

THE CHURCH PRAYS WITHOUT CEASING
Special People Pray for Us
Youth Group Session Four

Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry – Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
Written by Debra Burgan
Reworked Natalie Kapeluck Nixon

Objective: To give the participants an understanding of:

1. Church Militant and Church Triumphant
2. Who are the Saints
3. Intercession of the Saints on our behalf
4. Orthodox Monastic Life

Crafts: Patron Saint Icon

Items Needed: Copies of worksheets, pencils, bibles, lined paper, color icon reproductions for each participant of their Patron Saint, plain wood plaque or foam core, modge podge clear drying craft glue, glue brushes, and if possible the Tropar of each Patron Saint. (These items are needed for the easiest of the three provided Icon projects.)

Items in **blue** are notes for the Session Leader.

Related books for Session Leader's Reference:

- A Beginner's Guide to Prayer – The Orthodox Way to Draw Closer to God
Michael Keiser. Conciliar Press. www.conciliarpress.com
- The Orthodox Church A – Z
Fr. George Grube. Light and Life Publishing. www.light-n-life.com
- Beginning to Pray
Metropolitan Anthony Bloom. Paulist Press. www.paulistpress.com

Children's Books

- The Monk Who Grew Prayer
Claire Brandenburg . www.conciliarpress.com
- The Holy Monks of Mount Athos
Patrikia. Light and Life Publishing. www.light-n-life.com
- How the Monastery Came to Be on the Top of the Mountain
Alvin Alexi Currier. www.conciliarpress.com
- Christina's True Heroes
Maria C. Khoury, Ed..D. . www.conciliarpress.com
- Christina's Favorite Saints
Maria C. Khoury, Ed..D. . www.conciliarpress.com
- A Child's Paradise of Saints
Nun Nektaria. www.conciliarpress.com

Pre-session preparation – Gather the color paper icons for each participant. This may take a little extra prep-time. Some participants may use their middle name as their Patron Saint. Ask them well in advance for your preparations. If you decide to use the Tropar for each Saint, have them printed before hand. Copy lesson handouts.

If possible, try to arrange a visit to a local monastery for the group or ask a monastic to come and speak to the participants.

Following a short, age appropriate game and/or introductions, begin the lesson below. For younger children read for them – you may want to paraphrase and ask questions often to keep their interest. For older children, allow them to read aloud or to themselves.

Begin the Session with prayer to the Theotokos, *O Hail Mary, Full of Grace*.

Lesson

When you were Baptized and Chrismated, you became a member of the Holy Orthodox Church, the living Body of Jesus Christ. We here on earth are called the Church Militant because we are still striving each day to live according to God's teachings and commandments. In addition to those of us living in the Church today, this Body also includes all the righteous people who lived before us and are now living in the Kingdom of God, the Saints. Those in heaven are called the Church Triumphant because they have already fought the good fight and continue to pray for us. Together we make the Holy Orthodox Church. The Saints of the Church help us in two ways. When we learn about their lives of great faith and love of God, they become our role models...people we want to be like. But the Saints help us in another wonderful way: they pray to God for us. (Briefly discuss worldly role models compared to the saints. Ask them to list some of their role models or who society sees as a role model – maybe use the word hero. Do these role models help us to become better Christians – the Church Militant?)

The first of these people is the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Mary is greater than all of the Saints; the Orthodox Church calls her "Theotokos" or "Birth-giver of God." She is the greatest "role model" that we Orthodox Christians have in our lives because she happily accepted God's plan for Her life. She is the Mother to all Orthodox Christians and the greatest helper we have in bringing our prayers to God.

From Holy Scripture, we know that the first miracle that Jesus performed in public happened because Mary asked Him to help Her friends. Read John 2:1-11.

Mary, Jesus and His disciples were invited to a wedding in the town of Cana. Mary told Jesus that the hosts ran out of wine. She told the servants to do what Jesus said. Jesus turned water into wine.

Of course, seeing a miracle performed is a marvelous thing that helped people believe that Jesus truly is the Son of God. But there is another wonderful thing we learn here: when Mary sees that people are in need, She asks Her Son to help them. She prays to God for all of us and through her prayers we are saved! Because of His great love for His Mother, Jesus hears her and answers those prayers according to the will of His Father. Here is a the most simple and fervent prayer to the Theotokos: "O Holy Birth-giver of God, Save Us!" (Have the participants say the prayer together. Explain that we can say this prayer at any time of need.)

Every service in the Orthodox Church includes at least one prayer to the Theotokos, and we should remember Her in our own private prayer. We thank Her for giving Herself to be a part of God's plan for our salvation, we recognize Her life as one to follow, and we ask Her to pray for us. It's very important that we understand and remember that Orthodox Christians don't *worship* the Theotokos; worship is only for God in the Holy Trinity.

Read Luke 1:28 and 1:42. Who said these verses? Archangel Gabriel and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. What does this tell us about Mary?
both heaven and earth realize she is special

Hail, Mary, full of grace
the Lord is with you!
Blessed are you among women
and blessed is the fruit of your women
for you have borne the Savior of our souls.

A little further in the same chapter Mary says a beautiful prayer thanking God. (Luke 1:46-55) What does she predict about herself?

"from henceforth all generations will call me blessed"

Of course, this has come true!

The Theotokos is not the only one in God's Kingdom who is praying for us. We also ask our guardian angel and all the saints to remember us in their prayers.

We can, and do, pray to *all* of the saints. There are also many saints to whom we pray in special times of need. (Take the time to go to the [Praying with the Saints](#) page and review some of the Saints that are prayed to for special reasons.) But each one of us should come to know and pray to our *patron saint*. You may have been born on the day when the Church remembers that saint, or you may be named after him or her. You may have been given that saint's name at your Baptism and use that name when you receive Communion or participate in other Mysteries in the Church. (At this time see if there are any participants who converted at a later age and remember choosing their Patron Saint. Allow them some time to discuss how their Saint was chosen.) If you don't know who your patron saint is, you can talk to your spiritual father and ask him to help you find one. As you learn about your patron saint's life, you will have a hero to follow and a very special friend praying to God for you. The simplest way to pray to your Patron Saint or any Saint is: *O Holy Saint (insert name), pray unto God for me a sinner.*

Explain that as they grow older, they may come to be close to several saints. They can talk to their parents about choosing a sainted family to whom the family prays together.

*If time permits, you may also explain and discuss the words "glorify," "magnify," "venerate," and "intercede" and again remind the participants that *worship* belongs only to God.

Having the Theotokos, all the saints, and our guardian angels praying for us is a wonderful comfort, but the Church doesn't stop there. We've already talked about how we, in our own prayers, remember and *intercede* for many people and how the Church prays for us, as well. There are people who live in the world with us and have responsibilities that probably keep them from attending church everyday or fully praying all the daily services – that is why we pray for them.

There is a group of people within the Holy Orthodox Church who devote their entire lives to praying without ceasing. These men and women live in communities called *monasteries*, so they are called *monastics*. Men are monks; women are nuns. Monastics give up the worldly life, so that they can dedicate themselves entirely to God through prayer, fasting, obedience, and good works. You may be thinking that we *all* are taught to pray, fast, obey, and do good works, and you're right. But monks and nuns work hard to perform these spiritual tasks constantly and more strongly than we can. They fast more often and more strictly than we do, they obey the will of God by humbly obeying their spiritual elders. They may teach or care for the sick or needy, and they pray for us, even when we "forget:" or are too tired or are "too busy" or just can't find the words within ourselves.

Prayer is the first and most important job of the monastery. Monks and nuns spend several hours a day in church, praying the services of the Church. They also spend time in personal prayer. They work to master prayer

without ceasing by learning to pray in their hearts at all times. Many monastics are able to pray the Jesus Prayer in this way, repeating it hundreds of time.

O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

You may think that giving up worldly responsibilities and living in a religious community makes it easier for monastics to concentrate on prayer. But actually, their task may often be more difficult. They still have many of the same responsibilities and problems that we all face. Can you think of another problem that would affect the life of a monastery?

(Satan works his hardest to interrupt the lives of a group so dedicated to God.)

Many, many great saints of the Church have come from the monastic life. When we pray, we should always remember these men and women of God who keep us in their prayers constantly,

At some point you should explain that even though the children may know some priests who are monks, not all monks are priests and not all monastics live in monasteries for their entire lives.

If you have a trip planned to a monastery, discuss that trip now. Give the participants any special instructions concerning how they should dress and behave.

At this point you can begin the Patron Saint Icons. There are three different Icon projects from which to choose. The first is the simplest and the latter two are more labor intensive.

Have your snack/meal ready and close the day in Prayer.

Saints Called Upon in Particular Needs

For Spiritual Help

St. Ephraim the Syrian
St. Alexis
St. Seraphim of Sarov

For a Good End to One's Life

St. Joseph, Spouse of the Virgin Mary
St. Barbara
Archangel Michael

For Brides and Happy Marriages

St. Nicholas of Myra
St. Joseph

For Eye Disorders

St. Lucy
Archangel Raphael

For Those Who are Chronically Ill

St. Erasmus (St Elmo)

For Those with Stomach/Abdominal Illness

St. Erasmus (St. Elmo)

For Those with Tuberculosis, Respiratory Illness, Patron of Physicians

St. Panteleimon

For Those with Lethargy, Nervous Disorders(ADHD), Bites of Venemous or Rabid Animals

St. Vitus

For Those Possessed by Evil Spirits

St. Cyriacus
St. Dennis of France

For Protection against Epilepsy, Panic Attacks and Nocturnal Terrors

ST. Giles

For Protection Against Fire

St. Eustis
St. Barbara

For Those With Pain in Loins and Legs

St. Marina (Margaret)

For Those With Alzheimer's Disease

St. Catherine of Alexandria

For Travelers

St. Nicholas

For Those in Prison and Court Cases

St. George the Great Martyr
ST. Simeon the God-receiver
St. Onuphrios and St. Peter of Athos
St. Nicholas of Myra
St. Dismas the Good Theif
St. Barbara

For Help in Distress and Poverty

St. Nicholas of Myra

For Finding Lost Objects

St. Phanourios the Great Martyr
St. Menas the Great Martyr of Egypt

For Deliverance from the Scourge of Anger

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

For Mothers/Grandmothers

St. Anne, Mother of the Virgin Mary
St. Eleutherius

For Fathers/Grandfathers

St. Joseph, Spouse of the Virgin Mary
St. Joachim, Father of the Virgin Mary

For Finding Employment

St. Xenia of St. Petersburg

For Help in Studies

St. Basil the Great
St. John Chyrsostom

For Good Marriages

Martyrs Adrian and Natalia

For Meeting Difficult Situations/People

St. David the Psalmist

For Teachers

St. Catherine of Alexandria

ICON PROJECT #1

Decoupage Icons

ITEMS NEEDED:

Wood Plaques 3" x 4" or 5" x 7"

Color copy of icon 5" X 7"

Modge Podge or clear drying craft glue

Scissors

Paint Brushes

Wood Stain (optional)

1. Begin by having the participants stain the wood. (this is an optional step)
2. Take the Icons and cut to fit the shape of the wood.
3. Glue the Icon to the wood. Then coat the top of the icon with the glue. It will dry clear. Be careful not to bleed the colors.
4. Let them dry.
5. Laminate the Tropar or Prayer to their Patron Saint on the back of the Icon

ICON PROJECT #2

Mosaic Icons

This icon project was designed by Cheryl Pituch for Diocesan Church School Camp and Teenage Conference.

ITEMS NEEDED:

Foam Core Board (size is at your discretion – no smaller than 8.5” X 11”)

High Gloss Magazines or Gloss Paint Samples

Gold Foil Paper or Gold Metallic Paper

Modge Podge or clear drying craft glue

Black and White line drawing of an Icon that will fit the foam core Board

Scissors

Paint Brushes

Black Permanent Markers

1. Choose the Icons that you would like to make into a mosaic. Decide if the youth will make individual icons or work on several larger icons or one large icon.
2. Locate line drawings of the icons and apply them to the foam core board with the clear craft glue.
3. Locate a color copy of the icon/s that you are working on for reference.
4. Search the magazines for large blocks of the colors needed in your icon. The colors do not have to match perfectly. Multiple shades of any given color will enhance the mosaic effect. If using paint samples collect the colors that you need for your chosen icon.
5. Cut the magazine/paint sample colors into small pieces. Size of the pieces should depend upon the size of the icon. Shapes of the pieces should not be uniform
6. Begin gluing the pieces of color into the appropriate places on the line drawn icon. The colors may go over the lines a bit. It will eventually be fixed with the markers.
7. Fit the colored pieces tightly together, edge-to-edge as if building a puzzle.
8. When the process is complete trace the original icon drawing lines with the black permanent markers.
9. Have the Icons laminated and/or framed.
10. Have the Icons Blessed on Pascha

This project is like painting by number. Be sure to have two copies of the line drawn icon – one to be used as the frame work for the project and one to use as the guide to reapply the lines onto the finished project.

ICON PROJECT #3

Mosaic Icons

This icon project was designed by Michael Kapeluck for Sts. Peter & Paul UOC Church School in Carnegie, PA

ITEMS NEEDED:

Wood Plaques 5" X 7"

Craft Beads Seed or rocaille beads round (not glass –purchase colors needed for icon) and Seed or rocaille flutes(tubes)(not glass–mostly for outlining)

Color copy of icon 5" X 7"

Elmer's Glue

Extra thick/sticky craft glue

Scissors

Paint Brushes

Clear polyurethane

1. Choose the icons that you would like to make into a mosaic. Locate color icons that you would like to use.
2. Make color copies of the icons that you have chosen.
3. Dilute the Elmer's Glue with water for a thinner consistency but not too thin .
4. Trim and apply the color copy icons to the wood plaques using the paintbrushes– do not use too much of the diluted Elmer's Glue. It may warp the wood and paper.
5. Purchase the color craft beads needed to match the colors in the icon. You may want to purchase shades of the same color to enhance the mosaic.
6. Use the craft beads (tubes) to outline important sections of the icon (see drawing) apply these with the Extra Thick Craft Glue
7. Once the outline is complete begin applying the colored beads to the correct areas. Use the Extra Thick Craft Glue. Use an ample amount of the glue for the beads to hold. The glue will dry clear.
8. **DO NOT PLACE BEADS ON ANY FLESH AREAS!** The face, hands and if you choose gospels, censors etc.... will be seen as is in the color copy with no beads to cover them.
9. Apply a thick layer of polyurethane to the icon to help cement the icons.
10. Have the icons blessed on Pascha.

