



“I have sent them into the world.” (John 17: 18): The Church’s Ordained Ministries

Educational Materials in connection with the
Orthodox Church in America’s Annual Seminary Appeal
Lesson Outline - Teacher Guide

Developed through a combined effort of the
Orthodox Church in America’s
Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry and
Department of Christian Education

Purpose: This lesson is intended to be a short addition to your regular church school lesson during the month of June in connection with the OCA Seminary Appeal, and is not intended to take a whole school period; however, if students are interested, feel free to take more time. It is a short explanation and review of the Church’s main ordained ministries, the studies for which take place at a seminary.

In addition to the mini-lessons provided below, be sure to copy and distribute the enclosed handout for students to take home and discuss with their families.

For a more comprehensive study on Church vocations, see the 7-session study unit “God is Calling You” available from the Orthodox Christian Publication Center at (973) 331-9190 or on The Hub for Youth and Young Adult Ministries. Go to <http://yya.oca.org/TheHub> click on Study Units/Guides and then on Catechetical Themes.

Objectives:

1. The students will be able to list the vocations of bishop, priest, and deacon as three ordained ministries, and will recognize the significance of their calling by God to serve His Church.
2. The students will learn about the role of the bishop, priest and deacon in the Church, and will be able to discuss the impossibility of a complete life in the Church without our ordained leaders.
3. The students will be able to name ways that each of these ministries is nurtured and supported by the work of our churches seminaries.
4. The students will explore ways to support our seminaries and seminarians through prayer, letter writing, gift giving, and financial support.

Scripture References:

1 Thess 5:12-13
1 Cor 12:27-28

Concerning bishops and priests:

- 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:12-5:3; 6:11-21
- 2 Timothy 4:1-5
- Titus 1:5-9
- 1 Peter 5:1-9

Concerning Deacons:

- 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- Acts 6:1-7

Lesson Ideas:

Pre-school/Kindergarten/Primary Grades

1. Ask the children, “Name God’s helpers. Who are the special helpers that God blesses to lead His people (bishops, priests, deacons)? How do these people help God? What do they do? They are the special people God has given to us, so that we may have a full life in Christ’s Church.” Ask the students to remember as many sacraments as they can (Communion, Confession, Baptism, and Marriage, etc.). Then ask the question, “Who is blessed by God to give us the sacraments we receive?” This is the time to briefly discuss what our bishops do (they are the head of their dioceses; they perform all of the sacraments, etc.). A priest can perform all of the sacraments, with the exception of ordination. A deacon is a helper to the bishop and the priest and proclaims the Gospel.

Have a discussion about why we go to doctors and not just anyone when we are sick. Ask, "Why do we have teachers in our schools, or parents with special materials who teach us at home? Why do we go to an auto mechanic to fix our cars? (Soliciting the answers should then lead to the question, "What makes these people special? (They have had to go to school to learn how to develop these skills and to do their jobs well.) Then ask, "Why do you think God has appointed bishops and priests to be our leaders and to perform the sacraments? Where do they go to learn about God and to learn to serve His people in His Churches?" Explain that they go to special schools called seminaries to learn how to help us and teach us about God and His Church. What are some ways that we might support these seminaries?

2. Use the attached handout or the Teaching Pix available from OCEC (Orthodox Christian Education Commission) to show children how differently those in each of the ordained ministries are dressed and to discuss their different roles.
3. Use the "Build Your Own Deacon, Priest, Bishop" available from OCEC Publishers.
4. As a class, or a family assignment, write a letter to a seminary professor thanking him/her for helping to train our Church leaders. Ask questions that can be answered easily.
5. As a class, or a family assignment, write a letter to a seminarian and let him/her know he/she has your support and your prayers. Ask questions that can be answered easily.

Intermediate Grades

*Read appropriate Scripture references if applicable to your group.

1. Have a discussion about what participants are planning to do with their lives as they get older including the kind of career or job they are thinking of pursuing and if they have thought about how they can serve the Church as they get older. Continue the discussion asking them, "What type of schooling/training do you think you (the participants) will have to complete to achieve your goals? Will schooling help you to become successful and to be prepared for your career?" This can lead to a discussion about how doctors, teachers, mechanics, etc. are all trained and the reasons they would never want to go to a doctor, teacher, mechanic who has not been thoroughly educated.
2. Ask the participants: "What do you think the word 'ordination' means?" Have dictionaries available for participants to look up the word, if necessary. "Who are the people who are ordained in the Church? What do you think a bishop does? What does a priest do? What do you think are the duties of a deacon?" Discuss the special calling of each of these people to serve God in His Holy Church. Ask, "Why do you think God has appointed them to lead His Church and be the people who perform the sacraments?" Discuss the type of life in the Church that is possible without them. Ask, "Why would we say it is impossible for us to have a complete life in the Church without them?" Why is it necessary to pray for them, and to offer them our love and support?"
3. Then ask, "How do you think our bishops, priests and deacons were prepared for their special ministries to serve God and His Church? Where do they go to school? (Seminaries)." Continue with, "Based on what you know about our bishops, priests and deacons, and what they do, what kinds of classes do you think are taught at our seminaries (classes about the Bible, Church history, lives of the saints, ministering to the sick, celebrating the Church services and the Sacraments)? What do you think would happen if there were no seminaries for this special training? How can we help our seminaries and our seminarians?"
4. What questions would you like to ask a bishop, a priest or a deacon? Invite your priest and or deacon to come to class for a question and answer session. As a class project, or family assignment, write a letter to your diocesan bishop to ask him questions and to thank him for his service to them and to the Church.
5. Read the lives of different saints and compare how each served the Lord (St Athanasius the Great, St Romanos the Melodist, St John of Kronstadt, etc.).
6. Plan a project to help our seminaries. Car washes, newspaper drives, hosting luncheons at the parish are all good activities for this age group.
7. Find out about someone in your local area who might be attending a seminary. Help to support this seminarian by letter writing, gift giving, prayers at the beginning of each church school lesson, as well as at home, and financial support. All of the above activities may be done for an individual as well as for the seminaries.

Teens and Young Adults

1. Read the Scripture readings out loud or silently. You may want to read them as a group or to break the students up, have each of them read one Scripture passage and then report to the whole group about what they read. Ask, "How do these Scriptures help us understand why God put bishops, priests, and deacons in the Church. Why do we need these positions in the Church? Can we have a complete life in the Church without ordained ministries?"

2. Say, "Many places throughout the world, including many of our own parishes in places like Alaska and Mexico, only have a priest visiting them once or twice per month or per year. How would your parish life be affected if you lived in one of these communities?"
3. Just as you would prepare for a career by going to college or doing post graduate work, the men who feel called by God must be prepared as well. Pretend you are writing a want ad for the newspaper, advertising for a bishop, a priest, or a deacon. How would you write the ad? What qualifications would the applicants need? How would you describe his role and responsibilities? What kind of training/education would they need?
4. Ask students if anyone has any experiences with any of our seminaries. Maybe they have attended workshops or retreats with a seminary professor. Explain to the group that the Orthodox Church in America has three seminaries: St Tikhon's Seminary in PA, St Vladimir's Seminary in NY, and St. Herman's Seminary in AK. Ask, "What kinds of programs and degrees do you think our seminaries offer?" You may wish to have students research the 3 seminaries on the internet and report back to the whole group.
5. Ask, "How would you respond to someone who might say we don't need seminaries or don't need to offer our support to them? Why is the Annual Seminary Appeal important? Why is it important to offer our financial support, as well as our encouragement and prayers to the students and teachers in our seminaries? What are some ways as a group, or as individuals, we can support our seminaries and our seminarians?"
6. Choose a project to support our seminaries. If you have a small church school, a luncheon, or a carwash, with the older teens and young adults leading the drive, would be appropriate. Writing letters to seminary professors or students asking questions about life in the seminaries could serve the purpose of helping support them, and could possibly inspire a teen or young adult to consider the possibility for him/herself.

For information on the 2004 OCA Seminary Appeal go to

http://www.oca.org/pages/min_orgs/appeals/seminaryappeal2004.html

The addresses of the Orthodox Church in America's seminaries are as follows:

St. Herman's Seminary

414 Mission Rd.
Kodiak, AK 99615

<http://www.alaskanchurch.org/shs/html/home.html>

St. Tikhon's Seminary

P.O. Box 130 - St. Tikhon's Rd.
South Canaan, PA 18459

www.stots.edu

St. Vladimir's Seminary

575 Scarsdale Rd
Crestwood, NY 10707

www.svots.edu



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