced in this activity; things such as did they find it hard? long? boring? peaceful? calming?
- relate the discussion back to their experiences in trying to pray
- Possible questions to generate and lead the discussion are as follows:
- What is prayer like for them?
- Do they think it's important to do it but have trouble getting to it?
- Do they pray by themselves? With their family? Both?
- Which do they find it easier to do-by themselves or with someone?
- What happens when they pray? What do they experience then? (all kinds of thoughts come into their minds of stuff they have to do or are looking forward to and they can't concentrate)
- Do they get distracted? By what? (counsellors should share from their own experiences in all of the above questions and be honest!)
- as the discussion of what happens when they pray gets around to the aspect of how difficult it is to concentrate and more especially the distractions that they may have, introduce the campers to the nest activity (concerns distractions)

*The discussion can lead into many areas/ tangents. Counsellors must be prepared to go with the flow.

Lesson 2: Pray

* See 'Questions and Answers about Prayer' section if you are not sure what to answer, especially if they say, "I don't know how."

Game: (5-10 min.)

Materials: 2-3 bags of 'Stuff'
2-3 Bristol board
3 markers
candy prizes (nicely wrapped in bags with ribbon---enough for the winning team)

- ❑ Split campers into 2-4 teams and line them up at one end of the 'room' (to make the game harder and somewhat more confusing, don't have the team members line up, just have them huddle in a group)
- ❑ Give each team a category for its name (eg. Jungle, Barnyard, Arctic, Desert)
- ❑ Tape a big piece of Bristol board (one for each team) onto a wall opposite the teams. - Each team gets a 'Stuff' bag (the items in the bag can be either dumped onto the floor in front of each team or left in the bag to be carried whichever will make it the hardest to carry---if items are left in the bag make sure that the bags have a big 'Stuff' label on them---bags should be bulky).
- ❑ Instruct the teams to think of as many animals that belong to their team's name as possible (do not tell them this until everyone has been handed out their 'Stuff' bag and they are waiting for the 'Go' signal---they will have to think quickly)
- ❑ On the signal to go, one team member must grab their team's 'Stuff' or 'Stuff' bag and run to the Bristol board for their team, write the name of (or draw) an animal from their category as fast as they can, drop the marker in front of the Bristol board, run back to their team and drop the 'Stuff' onto the floor in front of another team member
- ❑ The team member that has the 'Stuff' or 'Stuff' bag dropped in front of them must then pick up the 'Stuff', run to the board and repeat the same thing, dropping the 'Stuff' in front of another team member at the end of their turn as fast as they can
- ❑ Do this until every team member has had a turn or 'TIME' is called (if all team members have had a turn and 'time' has not been called they must continue the game)
- ❑ No team member can have a 2nd turn until all team members have had one try
- ❑ Blow the whistle or call 'TIME' after about 5-7 min.
- ❑ Hold a 'Presentation ceremony' and hand out a prize (candy) to each member of the winning team with the most correct animals in their category (any disputes concerning whether an animal fits the category is up to the counsellor's discretion as to whether it's counted)
- ❑ LOUD clapping, whistles, shouts for the winners!

Discussion: (10-15 min.)

- Ask campers what they thought of the game.
- Do they see any relationship between the 'Stuff' they had to carry around to anything concerning praying?
- Counsellors should try to lead the discussion to cover:
 - types of distractions that kids experience or identify around them

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- bring awareness of the negative effects that uncontrolled media exposure ie. TV, video games, computers and their games, etc. has on us and our ability to pray
- **Possible Suggestions**-it makes us lazy (don't want to work just play), takes away our motivation for many things, makes us want it so much that it becomes the thing that we center our day/lives around, we tend to argue a lot more especially if someone us while doing these things, makes us **ignore God**, it 'dumbs us down' and we don't think as clearly (brainstorm more with other counsellors, priests, Christian Ed. director, Camp Director, etc.)
- relate the 'Stuff', that they carried around in the game to:
 - the worries that we have about things in our lives
 - the weight of all our distractions that weigh down and make our soul heavy with homesickness for God
 - d) bring awareness that our soul needs God and lets us know this through a sense of dissatisfaction and a feeling of emptiness and heaviness of heart
- all God wants is for us to "Just do it." He'll take care of the rest.

-Counsellors need to be on the ball about bringing out some of this stuff because they can have resistance from the campers---they may not want to see how it affects them or not want to feel badly or uncomfortable or they may even not want to give it up---in any situation STRESS that we are all at different levels of maturity in our spiritual life and that God just wants us to be honest with Him about what we feel about these things---He just wants us to ask for His help because He really is the only One who knows us best and how we best mature in prayer and accepting these 'hard' things

Note for Counsellors: Uncontrolled media exposure (even just ½ hour of TV, computer games, video games, etc. acts like a drug. Current research now shows that the brain is affected in a way like a drug addicts. ½ hour of these things is like taking a dose of crack. A daily dose over prolonged periods (more than once) is like a cocaine addiction---they need a fix. (For more info go to the 'Focus on the Family' website or to scientific journals dealing in brain research)

***Questions and Answers about Prayer**

Q: Is it wrong to say your own words?

A: It's not wrong, it's a beginning step but it's also not enough. Its like babies who are given milk at first but start on meat when they grow; we have to 'grow up' in our spiritual life and begin having 'meat' too in how and what we pray. The prayers of the Church (morning and evening prayers, prayers before confession, prayers before and after Holy Communion, etc.) come from the Holy Fathers and Saints who experienced prayer at many deep levels. When we read them, we draw on their experience for our own lives so that we are not led astray.

-Counsellors can ask campers what prayers they know to say or what they do in their prayers

Q: Does singing prayers help us?

A: Sometimes if we are tired or very distracted, chanting can help us attain the right atmosphere. It's more a form of glorifying God and has a God-given role in helping us to express our joy to

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the Lord. So it has its place. Union of the mind and heart can really only happen after awhile of continually struggling to pray. Our minds need quiet for them to settle down and allow them to focus. Then the meaning of the words that we are praying can penetrate the heart of our soul and God can show us what He wants to reveal to us about ourselves and any other things.

Q: Do you have to be facing an icon?

A: It's better to pray without a lot of light. It is not important whether there is or there isn't an icon in front of us. It's where your heart and mind are that matters. If you concentrate better with an icon, then try to have an icon.

Q. What is the ideal place to pray?

A. It is best to pray in a quiet and peaceful atmosphere because that will help me enter the living presence of God and not be distracted.

Q. What does prayer do?

A. Prayer helps you to focus your mind and concentrate

Q: What kind of prayer does God like the best?

A: The thing that God loves the most is someone who prays. The best kind of prayers are those in which we ask for God's mercy, or where we thank Him. Sometimes we ask for things and God accepts this, but His favourite prayers are when we ask for His mercy and a repentant heart. It is important to ask for this spirit of repentance!

- It is best to pray in the early morning because the mind is free from all thoughts when you first wake up, and the world is still quiet and peaceful
 - This morning prayer gives us life/enthusiasm to meet the day
 - The purpose is the "catch" the Spirit of God
- One idea is to pray the morning prayers starting with a Trisagion (explain what are the Trisagion prayers – "Holy God, Holy Mighty Holy Immortal have mercy on me.....ending up with the Lord's Prayer)

*Counsellors can also introduce 1 or more prayers or give them '**prayer cards**' with prayers printed on them

SECTION #2: PRAYER IN CHURCH

Story: (5-7 min.)

It was a hot day on Tuesday; one of those days that make a person want to stay in a cool pool and never leave. One of Tom's friends, Aftim, had just called him needing help with a soccer tournament that he was involved in. Aft was always taking on something new and was up to his eyeballs with work from school, his job and now the tournament. He really needed someone badly so Tom, being the good guy that he was, pitched in to help. 'Gopher' took on a new meaning for Tom over the next few weeks but he didn't mind. Finally, Aftim and Tom

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finished all the preparations, handed it all in to the coordinators and relaxed at his parents' pool that evening. Suddenly, Aft realized, with a sinking feeling, that they had forgotten to call the Churches to let them know where the banquet would be held and, as well, he still had to study for his final exam in chemistry. Looking over at Tom with a pleading look, Aft asked him if he would do this one last thing. Tom looked him intently in the eye and, after a long silence, said, "Aft, if you promise me that you'll go to the monastery for a week to unwind after your exam, I'll gladly do it." Aft sighed and slowly said, "Yes.", even though he could think of a million things that needed to be done.

At the monastery, Aftim helped out and attended services for quite a few days and enjoyed it. He had talks with some of the brothers and the abbot and was content until one day in Liturgy he couldn't take it anymore. He started fidgeting, his mind was on all the important things that he could be doing, and he couldn't pray! It was too long! It had no purpose! "Why is Liturgy so long?", he thought, "I have to get out!"

Aft left the Church in a hurry and breathed in the fresh air deeply. All his thoughts were racing around in his head. The abbot, having noticed his agitation, followed him out of the Church and quietly came up to him. Touching his shoulder, he gently asked, "What's the matter, my son?" Aftim looked down at him (he was a short man) and blurted out, "Father, how can you stay that long in Church just talking to God. We're supposed to be doing things, helping people, you know. We say the same thing over and over again. It's crazy! Don't you see?" Abbot John said quietly, "Aftimios, tell me something. What does a baby do in its mother's womb? At 3 months, what does it do? At 6 months what does it do? At 9 months? Aft thought for a moment and replied, "Nothing, I guess." "Well," said Abbot John, "That's what it appears like to us but let me ask you another question, 'Is the baby the same at 3 months, at 6 months, at 9 months? No. It's growing. It doesn't do anything and yet it grows. That's the way it is with us, Aftim. For our little effort in praying in Church, God causes us to grow in the spiritual life even though we aren't doing anything."

Discussion: (5-10 min.)

-Possible discussion questions: What did you think of the story? Do you feel its boring and a little useless to the same ones
be saying so many prayers and especially over and over again?
: What's it like for a teen in Church?
:

Stories: (5-10 min.)

- Counselor can involve campers in the telling and maybe role-playing of these stories
- possible intros to these 2 stories in her life could be the following:
 - o Bible quote/Famous quote that applies to loving your neighbour so much that you 'go to bat' for them about something
 - o song that applies
- **The Flight to Egypt: Robbers on the Way! (Gestus and Dismas)**
- **The Wedding at Cana: Intercession**

- bring out that one of the key characteristics of the Virgin Mary is her love for all mankind. She loves us so much that she is always praying for God to help us. Prayer is born out of love.

Lesson 2: Pray

Activity (5-10)

'Too Much Stuff' as an intro to being too busy

Spiritual Advice on Praying

-The Holy Fathers of the Church tell us "Pray, and prayer will teach you how to pray"

6. So, how do we start?

- We have to '**just start.**' **It's that simple.** There is no set formula for how to pray. There are prayers that the Church has compiled which are
- It's also important to spend some quiet time just saying the Jesus Prayer.
- Lastly, something that's important for young people to do is prostrations
 - Demonstrate what a prostration is
 - Have the entire class do 25 prostrations altogether (it's a workout!)
 - Think of prostrations as part of your daily workout routine! For that matter, you can think of prayer as like a training of the mind, and prostrations are a training of the body! You are trying to become a **SPIRITUAL ATHLETE!**
 - It is a good idea to ask your spiritual father (priest) to give you a prayer rule to follow every day. It isn't usually very long unless you are used to praying for long periods.
 - Many times we don't pay attention in church, or if we do prayers at home we don't think of the fact that we are in front of the throne of God, Himself.

Put the icon of the Pantocrator from Sinai in front of yourself and the campers and ask them how they felt when you were talking before and how they feel now (ie: maybe some were distracted and talking before)

Lesson 3: Obedience “Who’s the Boss?”



Lesson 3: Obedience

Objectives

- Know the stories of
 - a) the Fall of Adam & Eve
 - b) Betrothal: the Budding Staff
 - c) Annunciation
 - Visualize the contrast between Eve (disobedient) and the new Eve, Mary (obedient)
 - Explain what Adam and Eve did that was considered bad in the eyes of God
 - Show how obedience gives you freedom by:
 - i. Freeing you from harmful desires.
 - ii. Giving you self-control over yourself.
-

1. Introduction (5 min)

Ask this question: What do people think about the idea of being obedient?

- Some possible answers from the campers: negative, it’s weakness, simple-minded, you don’t think for yourself, etc. (or good ones as well)

NOTE: After this 1st question, if the counselor feels that the lesson will be too long to include everything outlined, then they should feel free to go right to the stories of ‘Joseph’s budding staff’ and the ‘Annunciation’, and try to bring out in the discussion the highlighted section of the discussion part of the ‘Fall of Adam & Eve’

Opening: (5 min.)

- Tell campers the story of the **Fall of Adam & Eve** (Genesis 2)
- use some of the campers as props (Tree of knowledge, animals, etc.)
- have icons of Creation of the World and Expulsion from Paradise visible for reference as needed

2. Activity (20 min)

After the story, quickly separate kids into 2 or more groups (**more groups means less time** --- counselor will need more markers and Bristol board taped on ‘wall’ too) and have them line up behind each other single file. Each group has a poster taped to the wall facing them. The first person in line must run to the poster and write one word that they think of when they think of Eve or Adam. They must then run back to their group, hand the marker to the next camper and go to the back of the line. This is

Lesson 3: Obedience “Who’s the Boss?”



repeated until the counselor calls “time”. The group with the most items on their poster wins a candy prize. Do not take too much time on this activity! How well they write doesn’t matter! Make sure that disobedient or the equivalent is on the list.

Discussion 1:

- What was the problem of Adam and Eve listening to the suggestion of the serpent and eating of the fruit of the Tree of good & evil?
- Possible questions that might help prompt camper discussion could be:
 - o **What happened in the fall and why?**
 - o **What made Eve follow the suggestion the serpent made?**
 - o **How did Adam react to Eve’s suggestion to ‘eat’? Did he think about what he was doing or being asked to do?**
 - o **How did they react when God asked, “Where are you?”**

(Note: God was giving them a chance to come to Him of their own free will to tell Him what they had done and to repent (be sorry) about it--- If they had done this on their own, things may have been different.)

- o **What was God’s reaction?**

Note: The important thing in this is that God gave them consequences so that they would begin to understand that what they had done was serious. It took them away from their relationship with God (which was very loving, beautiful and beyond our understanding since they actually walked and talked with Him (meaning Christ) and had consequences for people that they didn’t even know (us). The consequences were given to them out of God’s love, to remind them and us of the seriousness of sinful behaviour for themselves and others.

- o **How did sin come into the world?** (It came through mankind’s choice not to obey what God has told us.)
- o **What were the sins that they committed?**

Eve: -wanted to be like God
-didn’t trust God
-didn’t check if ok
-blamed someone else (serpent)
-didn’t take responsibility for actions
-and so on...

Adam: -took Eve’s word over God’s
-blamed Eve 1st then God Himself
-didn’t take responsibility for his actions
-letting curiosity about something cloud his judgment
-and so on...

Note: *The above explanations will be discussed between the Christian Ed. Counselors at the training session since much of this info should be woven into the discussion, not kept as a separate section of the lesson.*

Lesson 3: Obedience “Who’s the Boss?”



3. Section 2 (20-25 min)

Story (5-10 min)

- Tell campers the stories of: **1. Joseph’s budding staff**
2. The Annunciation
- Highlight that Joseph and Mary were different than Adam and Eve because of their obedience -- Joseph obeyed despite not wanting to have another burden in his life and struggled with obeying; Theotokos gave her consent (“the Lord’s will be done”) readily because she had practiced it from her early childhood on and had grown to trust God/the angel.
- Both Eve and Mary had no idea of the impact that their actions would have on mankind. They didn’t fully understand the bigger picture. One obeyed, the other disobeyed. Eve’s decision was born out of a “know-it-all” attitude and not trusting in God to know what was best. Mary’s obedience was born out of trust in God and an understanding of her own ignorance.
- The Theotokos is what Eve was supposed to be (She is the new Eve)
- Question is: **Who made the better choice?**

Note: These points should also be explained in the counselors’ training session and could be woven within the story-telling to save time, if needed.

Activity (10-20 min)

This activity can be done in different ways, depending on the amount of time left. Counselors can decide how to use it (e.g. break up the campers into 2 groups to work on a different scenario each **or** chose a scenario and from the 2 given and discuss it as a whole group or use their own ideas). How the counselor uses the scenarios to bring out different points about obedience is up to them.

(Note: See ‘Points on Obedience’ below) The key is to make the kids aware that it takes an effort on their part to obey since human beings are more used to not obeying. Also, that God blesses those who honestly try.

Scenario #1: So you want to buy a new iPod with camera and voice features (or another thing that is all the rage with the kids nowadays). It looks really cool and many of your friends have it. They’ve been bragging about how awesome it is. You’ve tried out theirs and think it’s really cool too. However, you already have one of the older models that still functions just fine. Mom and Dad say, “No.”, but you have your own money. What would you do?

- **Discussion:** Would you try to persuade them? How would you go about trying to get it? Etc. (These are only possible questions to get them going.) Try to get them to bring out what they would do to try to persuade Mom and Dad &/or what they would do to try to get it against their parents’ wishes.

Lesson 3: Obedience “Who’s the Boss?”



Scenario # 2: Mom and Dad tell us that we can’t hang around with one of our friends. They don’t really give us a good reason. We really enjoy that person; they’re funny, do cool stuff, appear very confident about themselves. We admire them. What would you do?

- **Discussion:** What is it that attracts you to this person? Bring out what it is in themselves that makes them feel attracted to them (I’m not as pretty as they are. They get to do stuff I don’t, etc). What makes them not want to listen to mom and dad?

**By the way, the ‘friend’ is part of a gang and is wanted for/known to be (criminal/drug/bad activities)?*

4. Wrap-up (5 min)

Points on Obedience

- Obedience is how we draw closer to God. God blesses obedience
 - The devil doesn’t want us to obey so he tries to make it seem like it’s a bad thing
 - In the eyes of God, you aren’t responsible if something doesn’t turn out well when you obey. The responsibility rests with the person you are obeying, even though that person may get annoyed about it. (You did what you were supposed to....so be prepared for it anyway.)
 - Obedience is true freedom the way God meant it to be.
 - You can’t become prideful when you’re obedient.
 - We can still have fun even though we obey.
 - **ONLY THE STRONG OBEY!**
- Some might bring up the fact that their parents aren’t perfect, they don’t understand, etc.
 - In those cases, point out gently that obedience is not a battleground between two people; **it’s a battle with your own self.** Most of the time, it really doesn’t matter whether or not your parents are right or wrong.

****Trivia questions from the lesson (counselor will make up trivia questions during training)*

BYZANTINE CHANTING



Lesson: Byzantine Chanting

OBJECTIVES

- ➔ Learn about the spirituality of chanting in the orthodox church
 - ➔ Teach campers the troparion of the Transfiguration and of St Anna (and if time, the troparion of the Dormition of the Theotokos)
 - ➔ Foster a desire to learn and reinforce those hymns which the campers already know
-

1. Introduction (20 min) **Camper discussion!!!*

WHAT IS A CHANTER'S JOB AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CHANT?

- A chanter or choir is the mouth of the Church; while singing prayers and hymns he/she pronounces them not only for himself, but in the name of all who are present in church.
- A chanter stands before the One before whom the angels cover their faces with fear!
- A chanter sings praises to the One of Whom all the heavenly powers ceaselessly proclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth! This is a great responsibility!
- What a wonderful and great gift—the gift of a voice and the ability to sing! They were given to us for this, that we might both glorify the Lord ourselves, and incite others to do the same.
- A chanter sings to the glory of God not only with their lips and voice, but with heart, mind, soul, will, desire, zeal—with all their being. This is what it means to chant.
- the purpose of chanting in to showcase the words... that is why it doesn't really matter if your voice isn't that good. As long as you say the words and sing with a humble heart to God, you are chanting more beautifully than the angels. It is when we sing with pride and boast in our own voice that we sound terrible to God.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHANTER?

- A chanter must have devotion to their work
- they must always exhibit true humility. "I must decrease, so that Thou may decrease". What this means is that a chanter must not show off their voice or sing very elaborate melodies for the sake of singing them. As mentioned earlier, the purpose and goal of a chanter is to uplift the people during the service to God.
- If there are a group of chanters, they must submit and follow the leader (Protosaltis or head chanter) and not follow themselves.
- should not get distracted in church; must always focus on prayer. Many times chanters get distracted in church, by a variety of things (people, noises, thoughts, etc). It is hard to stand up at the front of the church and not be distracted. Luckily, Orthodox Christian liturgy is an encounter with the incarnate Word of God, made possible through intelligible worship that touches us through every human sense: sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste.

Two further notes:

Two fundamental principles governing Orthodox worship are beauty and clarity. The word must be

BYZANTINE CHANTING



clearly heard to be a word, and nowhere in the Liturgy is this more acutely relevant than during the reading of Scripture or the chanting of the music. If a word is mumbled, mispronounced, or inaudible, it is not a word for the hearer; it is just a sound. Here we should note that, as a rule, music in the Orthodox Church is always a musical word. We do not have organ preludes or orchestral performances in the Liturgy primarily because these musical forms, as beautiful as they might be, are wordless. Thus, for church reading to be effective, it must be intelligible. Yet we cannot make intelligibility the sole criterion for church reading, because authentic Christian worship also requires beauty.

The expression of love through beauty is evident in the hymns of the church and in our church buildings. Whether it is the great Hagia Sophia, a hand-carved Russian village church, or a small storefront mission in the mountains, an Orthodox Church building is always built and adorned as beautifully as possible. The beauty one beholds in the church building is a witness to the love for Jesus Christ concretely manifested in His faithful people.

Nothing is more blessed than to imitate on earth
the songs of the angels' choirs.

BASIL THE GREAT, +379

STORY OF CHANTERS **Have a camper read the story out loud*

Here is a little story. Once upon a time there was a Monastery of St. George, and the Abbott was blessed with monks that did not have such wonderful voices. The annual pilgrimage on the Feast Day of St. George was not all that impressive with the rather awful sounds coming from the choir. So the Abbott called together all the monks and said, "Look this year I am going to invite the famous choir from the cathedral for the Feast." Word went out and thousands of people came to St. George Monastery for the feast day and it was a glorious day. The famous choir from the cathedral was in great form and used its best voices. The Abbott was thrilled and even the humble monks who were not allowed to sing that day were thrilled.

Following the day's festivities the monks went off to sleep, and the Abbott was sound asleep after all the excitement of the day. St. George came to him in his sleep and said, "Father, I think you missed my feast day! Today is my feast day and here you are and you didn't do anything. Have I not blessed you this past year?" And the Abbott said, "Oh, Saint George, I do not know where you were, but we had a glorious feast today. How could you not be here?" St. George said, "I was in the church and I saw a great multitude of people, but I heard nothing."

Take home point: You and your choir sound as good as you are able. God not only expects, but He accepts only our best. If your best sounds like terrible to others, but it is indeed your best, then God hears it and accepts it.

STORY OF THE HYMN OF "IT IS TRULY MEET" ** Have a camper read story; show icon of "Axion Esti"*

A monk was singing to the Theotokos in his cell one night on Mount Athos in Greece. It was dark

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and only a single oil lamp was lit. Suddenly, an angel appeared to him in bright light and asked him what he was doing. The man was afraid and made the sign of the cross and prayed to the Lord to protect him. The angel repeated his question, “what are you doing?” The monk, realizing that this was an angel of heaven and not a demon in disguise, answered him: “I am singing to our most holy Virgin”. The angel said, “No you are not. In heaven we don’t know what you are saying because it is hurting our ears!”

The monk was saddened and asked how he might praise the Theotokos properly. The angel answered him, “She sent me down to show you how we sing to her back home” and he wrote it down on a rock. After he finished writing, he said, "From now on you and all the Orthodox Christians should sing thus." Then he gave his name as the Archangel Gabriel and disappeared. The monk was overjoyed and shared this story with the abbot of the monastery and all the monks glorified God and the Most Holy Theotokos. This hymn is sung in all the orthodox churches to this day.

The hymn that was passed down from heaven is:

It is truly meet to bless thee, O Theotokos,
ever blessed, and most pure, and the Mother of our God.
More honourable than the cherubim
and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim;
without corruption thou gave birth to God the Word
True Theotokos, we magnify thee.

2. Troparias (15-20 min) **Pass out music for Troparias and teach to campers*

- Troparia of the Transfiguration, Troparia of St Anna, Troparia of St Catharine (? if time allows, the Troparia of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos?)
- Bring about relevant elements discussed earlier (i.e. if too loud, or mumbling, etc)

3. Activity (15-20 min) **Pick one (or more if time allows) of the following activities*

- The chanting circle: campers make a circle (if too many, then make two circles); Counsellor or CIT stands in the middle and they will close their eyes and spin around and point at someone in the circle. That camper has to chant something or say a prayer. Whatever they say is graded on a scale from 1-5 (e.g. Lord have mercy = 1 point, katavasia = 5 points). Then they go around the circle. The campers can move around in the circle while the counsellor has their eyes closed. If the counsellor picks the same camper twice, then he/she has to chant/recite something. Chants/prayers cannot be repeated, i.e. if someone did it, you can’t do it again. So this continues until a camper is chosen and cannot think of anything to do; they will then be eliminated. Each person only gets 1 lifeline (ask friend, etc.). Game stops after two campers are left.
- Chanting showdown: Divide campers into two teams. Each team will pick a person (everyone must have a turn) and that person will step forward and go head to head with the rep from the other team. The counsellor will then sing a short part of a well-

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known chant (e.g. O Lord save Thy people...) or will sing a short segment of a chant and the campers have to name it (e.g. "we who mystically represent the cherubim") or say the beginning of a short prayer (e.g. Our father...). The camper who claps their hands first, get a chance to finish as much as he/she can of the hymn (e.g. "and bless Thine inheritance, granting to thy people...") or (e.g. Cherubic hymn) or (e.g. " who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name..."). If the camper is stuck, then the other team's camper can try to win the point. The team with the most points wins.

- ➔ Campers make up "Top 10 list of what a chanter should not be like": split campers into groups of 4-5; talk amongst each other and write up a list of what a chanter shouldn't be like. They pick a camper who will act out their list, as they read it and they present to the rest of the campers and counsellors. Points can be awarded for the most creative list.



LIVES OF THE SAINTS

Lesson: Lives of the Saints

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES FOR CAMPERS:

1. Learn about the life of St Thomas the Apostle
 2. Be able to recognize his icon and details from his life
 3. Be able to relate events in his life to major events in the church life (Christ's life)
 4. Know when his feast day is celebrated (October 6th) and his troparion
-

1. Introduction **discuss briefly with the campers the 3 following questions*

WHY do we have the lives of the saints? They are examples for us and a testament to the life of Christ and the love and mercy of God.

WHY is it important to learn their stories? To learn from them and develop a relationship with them; they can help us by interceding during our lives. We can also get strength and inspiration from their stories.

WHO is St Thomas? An apostle of Christ, one of the 12, he is also known as “doubting Thomas” to many. His story is a journey of a doubter to a man of faith.

2. Life of the Holy Apostle Thomas

OPTIONS

- Counsellors act out the story or tell story of Saint Thomas using props with narration
- Campers act out story, while counsellor narrates
- Counsellors read story
- Other (i.e. however you want)

LIFE OF SAINT THOMAS

Thomas was born in Galilee and by trade was a fisherman; his life was hard and full of struggles because of his poverty. So one day, this guy is preaching in Thomas' village; Thomas hears him and his heart is on fire with the words of the Saviour, so he follows him. Yet he was initially very cautious about all the miracles and everything that he witnessed with Christ.

Thomas (to himself): You know, that's another blind man is healed by Christ... this guy has everything going for Him. I wonder if this will last. You know what they say about Murphy's Law, right?



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Now Thomas was a good man, it is just that he found it hard to believe that all these amazing things were happening. After all, how often do you see a man rise from the dead to return alive to his two sisters (Lazarus)? We fast forward to the cross and burial of Christ. The apostles are now hiding in an upper room in the city, afraid to show their faces for fear of the Jews. Then the Resurrected Lord appears to them and brings them peace and comfort. Thomas however was not there with them; he comes in late.

Other disciples: *Where were you? You are late; fine time to be away!*

Thomas: *Why, what did I miss?*

Peter: *We have seen the Lord! He is Risen!!!! You just missed Him!*

Thomas: *yeah right! I don't believe you. Unless I place my hand in the imprint of his nails and his side, I will not believe!*

So it was, 8 days after the Resurrection, on a Sunday, that all the disciples were gathered together in one place and Jesus appears to them.

Thomas: *who's this guy... he looks familiar. WHOA!*

Jesus: *Come and see my hands and my side Thomas; do not doubt, but believe!*

Thomas: *My Lord and my God!*

Jesus: *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed.*

Thomas: *Forgive my unbelief, Lord.*

Now we jump ahead to the Ascension of Christ to heaven. The apostles have just witnessed Christ rise to heaven with the angels carrying Him up. They are standing around, waiting...

Peter: *So He said he was going to come again right?*

John: *yeah... I give it 10 minutes.*

Thomas: *maybe, but should we sit down in case it is longer?*

Suddenly, an angel appears and speaks to the apostles:

Angel: *NO PEOPLE! What are you doing?*

Peter: *We are waiting for the Lord to come again... duh!*

Angel: *poor silly men... mankind would truly be lost without Christ. No, no. You must go and preach the Gospel to all the ends of the earth!*

James: *really? Sweet... that'll only take us about a year, then we can come back here and keep waiting.*



LIVES OF THE SAINTS

Other disciples: *Yeah. We're down with that.*

Angel: *I said the ENDS OF THE EARTH... every place under heaven. Like the Maramac mountains, Chile, Toronto, Montreal and even Nicaragua.*

Thomas: *Chile? But we are not cold... I don't understand. Why do we have to go into cold water?*

Peter: *Water?! But, but I still can't walk on water yet... my training isn't finished.*

Angel: *don't get smart with me Peter. You are not going into cold water Thomas; Go! Preach to the ends of the earth!*

So the disciples talk among themselves and decide where each was going to go. Thomas gets the shortest straw and has to go to India and the other obscure lands in the East (remember the world is not yet well explored). So he sets out.

Thomas (on the road): *Indians! Aren't these people savages? What if they will eat me? Geez, I wish I had got Egypt or the Northern Roman empire of Britain; even CHILE would have been better than this!*

Thomas' Guardian Angel: *You know something? For an apostle of Christ, you sure do worry a lot. Have a little faith my friend.*

Thomas: *Easy for you to say; you can fly. Maybe if I stay for a couple of months in one place, then pretend I got lost or something, I could go back.*

Jesus (appears in a vision to Thomas on the road): *Thomas.*

Thomas (looking around): *yes?*

Jesus: *I'm over here.*

Thomas: *Oh. Hey! Am I ever glad you are here, Lord. I am so worried about my trip... I pulled the short straw... again. So I've got to go to India and Persia to the savages and tel...*

Jesus: *Do not be afraid, little one. I am with you always. I will send the Holy Spirit with you as I have done with all the others.*

Thomas: *Sweet. Ammunition! Can I have a legion of angels as well? Please?*

Jesus: *you won't need anything if you but trust in me. Go and fear no more. I will help you in all you do. There is a King in India, Gundafor, who wants to build a splendid palace for himself, as a monument to his rule. He will soon ask Abban the merchant to find him a master architect; one that can build such buildings as the roman emperors have. So you will be that architect for him and build him his palace in heaven. Do not fear; all will be taken care of.*

With those words, Jesus disappears, leaving Thomas greatly reassured.

Thomas: *So all I have to do is build this king Gun... gundofolos... gundafilar...*



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Thomas' guardian angel: *Gundafor! Were you not paying attention?*

Thomas: *thanks. Gundafor. Anyways, so this king wants a palace and I will build him one in heaven. Wait a minutes... does he know that i'm going to build it in heaven? Well, whatever. Christ said He would take care of everything! Now I need to find this Abban merchant guy.*

So Thomas continues on his journey and soon meets Abban the merchant. Christ also appears and sells Thomas as a servant to Abban for 3 pounds of silver, telling him that Thomas is a builder by trade. When Abban asks Thomas if he is really a slave, Thomas answers him:

Thomas: *Yes, I am His slave. He is my Lord and in His compassion, He paid a tremendous sum as a ransom for me.*

Abban is satisfied and they set out to the city of the king. Abban presents Thomas to the king, saying that he is a master builder, fit to serve a king. The king is delighted and immediately takes Thomas to the place where the palace will be built. It is a beautiful place, with springs of water and large trees; many flowers and rolling hills.

King Gundafor: *You must draw up a plan for my palace and it should be done in 3 years. I must go off to fight a war, but when I come back, I want it finished.*

So Thomas draws up a detailed plan of the palace that he will build and shows it to the king who is very pleased and gives Thomas great sums of gold, silver, wheat, wine, oil and everything else that would be needed to begin construction right away! So the king leaves for his expedition and anticipating that Thomas will begin work immediately.

Thomas does begin his work; he goes to the construction site and begins to distribute all the wealth the king gave him to the poor. He preaches the gospel of Christ and converts and baptizes many people.

When two years have passed, the king sends messengers to Thomas to ask how his palace is coming along; Thomas sends back a reply:

Messengers (speaking to King Gundafor): *Your master builder was pleased to hear from you, O King. He says that all that is left is the roof.*

King Gundafor: *Excellent! I am so excited... we must send him much more gold, so he can build me the most magnificent roof under heaven! Hurry and take him this money!*



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So the king sends Thomas more money, with instructions to build the roof as quickly as possible. Upon receiving the gold, Thomas thanks God.

Thomas: *Awesome! We were starting to run low. You know, Jesus, I really didn't believe you'd help me. Why do I always doubt you? I need to have stronger faith... like John or Peter. But this huge amount of money will feed many of the poor of this kingdom! By the way, have you figured out how you are going to save me if the king comes home? He expects an earthly palace, but will not be able to see what I have built for him. Maybe I should make him a small model?*

Jesus: *Do not be troubled Thomas. Just trust in me.*

Thomas: *ok, Lord. It's you and me.*

Guardian Angel: *Thomas, he's got your back, no worries. Now let's go feed some hungry stomachs!*

So Thomas continues to distribute the money to the poor and needy of the kingdom and to preach the Word of the Gospel. However, one day, word reaches the king that Thomas has not even broken ground on the construction site.

Messenger: *My lord! I have an urgent issue that requires your immediate attention! Your master builder has not built you anything! He gives away all the money and food that you gave him to build your palace! He does nothing all day except go around and preach about some new God and work magic. I doubt if the man has even broken a sweat. Although his healing the leper trick is kind of cool. We even asked him to raise a dead man and he did it yeste....*

King: *WHAT?!*

Messenger: *It's all true. There is no new palace in your kingdom... but he has improved the economy in a way... less annoying poor and sick people now, my lord.*

King: *BRING THIS MAN TO ME AT ONCE! I will learn from him whether this is true or not.*

So soldiers went to fetch Thomas and bring him before the king. They seize Thomas and bind him and travel back to the king.

Thomas (on the road to the king): *Lord, you and me... right? Don't forget now!*

Jesus: *I am with you Thomas. Don't doubt me.*

Guardian Angel: *didn't I tell you He was here? He's been with you this whole time; faith my friend.*

They reach the place where the king is and Thomas is brought before him.



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King: *Have you built me a palace? I am anxious for a report.*

Thomas: *Yes my king. It is magnificent and beautiful.*

King (wishing to trap Thomas): *then you must show it to me right away.*

Thomas: *Oh... well you can't see it in this life, king. You have to die first, because I built it for you in heaven.*

The king is furious. He thinks Thomas is trying to make a fool of him, so he throws him in jail as well as Abban the merchant.

King Gundafor: *Throw them both in jail and let them rot there until we decide how to kill them! Perhaps we should flay their flesh and burn them alive! Or use that new Chinese water torture method... it has worked very well in this last war.*

Thomas and Abban are thrown in jail.

Abban (speaking to Thomas): *you fool! Why did you pretend to be an architect? You deceived both me and the king and now we will both die! Because of you, I will suffer a horrible death.*

Thomas: *Do not fear; my Lord will save us, for I HAVE built a palace for the King. He just can't see it until he dies, because it is in heaven.*

Thomas' Guardian Angel: *Yeah, don't worry. You'll be out of here really soon... I give it maybe 24 hours, tops.*

Abban (to Thomas): *did you say something? I thought i heard you interrupt yourself.*

Thomas: *Just get some rest my friend, you are very tired.*

Thomas (to his Angel): *He can't see you?*

Thomas' Guardian Angel: *Go to sleep; you need your rest as well.*

That night, as Thomas and Abban lay in prison, the king's brother Gad falls ill and dies. The king is so sad that he forgets all about Thomas and Abban and cries and mourns for his brother all night.

But the angel of the Lord takes up Gad's soul to heaven, showing it all the places where he can live. There are many palaces and castles, brilliant in their splendour. The angel asks Gad which one would he like to live in, for Gad had been a good man.

Angel: *In which of these would you like to live?*

Gad: *I don't know... there are so many of equal beauty and size... I can't pick just one!*

They see one after another until finally Gad said: STOP!



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Gad: *That one! I want that one! It is so beautiful; if I could only live in but a small corner of this palace, I would need nothing else.*

Angel: *ummm, you can't live here.*

Gad: *Why not?*

Angel: *do you remember that builder that your brother threw in jail yesterday?*

Gad: *oh yes! The faker...*

Angel: *see, he's actually not a faker. He built this palace that you are staring at right now. I know his guardian angel very well. I saw him bringing up to heaven bricks and beautiful stones and things for this palace for the last three years. It's no joke.*

Gad: *seriously? We all thought he was a fake.*

Angel: *well, he isn't.*

Gad: *if what you are saying is true, then let me go back to the world!*

Angel: *so you want to tell your brother the truth?*

Gad: *No. I want to buy the palace from him. I must go back!*

Angel: **Sigh* Alright. Go back, but you tell him about Thomas, and then you can ask him if you can buy this palace from him.*

So the angel returns Gad's soul to his body and he rose to life. He quickly runs to his brother King Gundafor.

Gad: *My brother, if you love me you will give me what I ask.*

King Gundafor: *Gad, I thought you had died! Ask me anything on this earth brother and I will give it to you. I am so happy you have returned to us!!!*

Gad: *Am I ever glad you said that last bit. Well, remember that palace that Thomas built you? I want it.*

King Gundafor: *I think you need to lie back down to sleep and get some rest. Thomas didn't build anything for me. That thief gave all my money away instead of building my palace.*

Gad: *But you are wrong!!! I saw it in heaven with my own eyes and I want it! Do not refuse me.*

The king becomes troubled and stops speaking. He thinks to himself that perhaps Thomas really has built him a palace in heaven, after all, his brother has seen it and has described in perfect detail the plans that Thomas drew up for him 3 years ago. So he speaks to his brother again.

King Gundafor: *Did Thomas really build me a palace?*



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Gad: *Yes. Truly there is none like it; it is so beautiful! I saw it and asked the angel if I could but live in a small corner of it, but he didn't allow it because it is for you. So I ask you again... can I have it?*

King Gundafor: *My brother, remember that I promised you anything on earth... but since this palace is in heaven, I don't have to give it to you. But here is what I will say. Let us free Thomas and he will build you a palace of your own.*

This answer pleases the Gad and quickly they both go to the prison to free Thomas.

Guard 1 (yawning): *day and night, night and day and for what? To guard two dead men?*

Guard 2: *they're not dead yet, and unless you want to take their place, we're staying here.*

Guard 3: *I just heard some news, lads. The king's brother who died last night has just come back to life. He's been with the king for almost 2 hours now.*

Guard 1 (another yawn): *well isn't that nice... maybe the king will remember these two guys and kill them so we can get some sleep. I hope he won't forget they are here.*

Guard 2: *you can ask him yourself in a minute because I just heard the trumpet announcing him. He's coming here!*

King Gundafor: *Guards! Where is the prisoner Thomas?*

Guard 1: *can we kill him now, my lord?*

Guard 2: *yes, Sire. Everything is ready for the Chinese torture as you ordered.*

Guard 3: *Oh by the way, congratulations on the recovery of your brother, my lord.*

King Gundafor (getting impatient): *bring me the two prisoners!*

Guard 1 (grinning): *right away my king!*

Thomas' Guardian Angel: *Wake up gentlemen...*

So Thomas and Abban are brought to the king rather roughly by the guards, who still think that they will be tortured and killed. Upon seeing Thomas enter the room, the king rushes up to greet the apostle and falls at his feet, begging his forgiveness.

Guard 1 (whispering to guard 2): *am I dreaming or did the king just kneel to this man?*

Guard 2: *shut up or we will be killed instead of them!*

King Gundafor: *Thomas, forgive my unbelief! My brother Gad just came back from heaven to beg a palace of me and I could not believe my ears until he recounted to me the palace and it*



LIVES OF THE SAINTS

was exactly according to the plan you had drawn up for me 3 years ago... down to the last detail!

Thomas: *O king, God hears your repentance and forgives you. I wish I could show you the palace, but I'd have to kill you to do that... so that doesn't really work. When you pass onto the next life in eternity, then you will see it for yourself. Believe my words and don't doubt me.*

Thomas' Guardian Angel (whispering to Thomas): *You know something? You are starting to get the hang of this 'faith' thing.*

Then Thomas begins to preach to the king and all his court about the kingdom of God and they come to believe in Christ and are baptized that very day. Thomas also begins work on a second palace for the king's brother. He stays with them for a time and then travels throughout India preaching the gospel and the one true faith to the Indian people. He does many miracles and wonders and many believe and are baptized.

During this time while Thomas is continuing his preaching in India, the most holy Mother of God falls asleep in the Lord. Now remember, that many of the apostles are in faraway lands. But the clouds and angels of heaven catch them up and transport them back to Gethsemane to the bier of the Theotokos. Thomas is also caught up, but he does not make it on time for the burial. He arrives 3 days late.

Thomas (speaking to the angel): *hurry up or i'll be late again! I missed one death, burial and resurrection. I can't miss the burial of our Lady!*

Thomas (a couple of minutes later): *can we go any faster?!!!*

Finally Thomas arrives at the tomb, only to see it sealed and all the faithful mourning around it.

Thomas: *Drat! (looks at the angel) Are you new at this, cause i'm sure you could have gone faster!*

Suddenly, Thomas is caught up again by the cloud and transported to a place high above the tomb of the Theotokos. He can see everything from this view and suddenly he spots her body being translated to heaven. He calls out to her:

Thomas: *where are you going Mary?*

Mary (undoing her sash, she gives it to Thomas): *Take this my friend.*

Thomas: *Thank you. Wait... come back! Oh man, she's gone! I can't see her anywhere... Lord, why was I late?*



LIVES OF THE SAINTS

The angel brings Thomas back to the ground and he sits down on a stone and weeps because he was not there to see her when she died.

Thomas: *Am I not an apostle? Are we not all preaching the same thing? Maybe God isn't happy with my work in India; I probably could have trusted him more. Was my faith too poor? Was my work not good enough?*

James: *what is that in your hand Thomas?*

Thomas: *this? *sniff* *sniff* Oh, the Theotokos gave it to me as I saw her going to heaven. Please, can we open the tomb so that I can say goodbye to her.*

The other apostles do as Thomas requests and open the tomb. But her body was not there! All that was left was the sash or veil that she gave to Thomas. All the people rejoiced at this miracle and were much comforted. The veil remains to this day as a reminder and a help to the Orthodox Christians.

Thomas' Guardian Angel: *Don't you see Thomas? If you had not arrived late, no one would have known that after she died, her soul AND her body were both taken up to heaven. Christ honoured his earthly mother by receiving her soul himself and taking it up to heaven... I was worshipping at her funeral and I saw all of this.*

Thomas: *You were there? What was it like?*

Thomas' Guardian Angel: *She looked so peaceful and angelic. They made a procession from her house to the tomb; she carried the flowers from heaven that Gabriel had given her as a promise when he told her that she would fall asleep soon.*

Thomas: *flowers from heaven?*

Thomas' Guardian Angel: *yes. But there was something else too. A Jewish priest saw the procession and he wished to turn over the casket so her body would fall onto the ground, but as he pushed his way through the crowd and reached to do it, one of the angels took a sword and cut off his hands. He was so scared!*

Thomas: *what happened then???*

Thomas' Guardian Angel: *Well, he believed and was healed.*

Thomas: **sniff *sniff* Oh Lord, forgive me. I didn't know you were using me to show your power.*

As for Thomas, he returned to India... the long way... and continued his preaching. He converted many people, including the wives of two powerful kings and warlords. This angered them and they arrested Thomas and commanded 5 soldiers to take him up on a mountain and kill him.



LIVES OF THE SAINTS

Thomas (praying): *Lord, it is about time I saw you again. All this preaching caught up with me... I am tired and am anxious to be with you again. Please help the flock here in India and protect those that I am leaving behind. As Thy slave did you sell me that fateful day to Abban and now, free me this day by allowing my martyrdom.*

Jesus: *Come Thomas, come to that rest that you have earned, my beloved disciple.*

The holy Apostle Thomas was run through with 5 spears and gained a crown of martyrdom on October 6. His body was buried in the city of Mylapore in India and many miracles have been performed at his grave.

3. Troparion of St Thomas **pass out troparion and discuss how it portrays his life*

Troparion of St Thomas (tone 2)

Thou was a disciple of Christ and one of the Twelve, and by thy unbelief didst proclaim Christ's Resurrection. By touch thou was assured of His holy Passion, O glorious Apostle Thomas. Pray to Him to grant us peace and mercy.

4. Icons of Thomas **pass around icons pertaining to his life and point out the parts of his life*

5. Discussion **what did the campers like best about his life? Did they find his story familiar (doubting or faith)? Etc...*

Lesson: Icons Explained



Lesson: Icons Explained

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES FOR CAMPERS:

- Teach the campers why icons are important and why they have a place in the church
- Learn about symbolism in an icon
- Be able to “read” an icon, through examining details (i.e. clothing, items held, the scenery)
- Become familiar with popular icons of the church (Major Feast days, Theotokos, etc.)
- Encourage the campers to foster an appreciation for the sensory elements of Orthodoxy

1. Icon introduction

WHY ICONS? **have campers discuss this question*

Why do we have icons? Saint John of Damascus said: “The Icon is made for the remembrance of past events, such as miracles or good deeds, in order that glory, honour, and eternal memory may be given to those who have struggled valiantly. They assist the increase of virtue that evil men might be put to shame and overthrown, and they benefit generations to come, that by gazing upon such images we may be encouraged to flee evil and desire good.

The chief task of the icon is to proclaim the wonder and mystery of Christ, the Theotokos and the saints, and yet at the same time, to remind us they were human like we are, and to call us to the same spiritual perfection which Christ’s incarnation allows us to seek. They are windows to heaven. Icons are so important in the life of the church, that they even had a council (7th ecumenical) to establish that the veneration of icons was proper and pleasing to God! Many of the early Christians did not read, so they depicted stories of the saints in pictures instead of just in books.

FIRST ICONS OF THE THEOTOKOS **pass around the two icons by St Luke and of him painting*

St. Luke is credited with painting four icons of the Virgin Mary and over 70 other icons. This was done while Mary was yet living, and Our Lady was said to have stated upon seeing them, “My grace and power are with these image”. (See Icon made by St Luke). The four icons still survive to this day. One is in Greece [Theotokos Mega Spiliotissa or Our Lady of the Great Cave], one in Jerusalem (St Mark’s Monastery), one is in Syria (Sydnaya Monastery) and the last one is rumoured to be in Cyprus [Panagia Kykkou] (Kykko monastery).

OPTIONAL INFORMATION (icons in the church)

CERTAIN ICONS IN THE CHURCH

The Church is an icon of the Body of Christ. It is the Kingdom of Heaven as it already exists on earth, and anticipates its coming in glory, so we see all kinds of icons and saints.

Iconostasis – represents the connection between heaven and earth. The Priest (representing Christ) passes through during the liturgy, uniting heaven and earth. The arrangement of icons: on either side of the Royal Doors are icons of Christ and the Theotokos. Going outwards, we have St John the Baptist on the side of Christ and the Patron Saint of the church on the side of the Theotokos. The farthest icons from the royal doors are the two Archangels, Michael and Gabriel on the deacons’ doors. The saints and angels depicted on the iconostasis are there to remind us that we are not praying alone and in vain, but that we are surrounded by the saints and the heavenly host at every liturgy.

Lesson: Icons Explained



Pantocrator – At the top of the church is the dome and smack in the centre of the dome is the Pantocrator, also known as Christ enthroned. It is bigger than big. Sometimes it is over 50 feet! It signifies Christ as the Creator and Ruler of all looking down on us worshipping creatures. As Christ is the head of the Church, so everything comes after him. He is often supported by angels and near Him are the prophets, the apostles (including the Evangelists, who spread the Gospel to the four corners of the earth) and the martyrs, hierarchs, and ascetics.

Platytera – The name Platytera means literally, "More Spacious than the Heavens". This icon is HUGE and generally high above the altar in a significantly prominent position. This icon reveals a lot about Mary; it shows that she is made significant by the One she bore hence Christ is in the centre of the icon. He sometimes is sitting on her, showing that she provides the throne. She is in the background, revealing her humility. Her arms are always out in an eager embrace; she is waiting to help bring mankind to her Son. Sometimes she is seated on a throne (chair), symbolism her as the Queen of Heaven.

2. Teach about symbolism in icons

SYMBOLS IN ICONS **Either use chart; show examples of each type and point out elements to the campers*

Holy icons are painted according to tradition. The Church says that icons should be painted “as they were painted by the ancient and holy iconographers.” Early tradition established important characteristics of saints depicted in icons. Colors, poses, and inscriptions are usually dictated by tradition to conform to the original.

Icon depicting	Usually have	Icon Example
a Saint	Halo, a detail about their life	Simeon (stylite) Mary Magdelene (myrrh), Elias (raven)
a bishop	Vestments, crown, holding the gospel book	Nicholas, David of Wales, Basil the Great
a Priest	Vestments, blessing hand	Theodore
a Deacon	Deacon’s stole, censor	St Stephen, Lawrence
Royalty (king, queen, etc)	Crown, richly coloured robes	Constantine and Helen

Lesson: Icons Explained



a Monastic	Black robes and habit, a schema, very little clothes	Cuthbert, Hilda, Anthony
a Warrior or Soldier	Armour, can be on a horse, weapon of some sort	St George, Menas, Demetrius
a Prophet	a scroll, Jewish robes	St Elias, Jeremiah, Moses
a Martyr	Red robe, holding a cross	Agatha, Irene, Mammis
a Virgin saint	White veil	Lucia
an Angel	Wings	Arch. Michael, Gabriel
a Doctor	Small box of medicine	St Panteleimon, Tryphon
an Iconographer	A paintbrush or icon	St Luke
a Hymnographer	A scroll with hymns	St Romanos

MEANING OF COLOURS IN ICONS **If time allows, cover this material (same way as symbolism)*

COLOUR	MEANING	USES	ICON EXAMPLE
GOLD	Divine nature of God, radiance	Halos, backgrounds	Pantocrator 2 & 3, Resurrection 3
PURPLE	Royalty, wealth, power, dignity	Robes of emperors, kings, queens, priests	Theotokos (full figure), Theotokos enthroned 1, Constantine
RED	Victory, the Resurrection, eternal life, blood, sacrifice, fire, the Last Judgement	Christ and martyrs robes, the wings of the Seraphim, red backgrounds	St George, St Elias, Panteleimon, Stephen, Christ walking on the water,
WHITE	Divine light, heaven, holiness, purity, simplicity	Swaddling clothes of babies, shrouds of the dead, robes of angels, veils of virgins	Ladder of divine ascent, Martyrs of China, Lucia, Irene, Procession with Epitaphios 2, Transfiguration 1, Resurrection 1

Lesson: Icons Explained



BLUE	Heaven, infinity, the Mother of God, the sky, truth, humility	Robes of Christ and the Theotokos, the sky	Christ (full figure), Theophany 1, Theotokos 3, Wedding at Cana
GREEN	Life, youth, hope, fertility	The earth, robes of the martyrs	Demetrius 2, Panteleimon, John the Baptist 1
BROWN	Dust, earthy and perishable things, human nature, wood	Soil, rocks, buildings, robes of ascetics	John the Baptist 3, Seraphim of Sarov 3, Makarious the Roman 2, Moses the Ethiopian
BLACK	Evil, death, mystery	Tombs, caves, habit of monastics, Hades beneath the cross	Resurrection, burial of St Ephraim the Syrian, Gerasimos, Monastic Angel, Resurrection 2

SCENERY IN AN ICON **Show examples to illustrate for the campers*

The "scenery" in the icon has its meaning in the larger context of the icon as well. Architecture and landscape serve tie the icon to a specific event in time. An event that happened indoors will have buildings in the background with a cloth draped over them, whereas buildings without a cloth mean it happened outside. There can be trees or rocks, pillars or other things to show where the event happened or to give context to a special time in the saints' life.

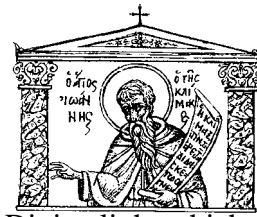
(e.g. Theophany 1, Healing of the demoniacs, Samaritan woman, Deposition from the cross 2, Jonah 2, Seraphim of Sarov 2, Mary of Egypt, Stylite saints, Innocent of Alaska, Peter denying Christ, Prodigal Son, Burial of Ephraim the Syrian, Finding of the Cross, Charity of St Nicholas)

PHYSICAL FEATURES OF A SAINT **If time allows, cover this material*

The physical features show a special spiritual language.

- The forehead on many icons is often high and convex, to express the power of the spirit and wisdom. (e.g. Nicholas 1, Stylianos)
- Ascetics, monks and bishops are given deep wrinkles in their cheeks. (e.g. John the B 3, Onophorios, Anthony the Great, Mary of Egypt)
- The nose of the icon is long and thin, which gives it a sense of gracefulness, it no longer smells the odours of the world, but rather the sweet incense of Heaven. (e.g. Basil the Great, Tryphon)
- The lips of the icon are closed expressing true contemplation, which requires total silence.
- The eyes are large and pronounced, usually gazing into Heaven. (e.g. Gregory of Nyssa, Seraphim 3)
- The hands are either holding the instrument of the depicted saint's salvation, raised in a work of mercy, or giving a blessing. The blessing hand, when depicted, always blesses with the fingers formed in the monogram of the name of Christ, ICXC, the way an Orthodox priest blesses. (e.g. Noah, Eleftherios, Neektarios, Theodora, Parasceve)

Lesson: Icons Explained



- The feet, if depicted, walk in the way of God. The halo symbolizes the Divine light which radiates from the person who lives in close communion with God.
- 3 golden stars on the Theotokos icons, one on the forehead and one on each shoulder of the Most Holy Theotokos. These stars symbols of her virginity. She was a virgin before, during, and after the Nativity of Christ. The three stars are also a symbol of the Holy Trinity. Sometimes the third star is covered by the figure of the Christ Child the second person of the Holy Trinity. (e.g. Theotokos the gate of Paradise, Platytera, Theotokos 1 (alone))

3. Activity/game **select one or more of the following options (if time allows)*

- ➔ “Who am I?”: Campers have icons taped behind their backs; using yes/no questions, they try to discover who they are. The icons will have the name of the saint.
- ➔ Quick on the draw: Campers are split into teams. The counsellor/CIT will flash an icon and the team (or team member) that claps their hands first gets to guess who the saint was for 1 point. They get 2 points if they can name the saint. If the team is unable to get the right answer, the other team can steal. If this becomes too chaotic, the campers in each team have to go one at a time. The team with the most points wins.
- ➔ Circle Game: Everyone gets a nametag with a category of saint or the name of a saint (on nametags) and then stands in a circle, with one person in the middle. The counsellor calls out either the name of a saint (who is in one of the categories) or a category of a saint (e.g. bishops). Everyone who is in that category has to switch places while the person in the middle, tries to get out of the middle. If he/she succeeds in taking another campers spot, then they are free and the other camper is in the middle.
- ➔ Read the Icon: Campers are split into two teams; each team picks a representative to go first (campers must take turns and each camper must go at least once). Standing apart from their teams, the two campers face the counsellor/CIT who will warn them that they have 15 seconds to read this icon. Then they will show the two campers an icon and the campers have to clap their hands fastest to beat the other camper. The camper who claps the quickest has 15 seconds to say everything that they can about the icon (e.g. what kind of saint, man/woman, name of saint, something about their life, etc.). The answers will be on the back of the icon. If the camper misses something, the other team can steal (use discretion on this point). The team with the most points wins.
- ➔ “What’s going on?”: Campers are split into 3-4 teams. Each team gets an icon depicting an event in the life of a saint (or Christ). They have 3 minutes to brainstorm what they think is happening and then they must present to the rest their thoughts. The other teams get the “score-card” for the team presenting and they ‘grade’ them. Team with most points wins; in

Lesson: Icons Explained



the event of a tie, a sudden-death showdown will occur. *Optional:* Teams can also act out the event instead of reading.

Lesson: Theotokos: Purity, Obedience, Prayer (Acronym “P.O.P.”)

Synopsis of her life

Overview: Birth and Childhood with Joachim and Anna → Entrance to the Temple → Life in the Temple → Betrothal and the Budding Staff → Annunciation Scandal → Nativity: The Withered Hand → Flight to Egypt: The 2 Robbers, Gestus and Dismas → Jesus’ Childhood → Wedding at Cana → Jesus’ Passion and Crucifixion → Resurrection and Ascension → Dormition(death) → 3rd Day Resurrection → Icons and Miracles

1. Birth and Childhood with Joachim and Anna

-born like everyone, no difference

-was NOT born without original sin (Orthodox understand original sin (this is a Catholic term) to mean that we inherit the consequences of Adam and Eve’s fall; that is the leaning towards sinfulness and that all human beings must die --- Catholic Church understands original sin to mean that sin is transmitted through the sexual act and therefore sex is looked upon negatively ---the Orthodox Church believes that the sexual act is good when within marriage between one man and one woman as set out in Genesis 1&2 --- this difference was cemented by the Roman Catholic Church at a council in the 1800’s called Vatican I because of not being able to understand how a mere woman who had original sin (their concept of it) could bear and hold within herself Christ the Lord)

-9 months old when first walked; she only took seven steps towards her mother

-her mother, Anna, prophesied at that moment that Mary would not walk again until she went to be dedicated to the Temple and so Virgin Mary didn’t walk until 3 years of age (all this was because of the promise that the deeply pious Joseph and Anna had made to God when He finally gave them a child in their elderly years---this promise was to dedicate their 1st child to the Lord, so they hired young girls (virgins also) to carry Mary around and entertain her so that her next steps after these first ones would be to God in the Temple

2a) Entrance to the Temple

THEOTOKOS: Purity, Obedience, Prayer (Acronym "P.O.P.")

- they decided to bring her to the Temple at 3 yrs. instead of 2yrs. old so that she would not turn back to them
- had a beautiful procession with lots of candles and family and young virgins from their house to the Temple
- put on steps that led from the women's section to the priests' court (where they burned incense) and she skipped happily up those, as well as, more stairs leading to the Holy of Holies (the altar area) --- St. Zachariah (the husband of Mary's aunt, Elizabeth, who was quite old at the time) was waiting for her --- he led her into the Holy of Holies where only the High Priest could enter (He would offer sacrifice for the sins of the people and it was only once in his lifetime)
- Anna and Zachariah exchange beautiful conversation where they both prophesy and show that they know of the holy purpose of the Virgin Mary, that is, to become the Birth-giver of God

2b) Life in the Temple

- prayed most of the time and worked in the temple
- was fed some bread from heaven (just like the Israelites in the desert in the Old Testament) by an angel after the 9th hour which was after 3pm (same hour Christ gave up His spirit when He was crucified)
- the Theotokos was soft-spoken, medium tall in height, had a beautiful and serene face, gentle manner, no one ever saw her angry, she was prayerful and calm, generous and concerned about others
- gave the food the priests brought her to the poor

3. Betrothal and the Budding Staff

- at age 12 or 14 had to leave Temple because couldn't have a girl in the altar area who would be having her menstrual cycle soon (no one with an issue of blood, male or female, could be near or touch the holy things) so they had to betroth her before it began
- chose her betrothed (fiancée) in a miraculous way
- all unmarried men (single or widowed) were told by Zachariah (an angel had told him to do this) to bring their walking staffs to the priest at the Temple
- he put them on the table (altar) in the Holy of Holies where Mary stayed
- the high priest prayed before the door to the sanctuary and so did the Virgin Mary (as certain icons have shown) behind the altar
- the next day, the High priest Zachariah (as the angel said) brought out the staffs and gave them back to their owners
- Joseph's had been forgotten and being humble he did not ask for it
- no sign appeared as the angel had indicated in the vision to Zachariah
- Zachariah went back into the Holy of Holies to offer incense and pray and the angel told him that he had forgotten one staff which belonged to Joseph
- the promised sign would happen when it was returned to him
- he gave it to Joseph and lo and behold the staff budded at the top and flowered
- this budding of Joseph's staff was also prefigured in the Old Testament when Aaron's rod budded also

4. The Scandal of the Annunciation

- the scribe Annas had come to visit Joseph and asked him why he hadn't seen him for awhile
- Joseph told him that he was tired from his work and travelling not wanting to draw attention to the fact that Mary was 'with child'
- Annas turned and saw that the Virgin Mary was pregnant and reported to the priest that Joseph had defiled the Virgin and tried to hide it
- so the priest accused Joseph who swore that he had never touched her at all (he broke down and cried when they kept on accusing him and told him to give up the Virgin Mary)
- as was the custom when there was a dispute over something that couldn't be proven, the priest decided to give them both (Joseph and Mary) the water of the Lord's testing which would show whether they had sinned
- this is talked about in Num.5:11-31 and was set up by the Lord so that He would reveal who was lying about a particular matter and who was not by
- both of them drank it (Mary with great confidence) and went out in separate directions to the hill country
- returning at the appointed time, all the people marvelled that they weren't harmed and wondered about the matter
- Joseph took Mary home rejoicing and glorifying God

5. Nativity: The Withered Hand

- happened in the year 6 or 7 BC since Christ couldn't have been born before Herod died (which was in 4 BC) and the little children were slaughtered by him
- Joseph's sons came with them including James whom the Virgin Mary had looked after when she first came to Joseph's home
- Joseph couldn't find a place to stay at the inn but did find a shepherd's cave
- this cave was used to house the sacrificial animals for the Temple sacrifices when not grazing
- after leaving his sons with the Virgin, Joseph went into the district to find a midwife since that's who helped women give birth in those times (no hospitals)
- Joseph actually met 2 midwives
- the 1st was Zelome who was an older woman
- Joseph told her of the miraculous way Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit and took her to the cave
- when they approached the cave, they saw a luminous cloud over the cave
- the cloud disappeared and a great light shone in the cave so that no one could bear it
- gradually it disappeared and they saw the infant Jesus nursing at his mother's breast
- Zelome left the cave and met the 2nd midwife, Salome who was the first cousin of Mary (she was the daughter of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist and the sister of Mary's mother, Anna)
- Zelome exclaimed that she had seen a virgin who had just given birth to a Son (against the laws of nature)

THEOTOKOS: Purity, Obedience, Prayer (Acronym “P.O.P.”)

- when she came to the cave’s entrance and saw the Virgin and Christ Child, the old woman, Salome, expressed her disbelief at this and said (just like Thomas) that she wouldn’t believe unless she had proof
- she stretched out her hand to examine the Theotokos like midwives would normally do and God punished her impudence and disbelief
- her hand withered up!
- Salome believed then but groaned bitterly because of her withered hand
- she beseeched the Lord to heal her until an angel stood by her and told her to reach her withered hand out to the Holy Infant and carry Him
- right away her hand was healed and she shouted with joy
- Salome was commanded by a voice not to reveal these things until Jesus had come to Jerusalem
- the Virgin Mary, a virgin before she gave birth to Christ, remained a virgin during His delivery and after His Birth for her entire life; she had no other children with Joseph or any other man
- that’s why there are 3 stars on her icons, 2 on her shoulders and 1 on her forehead to signify her virginity before, during and after the birth of Jesus
- Prophecy of Isaiah: when Symeon was helping to translate the Old Testament into Greek, he came across a prophecy of the prophet Isaiah that said a virgin would give birth to a son and he would be called Emmanuel
- he didn’t believe it to be possible and changed it to ‘a woman’ but an angel told him that it was to be a ‘virgin’ and to write it like that
- to prove that the prophesy was correct the way it had been originally written, the angel told Symeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah born of a Virgin
- Symeon was the High priest who received Christ into the Temple, 40 days after His Birth and he died shortly afterwards

6. Flight to Egypt: The 2 Robbers, Gestus and Dismas

- after the Wise Men came to worship the Christ, God warned Joseph to take Mary and the Child and flee to Egypt to avoid Herod’s wrath
- on the road, there was an area infested with robbers so Joseph and the V. Mary decided to travel past it during the night
- as they were travelling past this area, they saw 2 of the thieves asleep in the road
- as well, there was a large number of them asleep close by
- Dismas was wakened up and came up to the Holy Family
- he looked to see what Mary was holding and seeing Jesus he said, “If God were to take human flesh, He would not be more beautiful than this child!”
- Gestus awoke also and wanted to wake up the others so they could rob them
- Dismas pleaded with him not to do that and promised to give him 40 drachmas; as a pledge to show that he would fulfill his promise, Dismas gave him his belt and kept Gestus silent
- the Holy Family passed by as a result without any harm
- the Theotokos was full of gratitude for this kindness and turned to Dismas and said, “My Child will reward thee richly for having spared Him this day. The Lord God will receive thee to His right hand and grant thee pardon of thy sins.”

THEOTOKOS: Purity, Obedience, Prayer (Acronym “P.O.P.”)

-these 2 thieves are the same 2 thieves that were on either side of Jesus when He was crucified; Gestus was on the left and Dismas was on the right hand of Christ

7. Jesus Childhood with the Theotokos

-would walk with him and talk with Him about God

-when He was an older child and in His teens, Jesus would talk about many things of His Father in Heaven and of things to come; so the Theotokos had prior knowledge of what would happen to her son and thought about them quietly in her heart; she did not discuss them with other people

8. At the Wedding at Cana: Intercession

-this was the wedding of Simon the Zealot who became a disciple of Christ’s

-when the Theotokos heard that the bride and groom were running out of wine for the wedding feast, she turned to her son for help and persuaded him to help them even though it was not yet time for Him to begin His ministry

-He gave that help by turning water in to wine in the 6 water jars

-this showed how much He honoured his mother (parents), fulfilling the commandment to honour your parents

9. At Christ’s Passion and Crucifixion

-V. Mary was about 48 yrs. old at this time

-she knew from her study of the scriptures that her son was to suffer (knew this for most of her life with Jesus)

-was there with Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and the Apostle John the Divine

-felt such pain in her heart that it was as if a sword had pierced it (St. Symeon had foretold of this pain when Joseph and the V. Mary brought Jesus to enter the Temple at 40 days old; Virgin felt a little of this pain when Jesus was lost at the Temple when He was 12 yrs. old)

-spoke of her grief and bewilderment at all the things that were happening to her Son and was greatly comforted by His words to her from the cross (if interested in the dialogue between them, read p.357-360 of “The Life of the Virgin Mary and Theotokos”; it’s extremely touching and you can see the great strength of her faith)

-given to St. John for him to look after her as if he was her own son

10. At Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension

-was one of the myrrh-bearing women at the Resurrection

-was the first one to whom Christ showed that He had resurrected (not Mary

Magdalene—she was the second) ; in scripture, she was not mentioned as being first in

THEOTOKOS: Purity, Obedience, Prayer (Acronym "P.O.P.")

order to protect her from the Jews so that they would not harm her since she was Christ's mother and because people might think that what she saw (Christ resurrected) was suspicious, just a story or wishful thinking of a hysterical mother

- she was the one who told the Apostles and disciples of the Lord all the wondrous events that had happened and all the words that Christ had spoken to her from the beginning to the end of His life; she strengthened them about the truth of the tidings by Archangel Gabriel to her at the Annunciation and the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning her and the incorruptible birth of Jesus; she strengthened them also with the stories of Jesus when He was a child up to the time of His Baptism with John the Baptist
- after the Ascension of Christ, V. Mary would visit the places of Christ's Passion and pray there

11. Pentecost: She was there!

- was with the Apostles and disciples in the upper room and also had the Holy Spirit descend on her
- the Apostles chose lots as to where they would go to preach the Gospel and the Theotokos wanted to do the same in her desire to share all things about Christ her Son
- her lot was to Iberia which is the modern-day country of Georgia in southern Russia
- however, when she was ready to set out after Pentecost, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and told her that she needed to stay in Jerusalem and that she would go to Macedonia to preach on Mount Athos (in modern-day times, Athos is in Greece) later on
- 20 yrs. later (approx.) she set out to visit Lazarus (who had been raised by Christ after being dead 4 days) in Cyprus
- in fulfillment of the prophecy by the Archangel, her ship was blown off course in a violent storm and landed on the shores of Mt. Athos
- was at that time it was a pagan place with mainly virgins living on the mountain who were destined to become priestesses of the goddess Diana
- men could not enter on pain of death but lived on the peninsula around them
- there was a great earthquake and all the idols crashed down and broke and voices (demons from the idols) were heard telling the inhabitants to go to Cleme harbour and welcome Mary, the Mother of the Great God Jesus
- Mary preached to them all and they became Christian
- she is still the patron of the Holy Mountain of Athos and is the only woman allowed on the mountain since she requested of Jesus that it be filled with men seeking salvation through a life of prayer

12. Dormition: Confirmation of Her Intercessory Prayer

- was about 70 yrs. old when she died
- before Christ's Passion, she had asked Him if He would let her know 3 days before it was time to die
- Jesus told her that Archangel Gabriel would come with a palm branch from heaven and she would know that her time was soon
- he came with the palm when she was praying on the Mount of Olives (it was Friday)

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- the Virgin Mary wasn't afraid to die because she looked forward to being with her son Jesus and had been counselled by Jesus and the Archangel not to be afraid but rather joyful
- she wanted the Apostles to be there at her falling asleep and so God through His angels brought the Disciples miraculously from all over the earth
- the only one who wasn't brought was St. Thomas, who was in India at the time
- she prepared herself with prayer, said intercessory prayers for all the Christians in the world who call upon her name in the name of her Son, comforted and strengthened the Apostles and disciples there, and reassured the Apostles that though she would not be with them in the flesh anymore, she would be with them spiritually interceding for them and for all the Christians
- she counselled them not to be sad but joyful that she was going to her Son and God
- she lay down on her couch and beheld Jesus and the Heavenly Hosts coming
- she talked with Him, He comforted her and she gave her soul to Him at about the 3rd hour
- she felt no pain whatsoever just like she felt no pain when she gave birth to Christ
- there was a heavenly, sweet fragrance that is not found on earth that came from her body and many received healing from it
- her body was taken on a bier in a great procession with the palm branch that Gabriel had given her in front of it and the Apostles around it
- a luminous circular cloud hovered above it like a crown shining with a bright radiance
- there was ceaseless angelic singing also
- the Jews were attracted to this triumphant procession and came to see
- being stirred up by the jealousy of the Pharisees they tried to attack the bier but were blinded by the angelic hosts
- the bier and the Apostles were protected by the cloud which lowered over the bier and surrounded the faithful protecting them

- a Jewish priest, Athonios, moved by jealousy also, tried to attack the bier to cast the body of the Holy Mother to the ground
- an angel struck off his hands at the elbow and he fell to the ground crying out (his hands remained holding onto the bier)
- Athonios repented, confessed Jesus to be the Lord and Son of God and beseeched the Holy Mother to help him (as instructed by St. Peter)
- she healed his hands and he was baptized a little later on

13. Her 3rd Day Resurrection

- the Apostle Thomas was not brought to the Theotokos before she died since it was God's will that a more important truth be shown to the Christians of all ages
- Thomas was preaching in India at the time of the Dormition of the Theotokos
- 3 days after her death, Thomas was lifted up in a cloud and transported to a place in the air above the tomb of the Theotokos
- he saw her body being lifted up (translated) into heaven
- he cried out to her, "Where are you going, O all-holy one?"

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- she undid her cloth belt (cincture) from around her waist and gave it to Thomas saying, “Receive this, my friend.” and then she was gone.
- Thomas was saddened that he had not been there with the other apostles when she died and thought that maybe God was displeased with him concerning his preaching and didn’t think of him as being worthy like the other apostles
- he begged the apostles to open the tomb so he could venerate her remains and say goodbye
- they opened the tomb and found that her body was not there
- Thomas and all the Apostles venerated her burial clothes and prayed that God would reveal where she went
- after her disappearance, she appeared to them that night while they were having their customary meal together with a host of angels and said to the Apostles, “Rejoice, for I am with you all the days of your lives!”
- thus they all were convinced that she had resurrected just like her Son Jesus
- this also showed that Jesus was faithful to the commandment to ‘Honour your parents’ by giving her the honour of being the first, after Jesus, to resurrect

14. Icons and Miracles of the Theotokos

a) Miracle-working icon “Assuage my Sorrow”

The most ancient of the icons that carries this name was in Shklova in Mogilev Province. Where this miracle-working Icon was written is unknown: perhaps it was in the Russian Monastery on Mt. Athos or perhaps somewhere else. In a battle that took place in 1640 near Shklova, the soldiers of Tsar Michael Fyodorovitch defeated the Poles. In honor of this victory a copy of the miracle-working Image was translated by the Cossacks to Moscow and placed in the Church of St Nicholas in Zamoskovorechie (since demolished).

Apparently due both to a fire and to the many renovations of the church, the icon was forgotten for a time. Greatly neglected, it was carelessly left lying, in the bell tower. But the plentiful mercies manifested through it by the Mother of God forced the people to remember the forgotten icon.

Tradition relates that the first time this Icon was glorified was in the second half of the 18th century. The miraculous power of the Assuage my Sorrow Icon of the Theotokos was revealed in the following manner: a certain woman of noble extraction had long suffered from weakness in her hands and feet. In this case, physicians were of no help. In a vision, she was told to go to Moscow and pray before the icon of the Mother of God bearing the inscription Assuage my Sorrow; in the same vision, she was shown the Icon. Not finding that Icon in the church, she turned to the priest for help, who then brought all of the ancient icons down from the



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bell-tower. One of the icons actually bore the inscription Assuage my Sorrow. As soon as the woman saw the Icon she exclaimed:

It is she! It is she!

After a minute, the ailing woman felt so much stronger that she was able to stand and leave the church unaided.

This miracle occurred on January 25th (Julian Calendar), 1760. Since then, a Feastday in honor of the Assuage my Sorrow Icon has been observed. In the church of St Nicholas, the icon was installed in an appropriate place, and an altar was dedicated in its honor.

From all over the city, the faithful and suffering came to Zamoskovorechie to bow down before the newly-revealed icon, and Gods power was revealed in many other miracles. An especially great number of miracles happened during the plague epidemic of 1771. Many copies of the miraculous Icon were made and distributed throughout all Russia; in Moscow alone, four other icons bearing the same name were glorified by miracles.

Today, the miracle-working Assuage my Sorrow Icon rests in the Church of St Nicholas-in-Kuznetsy in Moscow.

b) Icon of the Mother of God Economissa

The Economissa (or Stewardess) Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos depicts the Mother of God seated on a throne, with Her Son on her left knee. St Athanasius of Mt Athos (July 5) stands on her right, holding a model of the Great Lavra. On her left is St Michael of Synnada (May 23). Two angels hold a crown above her head.

The Mother of God has been considered the Stewardess of the Holy Mountain ever since the tenth century when the Great Lavra was being built. St Athanasius of Mt Athos was abandoned by his monks because there was a shortage of food and money. He also left the half-built Lavra, and began walking toward Karyes, intending to ask for advice about whether or not to beg the emperor for the funds needed to complete the building. After about two hours, he saw a beautiful woman standing before him wearing a long blue veil.



"I know your sorrow," She said, "and I would like to help. Where are you going?"

St Athanasius explained everything that had happened, and She asked, "Have you deserted your monastery for a morsel of bread? Go back! You will have everything you need in abundance, if you do not abandon your monastery."

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"Who are you?" the astonished saint inquired.

"I am the Mother of your Lord," She replied.

St Athanasius hesitated to believe Her, afraid of being deceived by the Evil One. Then he asked Her how he could be sure that Her words were true.

"Do you see this rock?" she asked, pointing to the side of the path. "Strike it with your staff in the name of the Holy Trinity, and you will know who is speaking to you. Do not appoint a steward at any time, for from this time forward, I shall be the Stewardess of your monastery."

St Athanasius did as he was told, and the rock split open. A stream of water began to flow out of the crack. When he turned to face the Mother of God and to ask forgiveness for his doubt, She had disappeared.

Returning to the monastery, St Athanasius found all the storerooms filled to capacity with food, wine, and oil. The building was completed, and soon the Lavra was filled with monks once again.

To this day, the Lavra does not have a steward. There is, however, a monk who serves as an assistant steward to the Mother of God. The Economissa Icon rests on a throne in the narthex of the main church, and She remains the Stewardess of the Lavra. Pilgrims venerate the Icon before entering the side chapel with the saint's tomb.

The spring of St Athanasius still flows with healing water.

c) Paramythia (meaning calming down or restraining)



Tradition tells of this icon that the original expression on the faces of the figures and position of the bodies of Christ and the Blessed Virgin changed when the following strange miracle occurred: when pirates had secretly landed on the shore of the Monastery and were hiding, waiting for the gates to open in the morning in order to launch an attack, the Abbot, who had remained behind alone after the end of Matins in order to continue his prayer, heard these words from the icon of the Blessed Virgin "Do not open the gates of the Monastery today, but go up on the walls and drive away the pirates". As he turned to look, he saw the Holy child stretch out His hand and cover the mouth of His mother, saying "No, Mother, let them be punished as they deserve". But the Blessed Virgin, taking Her Son's hand in Hers and turning Her head a little to free her mouth, repeated the same words. This last arrangement of the figures has remained permanently on the icon. The monks, miraculously

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saved from the pirates, gave thanks to the Theotokos and named this icon “Paramythia”, which means “calming down” or “restrain”, words which equally convey the content of the miracle. The icon is a wall-painting and is on the right choir of the chapel named after it.

d) Theotokos of Tender Mercy (Eleusa)

The icons of the Tender Mercy type show Christ Child pressing his left cheek against His mothers right cheek. Here the Theotokos again represents the Church of Christ, displaying the fullness of love between God and man, a love that can only be achieved within the bosom of the Church, our Mother. Love here bridges heaven and earth, the things of God and the things of man; this union is expressed in the touching of the faces and the halos. The Theotokos is pensive, as she presses her Son to herself. She envisions His way of the cross, His life full of sufferings. Among the icons of this type, Our Lady of Vladimir is the one most widely known and loved by the faithful.



It is no accident that this very icon has become one of the greatest of Russias holy objects. There are several reasons for this, including its ancient origin, its attribution to the Evangelist Luke, and the numerous events related to its transfer from Kiev to Vladimir and later to Moscow, as well as the multiple instances of the delivery of Moscow from the plundering raids of the Mongol hordes. However, the very type of representation - the Tenderness Mother of God character evoked a positive response in the hearts of the Russian people. The concept of sacrificial service for the people has always been one that could be understood by, and was near and dear to, the Russians. The great grief felt by the Theotokos, who had brought her Son into this world of cruelty and sufferings, and her pain were very much in keeping with the innermost feelings of the Russian people.

e) Foundress (Ktitorissa)

When on one occasion the Arabs raided the Monastery, the deacon-Monk and vematars (the monk in charge of the sanctuary – vema – and, consequently, responsible for the sacred relics and other treasures kept there) managed to hide in the shaft below the altar (an ancient sacarium) a priceless icon of the Theotokos and a cross, placing before them a burning candle. The Monastery was looted and the



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monks taken prisoners to Crete. After 70 years, the deacon-monk, who was still alive, was released, and returned to the Monastery. He opened the well and found the icon and the cross upright on the surface of the water, while the candle was still burning. The icon is today kept on the synthronon of the sanctuary and is called the “Ktitorissa” (Foundress), perhaps because the finding of it is linked in some way with the building of the Monastery by the three brothers and founders of the Monastery Athanasius, Nicholas and Antony, who were monks there around the end of the 10th century.

f) Theotokos of Vladimir

The **Theotokos of Vladimir** (*Vladimirskaya*) is one of the most well-known Orthodox icons. It is presently located in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, Russia.



The Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God was painted by the Evangelist Luke on a board from the table at which the Savior ate together with His All-Pure Mother and Righteous Joseph. The Mother of God, upon seeing this image, exclaimed, "Henceforth, all generations shall call Me blessed. The grace of both My Son and Me shall be with this icon."

In the year 1131, the icon was sent from Constantinople to Rus to holy Prince Mstislav and was installed in the Devichi monastery in Vyshgorod, the ancient appanage city of the holy Equal of the Apostles Princess Olga.

The son of George Dolgoruky, St Andrew Bogoliubsky, brought the icon to the city of Vladimir in 1155 and installed it in the renowned Dormition cathedral which he built. At this time the icon received its name of *the Vladimir Icon*. The icon was first brought to Moscow in the year 1395. Thus, the blessing of the Mother of God established the spiritual bonds of Byzantium and Rus via Kiev, Vladimir and Moscow.

Very important events in Russian Church history have occurred before the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God: the election and elevation of St Jonah, advocate of an Autocephalous Russian Church (1448), and of St Job, first Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (1589), and of His Holiness Patriarch St Tikhon (1917).

The enthronement of His Holiness Pimen, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, occurred on a day of celebration in honor of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God on May 21, 1971.

The festal celebration of the Vladimir Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos occurs several times during the year.

The most solemn celebration of the icon occurs on August 26, the feast established in honor of the *Meeting of the Vladimir Icon upon its Transfer from Vladimir to Moscow*.

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In the year 1395, the conqueror Khan Tamerlane (Temir-Aksak) reached the Ryazan frontier and was advancing towards Moscow. Great Prince Basil Dimitrievich went with an army and halted at the banks of the River Oka. He prayed to the holy Hierarchs of Moscow and St Sergius for the deliverance of the Fatherland, and he wrote to the Metropolitan of Moscow St Cyprian, that the pending Dormition Fast should be devoted to zealous prayers for mercy and repentance.

Clergy were sent to Vladimir, where the famed wonderworking Vladimir Icon was. After Divine Liturgy and a Molieben on the feast of the Dormition, they clergy took the icon and brought it to Moscow. Along the way, on both sides of the road, countless people prayed kneeling: "O Mother of God, save the land of Russia!"

At that same time, when the people of Moscow were meeting the Vladimir Icon on Kuchkov Field, Tamerlane while sleeping in his, dreamed a great mountain, at the summit of which were the holy hierarchs with golden staffs coming towards him. Above them, in a brilliant radiance, was a Majestic Woman. She commanded him to leave Russia. Awakening in fright, Tamerlane asked the meaning of the vision. The experts answered that the Radiant Lady was the Mother of God, the great Protectress of Christians. Tamerlane then gave the order for his troops to retreat.

In memory of this miraculous deliverance of the Russian Land from Tamerlane, they built the monastery of the Meeting on Kuchkov Field, where the Meeting of the Vladimir Icon took place.

On June 23 the Church celebrates the miracle of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God, which led to the saving of Moscow from the invasion of Khan Achmed in 1480.

On May 21 of each year, the feast *Celebration of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God* is celebrated to commemorate the deliverance of Moscow from an invasion of Tatars in 1521.

A blind nun had a vision of Moscow's bishops forsaking the city and taking with them the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God, the holiest object in the city of Moscow. At the gates, the holy hierarchs were met by Sts Sergius of Radonezh and Barlaam of Khutyn tearfully imploring them not to leave Moscow. All of them offered intense prayer to the Lord for the forgiveness and the deliverance of Moscow from its enemies. After this prayer the bishop-saints returned to the Kremlin, and they carried back the holy Vladimir Icon. St Basil the Blessed saw a similar vision.

The Tatar Khan also had a vision of the Mother of God with a fearsome host, contending against his forces. The Tartars fled in fear, and the capital of Russia was saved.

g) The Theotokos of Tikhvin

During the reign of the Grand Prince of Moscow, Dimitry Donskoy, this wonderworking icon first appeared in the region of Novgorod. It appeared above the waters of Lake Ladoga, invisibly borne through the air by angels, shining with a radiant light. Many times the icon moved from place to place, healing the infirm and comforting those in sorrow. In those places where the icon stopped, pious Orthodox Christians built chapels and churches. She chose the small town of Tikhvin as her permanent place of shelter. There a church was soon built for the icon, and in time a monastery grew up around it which came to be known as the Great Tikhvin Monastery. The veneration of the icon was so great that a special window was built into the church, through which pilgrims could see the wonderworking icon and pray before it even when the church was locked. It is noteworthy that an unusual warmth issued from the hands of the Theotokos on the icon that could be felt by the lips of those who venerated it.



Counselor's Backup Page

- If there's extra time at the end of a lesson, try to get into a discussion on "the saints and our relationship with them"
 - o You can begin this discussion by playing the "mirror game"
 - o Details: split the group into two teams. Each team must choose a leader. The two leaders face off against each other. Each one has 30 seconds to be the mirror where they must copy everything the other one does. If they mess up, the other team gets a point. The rest of the team can try to distract the other team's leader by making noise or doing other actions, but they can't touch them.

Discussion:

1) Who are the saints?

- The Saints are "ANGELS ON EARTH"
- So basically there is: heaven → our goal
earth → the journey to the goal

- Discuss the differences between heaven and earth

HEAVEN	EARTH
- unceasing praise to God	- unceasing praise to God
- God's will is our will	- God's will is our will
- Unity with all creation	- unity with all creation

- Ideally, there is a mirror between heaven and earth
- So it is possible to achieve heaven on earth!
- Ask kids if they ever met someone they felt was holy, or who made them feel as though God was very close to that person?
- This is what made the saints "saints"! They achieved heaven on earth!
 - o eg: St Seraphim of Sarov was constantly in prayer, he healed and served and taught the people, and bears and animals came up to him unafraid

2) WE are the saints!

- Have one of the kids read 1 Cor 1:2, then have another one read Rom 1:7
- In the NT, all who are true Christians are called saints!
- Despite disorder, disunity and error among the Corinthians, St. Paul still calls them: the church of God, sanctified in Christ, and saints

Counselor's Backup Page

- Talk about some saints who answered the calling of sainthood
 - o eg: St. Mary of Egypt, St. Paul the Apostle, the Theotokos, etc
- The Virgin Mary is called more honourable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim
 - o These two are the highest of all the angels (there are levels in the angels, the Seraphim and Cherubim are at the top, and guardian angels are at the bottom)
 - The higher the level of the angel, the less they deal with humans and the more time they spend singing praises to God
- The Theotokos was a human being, she was one of us with temptations and evil all around her, but she chose to follow God
- This is where we're different than the angels... we choose everyday to follow God. They only chose once.
 - o This is why we can become higher than the angels
- So, despite our youth, our imperfections and our weaknesses, we're called to be saints!

3) How can we answer?

- Ask kids how they think we can answer
- Remember the Last Judgment Sunday Gospel
 - o Feed the Hungry
 - o Clothe the naked
 - o Visit the sick/suffering/prisoners
 - o Show hospitality to the stranger
- Uncalculated love to those around us is the "standard of judgment"
- Have one of the campers read 1 Cor 13:4-8
- Ask all the campers to sum up love in one word
- Every single person in the world is looking to be loved
- Talk about scenarios where campers experienced love from someone else
- Some of the Holy Fathers say that heaven is actually a state of spirit where you are always with God in prayer in the mind and heart
- When we love others, God is present between us
- This is how we experience heaven and God while still on earth
 - o That's why the saints never feared death
 - o That's why we, who are trying to become saints, should never fear death

Counselor's Backup Page