



Defenders of the Faith

Educational Materials for the 2006-2007 OCAY/Holy Synod Theme
Lesson Outline - Teacher Guide



Developed by the Department of Christian Education, The Orthodox Church in America

General Introduction to the Lessons

Theme

The OCAY theme for this year is “Defenders of the Faith.” The following lessons, based on this theme, are intended as supplements to regular Church School sessions, and may be used at any time that is convenient for your particular parish situation and schedule.

Levels of Lessons

The lessons have been written on four levels:

Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten – 2 lessons, approximately 30 minutes each;

Junior Level (Ages 7-9) – 2 lessons, approximately 40 minutes each;

Intermediate Level (Ages 10-12) – 2 lessons, approximately 45 minutes each; and

Additional activities for the Defenders of the Faith curriculum, including teen talk sheets, will be available on the DCE web site at <http://dce.oca.org> and the YYACM web site at <http://yya.oca.org>. Both websites are accessible from the web site of The Orthodox Church in America at www.oca.org.

Lesson Content and Sections

Each lesson provides the teacher with a theme, objectives to be accomplished in the class session, activities designed to meet those objectives, and a list of materials needed. In addition, the teacher is given background information, so as to be able to teach the lesson with confidence.

Resources (provided at the end of the lesson plans)

a. Music

Words and music for the Lord’s Prayer.

b. Educational Activities

A picture of a vested deacon and a picture of ‘People serving others’ (for Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten lessons).

A template of a shield (for Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten lessons).

Templates for a small cube and a ‘Growing Defender’ (for Junior and Intermediate lessons).

c. Readings

Stories of the lives of St. Poplia of Antioch, St. Elizabeth the New Martyr, and Father Arseny (for Junior and Intermediate lessons).

d. Icons

Thumbnail versions for icons of Jesus Christ, St. Stephen, St Catherine, and St. Dorothea, St. Elizabeth. (for all lessons). Full size, color versions are available at the web site of The Orthodox Church in America.

Feedback

If you have any comments or suggestions, please visit <http://dce.oca.org> or send an email to: christianeducation@oca.org.

Session One: *What Is a Defender of the Faith?*

Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten

Theme

To defend the faith means to show our love for Jesus Christ, to live as He wants us to, and to tell others about Him, no matter what the circumstances.

Objectives

1. To **define** the word “defend” in a simple way.
2. To **tell** how our parents and those who love us defend us.
3. To **recognize** Saint Stephen as a deacon and as a defender of the faith.

Materials

- ♦ Bible
- ♦ Pictures of people in armor or of pieces of armor
- ♦ A copy of the story Saint Stephen the Deacon from this lesson.
- ♦ Icon of St. Stephen (commemorated on December 27)
If you have or can borrow actual icons, use them. If you do use the icons available at www.oca.org, it would be a good idea to back them with stiff card stock, so they can stand up and the children can see it easily them.
- ♦ To share: crayons, and a simple snack that will be easy for children to serve to one another.
- ♦ For each child: A copy of the picture of the vested deacon (in the Resources Section) to color.
- ♦ To be prepared before class: Either laminate, or copy onto cardstock, three copies of the “People Serving Others” page in the Resources Section. *(If you have a large class, make enough copies to have one for each group of 3 or 4 students.)* Then cut each page into pieces to be a puzzle, and put each cut-up set into an envelope. Hide the envelopes in easy-to-find places in the room.

Background Information for the Teacher

Small children have the experience of being taken care of, or defended, though they may not know that word. This session helps them see that defending is not only taking up arms (though the word often applies to an action of that kind) and that we are called on to “defend” our faith. The word, in this context, means that we think about Jesus Christ’s love for us, that we pray, that we try to live as He calls us to, and that we try to tell others about His love.

We can do all this because we are sure that Jesus Christ loves us. In other words, we have faith that He loves us. When we show that we have this faith in Him no matter what happens, we are acting as defenders of the faith.

Saint Stephen (whose story is told here without the details of his death) is presented as a defender of the faith, and also a servant of others. We want children to understand that service can be a way of defending--of showing the kind of serving love that Jesus showed to others. When we act as Jesus Christ did and as God wants all of us to, we are defending the faith by showing what kind of God our Lord really is.

We also want our children to understand that people still serve others and defend the faith today. If your parish has deacons, it will be a good reinforcement of this session to point them out to your students in the coming weeks.

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Procedure

1. Open by singing or saying the Lord's Prayer. (see the *Resources Section* at the end of the unit for the words and music).
2. Show the class pictures of pieces of armor, or of people in armor, and ask: "Why did people wear these things, which are called 'armor'? What did they do when they wore these things?"

(Bring out the idea that long ago people would wear armor to fight. Sometimes they fought to help other people, or to keep them safe. The armor kept them from getting hurt as they were fighting. Sometimes people use a special word. They say that when you fight for someone to help them or keep them safe, you are defending them. To defend someone or something is to take care of it, to keep it safe, to make sure nothing hurts it.) (3 mins)

3. Ask the students, "How do the people who love you keep you safe and take care of you?"
(Suggest things such as providing warm clothes to wear, using seatbelts or car seats, getting needed medicine for illness, etc.)

Say, "That's a little like the way it is with Our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that He loves us. We could say that we have faith that He loves us. And when we do everything we can to show that we have faith in Him, we are defending our faith. We do that by being kind to others, by praying, by trying to do what Jesus wants us to do. We try to tell others about Jesus Christ and His love for us. Those are ways that we can defend our faith." (5 mins)

4. Divide the class into groups of three or four. *(If you have a very small class, divide into pairs.)* Have each group look around the room and find an envelope, and then work as a group to put the puzzle together. Ask, "What's happening in the picture?" *(Bring out the idea that a man is serving others. Read the words on the puzzle to the class.)*

Say, "Let's find out more about this man." *(Have students do a little stretching exercise, and then gather around you for a story. Read the following story about Saint Stephen the Deacon to the class. Have the Bible open, and tell the class that this is a story about a man who is in the Bible. Put your copy of the story text into the Bible to read it.)* (8 mins)

Tell this story of St. Stephen the Deacon

Our Lord Jesus Christ helped people every day. He told His good friends that they should help people, too. He also told His friends to teach everyone about Him.

Jesus wanted His friends to visit cities and towns. In these cities and towns, they could tell everyone that Jesus Christ loves them. They could tell everyone that Jesus wants them to have life forever in His Father's Kingdom.

Jesus' friends knew many people who were sick, or poor, or hungry. They wanted to help these people. But they also needed to travel around to tell everyone about Jesus Christ.

So they asked for helpers to take care of the poor, hungry, and sick people. The first helper they found was Stephen. He gladly helped and served other people. He became a deacon of the Church in the city of Jerusalem. He served food to the hungry, and cared for those who were sick or poor. Other deacons worked with Stephen, and the Church helped lots of people.

Stephen also told others about Jesus Christ. Most people were glad to hear his words. But some were angry. They said, "Why is Stephen telling us that we should love God more? Why does he want to change the way we live? We are good enough already!" They told others not to listen to Stephen.

But Stephen went on telling people about Jesus Christ. He knew that God's love is for everyone, even the people who were so angry with him.

Stephen was a deacon. He was close to God, and he became a saint. Saint Stephen was a defender of the faith.

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5. Ask the students, “How did Saint Stephen defend the faith?” (*Bring out the idea that Saint Stephen tried to tell others about Jesus Christ even when it was hard to do, and despite making them angry by speaking about the Lord. But he also defended the faith by serving others. Jesus Christ served others, and when we try to do things the way Jesus wants us to do them, we are defending the faith, too. We are showing what Our Lord Jesus Christ is really like.*) (3 mins)
6. Have students color their pictures of a vested deacon. Tell them that we have deacons in the Church today, and bring to their attention any deacons in your parish. (5 mins)
7. Have students serve one another a simple snack, after you ask a blessing together. Remind the children that serving others is one way of defending the faith, because Jesus Christ served others, and when we serve others we show what Jesus Christ is like.

Clean up together.

8. Close with the Lord’s Prayer.

Note

If you see that you will be short on time, serve the snack and send the picture of the deacon home to be colored there. If possible, give the pictures to parents rather than children, for safekeeping!

Session Two: We Are Defenders of the Faith

Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten

Theme

We have examples of people who defended the faith. There are ways we can defend the faith, too.

Objectives

1. To **tell** how Saint Catherine defended the faith.
2. To **describe** some ways in which we can defend the faith.
3. To **make** a connection between having a make-believe “shield” and being a defender of the faith.

Materials

- ♦ Icon of Jesus Christ on the wall or placed on a tall tripod or stand so that it can be seen above the children’s heads when they stand in front of it.
- ♦ Icon of St. Catherine (commemorated on November 24)
If you have or can borrow actual icons, use them. If you do use the icons available at www.oca.org, it would be a good idea to back them with stiff card stock, so they can stand up and the children can see it easily them.
- ♦ To share: tape, simple snack.
- ♦ For each child: A shield shape on card stock (*see shield template in the Resources Section*), a piece of aluminum foil large enough to cover the shield, an 8” strip of cardboard or heavy string to attach to the back of the shield as a handle. (*Or, if you prefer, don’t have handles on the shields--the children can simply hold both sides of the shields.*)
- ♦ To be prepared before class: You may want to arrange for the children to present their brief “action rhyme” to other classes, or to the parish at coffee hour or some other gathering. If you do so, make sure that an icon of Jesus Christ can be properly placed for the presentation.

Background Information for the Teacher

In this session, the children will encounter Saint Catherine, who defended the faith with words rather than material weapons. Though they will not understand the whole story of Catherine’s intellectual defense of the faith, this will be a reinforcement of the idea that there are many ways of “defending the faith.”

But with small children, it is also fun to carry through the idea of a “defense” that involves a shield. So the children will make a pretend shield, and learn an “action rhyme” to go with it.

Procedure

1. Open by singing or saying the Lord’s Prayer. (see the *Resources Section* at the end of the unit for the words and music).
2. Review the story of Saint Stephen and some of the things deacons do. Remind the children that we still have deacons in the Church today. Let them tell you in what way Saint Stephen was a defender of the faith. Let them tell you some ways that we can be defenders of the faith (*by helping and serving others, by telling others about Jesus Christ, by listening to stories about people like Saint Stephen who were defenders of the faith.*) (3 mins)
3. Have the children stand in an open area, and practice just saying the words of this rhyme together (*actions will be added later*):

**JESUS CHRIST IS LORD AND GOD, I WILL TELL EVERY FRIEND.
I WORSHIP CHRIST AND HE LOVES ME, THIS FAITH I WILL DEFEND.
WE WORSHIP CHRIST AND HE LOVES US, THIS FAITH WE WILL DEFEND.**

(3 mins)

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Say to the class, "Let's find out about another person who defended the faith. Her name is Catherine, and she is a great saint of the Church." Read "Saint Catherine Defends the Faith" to the students.

Saint Catherine Defends the Faith

Long ago in the country of Egypt, a young woman named Catherine was growing up. She was very smart, and loved to learn new things. She spent many hours reading and talking with her teachers. She thought about the world and all the things in it.

Many people in Alexandria did not know that Jesus Christ is God. They worshipped many gods. The king himself worshipped these gods. He ordered everyone else to worship them, too.

But an old Christian teacher wanted Catherine to know the truth. He told Catherine that Jesus Christ is the true God. The teacher told Catherine to pray, and learn more about the true God. Catherine did pray. She did learn more. The more she prayed, and the more she learned, the more she loved God and wanted others to know about Him.

Catherine was very brave. She went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, why should we waste our time worshipping these silly gods that are only stone statues? They cannot love us. We cannot love them. Let us worship the real God, who loves us and will always love us. This is the God who rules the whole world."

The king was not happy with Catherine's words. He wanted everyone to think of him as the ruler of the world. But Catherine was a very good speaker. He was worried: What if everyone listened to her?

The king had many wise men in his kingdom. They not only read books but wrote books, too. He was sure they knew all the secrets of the world. He was sure they must know more than this one young girl!

So he called the wise men to his palace. He ordered Catherine to come, too. He said to his wise men, "Show everyone that you are smarter than this young girl. Don't let her make people believe that this God of hers is real."

Catherine and the wise men talked in front of crowds of people. She spoke with grace and power. She knew that she was speaking the truth: Jesus Christ is the true God! Though the wise men tried hard to speak against her, Catherine was stronger and wiser than all of them. By her wonderful words, Catherine convinced many of them to become Christians!

The king was furious. He put the wise men in jail, and Catherine, too. But nothing could stop the truth that stone statues are not God. Jesus Christ is God, and Catherine told many, many people about Him. She is a saint of the Church, and a defender of the faith.

When you have read the story, ask students how Saint Catherine defended the faith. (*She prayed, she learned about Jesus Christ, and she told others about Him. Like Saint Stephen, she would not give up her faith no matter what happened.*) To read more about St. Catherine, visit the "Feasts & Saints" section at www.o.ca.org. (8 mins)

5. Have children make shields by covering their card stock pieces with foil, and taping the edges of the foil on the back of the shield. Then they can add handles on the back, taping the two ends so that they can fit a hand into the handle and pick up the shield. (5 mins)

6. Have children stand in a straight line across, in front of the icon (which should be behind and above them) with their shields in front of them, ready to pick up. Let them do the “action rhyme” with appropriate motions:

JESUS CHRIST IS LORD AND GOD

(children turn toward icon and extend one arm toward it)

I WILL TELL EVERY FRIEND

(children point toward themselves and then toward the person next to them, or to the people around them)

I WORSHIP CHRIST AND HE LOVES ME

(children turn toward the icon and bow slightly, then turn again to the front and put their hands on their hearts)

THIS FAITH I WILL DEFEND

(children pick up and hold their shields facing forward, then put them down again)

WE WORSHIP CHRIST AND HE LOVES US

(children turn toward the icon and bow slightly, then turn again to the front and all hold hands)

THIS FAITH WE WILL DEFEND!

(Children pick up their shields and move closer together so that shields form a solid “wall” in front of them)

(5 mins)

6. Have the children share a snack.

Clean up together.

7. Close with the Lord’s Prayer.

Session One: What Is a Defender of the Faith?

Junior Level (Ages 7-9)

Theme

As we grow and change, we become more able to be defenders of the faith. Saint Paul gives us an example.

Objectives

1. To **name** some things that we defend in life.
2. To **describe** ways in which we can grow into being defenders of the faith.
3. To **relate** baptism to defending the faith and using the “armor” described by Saint Paul.

Materials

- ◆ Bibles.
- ◆ Pictures of armor or people in armor.
- ◆ Pictures from the Service of Baptism (*these might be from parish photo collections, a set of Teaching Pictures your church school owns, or your own family photo collection.*)
- ◆ To share: Thin-point black markers, thick-point markers or crayons in various colors, scissors, glue, rulers, poster board, enough for each student to cut 6 strips 1” by 8” (*you could also use the cardboard from cereal boxes*), construction paper in various colors.
- ◆ For each student: 7 paper fasteners (also called brads), 6 strips 1” by 8” cut from poster board or cereal boxes.
- ◆ A small square box (not rectangular), or a cube that you make yourself from sturdy paper or card stock (see cube template in the Resources Section); 4” per side is a good size. On each of the six sides write one of the following:
 - a. Your friend is getting teased
 - b. Your mom is sick on Monday morning
 - c. Someone says, “People who go to church are stupid”
 - d. Your baby brother grabs the dog’s tail
 - e. You saw Tim push David, but the teacher thinks Chad did it
 - f. _____ (*Leave blank*)

Background Information for the Teacher

This session helps students think about what it means to be a defender of the faith, both by having them look at the examples of some saints, and by asking them to come up with examples of ways that we, too, can be defenders of the faith.

Because some children of this age have developed stringent criteria about what they “should” and “should not” do or be, the lesson includes some study of Saint Paul. This great saint had to grow into his ability to defend the faith – he did not start out being a good Christian. His example of growth will help children realize that they, too, can grow into faith and into being defenders of the faith. They don’t have to be “perfect” just yet. The activity of making a small cardboard figure that “grows” will reinforce this.

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Procedure

1. Open by singing or saying the Lord's Prayer. (see the *Resources Section* at the end of the unit for the words and music).
2. Show students pictures of armor or armored people, and ask what armor is used for. (*To defend a fighting soldier; to protect a person who is fighting.*) (3 mins)
3. Ask, "What are some ways we defend things or people in our own lives?" (*By sticking up for our friends, helping others, telling the truth, etc.*) (5 mins)
4. Gather the class in an open area for a game of "Defenders." Standing or sitting in a circle, they will take turns gently tossing the cube or box you have prepared. For whichever side lands up, they will state a way in which they might defend someone or something. Give children 2 turns each (*depending on the time you have*) and encourage them to come up with at least two answers for each side.

Some suggested answers (*but let children come up with their own*):

- a. You can defend a friend from those doing the teasing. You can also tell the teasers to stop, and "defend" them from being thought of as mean people.
 - b. If you help your mom on a busy Monday morning, you can "defend" her from getting sicker or feeling worse. Or you can "defend" her health by getting her some orange juice to help her feel better.
 - c. If a person says it's stupid to go to church, you can defend your faith by saying that you know it's not stupid but smart, or by reminding the person that Jesus prayed in the temple every day.
 - d. You might defend your baby brother from getting nipped; even some friendly dogs may nip or bite when taken by surprise. (You are also defending the dog from getting accidentally hurt by the baby!)
 - e. In this situation you can defend Chad by telling what you saw, or by privately encouraging Tim to tell the truth.
 - f. Each child can think of a situation, and a way in which he or she might be a defender in that situation. Some children may have trouble thinking up something; if so let them toss again. (8 mins)
5. Tell the class that the great Saint Paul talked about armor – not the kind made of metal, though. Read together Ephesians 6: 13-17. Ask, "What kinds of armor does Saint Paul want us to have?" (*He wants us to be truthful, to do what is right [to be righteous], to tell everyone the Gospel teachings of God's Son, Jesus Christ, so that there can be peace in the world, and to have faith in God, believing in what He has told us.*)

Ask, "Why do we need this armor?" (*Because we must defend ourselves against the bad things that may pull us away from God. Also, we want to be good examples of Christian faith to other people.*)

Go on to show the baptism pictures you have collected. Tell the class that when an Orthodox Christian is baptized, the priest prays for the person to be a "warrior" – someone who cannot be beaten and will finally get to the Kingdom of God. We believe that God helps us to be warriors, to fight with His armor of truth and love, so that we can live the kind of life that Jesus Christ has shown us, no matter what happens to us. (7 mins)

6. Say to the children: "You are still very young. As you grow up, there will be many ways you can learn more about your faith, so that you can become defenders of the faith. Even Saint Paul had to grow in his faith – at first he did not like the Christian faith, and even fought against it. Let's think of some ways we can grow in faith. (*Put children's suggestions of ways we can grow in the faith on the chalkboard, including the following: **pray, study, read, listen, worship, sing, learn, ask.***)

Give each child 6 cardboard strips to make a "growing defender" (*see template in the Resources Section*). Show them how to make an "X" with two strips-help them to poke a hole at the intersection, and let them fasten the two strips with a paper fastener. Help them use the other strips to make two more X's so that each child has three. (*Note: If using cereal boxes, have the blank side as the front side.*)

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Have each child put one X on the table in front of him or her, and then put a second X above it so that the ends overlap. Help the children poke holes through the ends, and attach the two X's with paper fasteners. Have them do the same with the third X. Then, cut off the top two sections of the third X. (*See illustration in the Resources Section.*)

Next, have children cut feet, arms, heads, and hats from construction paper, decorate them, and glue them to the cardboard. (*See illustration in the Resources Section.*)

Finally, have children choose three or four words they can write on the strips from among those you have put on the chalkboard. (Choices may vary.) Have them put their names or initials on the backs of their figures.

Let children practice having their figures “grow” as they push the feet together, and shrink as they pull the feet apart. Remind them that we can all grow into being good defenders of the faith, as Saint Paul and many other people in the Church did. (*Keep the figures until the next class session for a brief review. After that session, the children can take them home.*) (12 mins)

7. Read together 2 Peter 3: 18. Say to the children, “Please pray this week that God will help us all grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, so that we will all be good defenders of the faith.”

Clean up together.

8. Sing or say the Lord’s Prayer together.

Session Two: We Are Defenders of the Faith

Junior Level (Ages 7-9)

Theme

The saints and people we know give us examples of how we can defend the faith.

Objectives

1. To **tell** main events in the lives of Saints Stephen, Catherine, and Dorothea.
2. To **express** ideas about being defenders of the faith.
3. To **review** ways we can “grow” into being defenders of the faith as we get older.

Materials

- ♦ A Bible
- ♦ Icon of St. Stephen (commemorated on December 27)
- ♦ Icon of St. Catherine (commemorated on November 24)
If you have or can borrow actual icons, use them. If you do use the icons available at www.oca.org, it would be a good idea to back them with stiff card stock, so they can stand up and the children can see them easily.
- ♦ For each child: A copy of the numbered reading Saint Dorothea in this lesson. You may want to give each child a copy and have them read the numbered items in turn, or you may want to have the children read mini-sections (2 or 3 numbered items.) If so, you can group the numbered items with markers in various colors.
- ♦ Apple slices, or another simple snack made with apples (*optional*).

Background Information for the Teacher

The lives of three saints help children, in this session, to realize that there are many ways of being a defender of the faith – and women as well as men have defended the faith. To reinforce the children’s understanding, they will say part of a troparion for Saint Catherine.

Note: Three stories of saints’ lives are part of this session. You are asked to make a copy of Saint Stephen’s story so that you can put it into the Bible as you read it to the class, so as to emphasize that it is about a Biblical figure. For the life of Saint Catherine, who is not a Biblical figure, you can read the story from the text provided in the lesson. Saint Dorothea’s story is also found in the lesson, in the form of a reading.

Procedure

1. Open by singing or saying the Lord’s Prayer. (see the *Resources Section* at the end of the unit for the words and music).
2. Use the “growing defender” cardboard figures that the children made during the last session to review with them the words they wrote on their figures-words indicating some of the ways we can grow to be defenders of the faith. (3 mins)
3. Tell the children that you are going to read a story from the Bible. The story is about a man who loved Jesus Christ very much, and who defended the faith. Read the following story about Saint Stephen the Deacon, putting your copy of the story into the Bible to read it.

Tell this story of St. Stephen the Deacon

Our Lord Jesus Christ helped people every day. He told His good friends that they should help people, too. He also told them to teach everyone about Him.

Jesus told His friends, the apostles, to visit cities and towns. In these cities and towns, they could tell everyone about

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Him. They would share with people the things that Jesus Christ had taught them and shown them. They could tell everyone that Jesus wants them to have life forever in His Father's Kingdom.

The apostles knew many people who were sick, or poor, or hungry. They wanted to help these people. But they also needed to travel around to teach everyone about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. So they asked for helpers to take care of the poor, hungry, and sick people. The first helper they found was Stephen. He gladly helped and served other people. He became a deacon of the Church in the city of Jerusalem. Stephen served food to the hungry, and cared for those who were sick or poor. Other deacons worked with Stephen, and the Church helped lots of people.

Stephen also told others about Jesus Christ. Most people were glad to hear his words. But some were angry. They said, "Why is Stephen telling us that we should love God more? Why does he want to change the way we live? We are good enough already!" They told others not to listen to Stephen.

But Stephen went on telling people about Jesus Christ. He knew that God's love is for everyone, even the people who were so angry with him.

Stephen was a deacon. He was close to God, and he became a saint. Saint Stephen was a defender of the faith. *To read more about St. Stephen, visit the "Feasts & Saints" section at www.o.ca.org.*

When you have finished, review the following points:

- a. Saint Stephen served others as a deacon. We still have deacons in the Church today. Serving others is one way of defending the faith, because Jesus Christ served others. When we do so, we show people what Jesus Christ was really like--He was one who served. In other words, by serving we show people the truth about Him, and that is one way of defending our faith.
 - b. Saint Stephen also defended the faith in another way, of course--by telling others about Jesus Christ, even when that was difficult because it angered some people who did not want to hear it. (10 mins)
4. Tell the children that they are going to hear the story of another defender of the faith. Read the following story of Saint Catherine to the class.

Saint Catherine Defends the Faith

Long ago in the country of Egypt, a young woman named Catherine was growing up. She was very smart, and loved to learn new things. She spent many hours reading and talking with her teachers. She thought about the world and all the things in it.

Many people in Alexandria did not know that Jesus Christ is the one true God. They worshipped many false gods. The king himself worshipped these false gods. He ordered everyone else to worship them, too.

But an old Christian teacher wanted Catherine to know the truth. He told Catherine that Jesus Christ is the true God. The teacher told Catherine to pray, and learn more about the true God. Catherine did pray. She did learn more. The more she prayed, and the more she learned, the more she loved God and wanted others to know about Him.

Catherine was very brave. She went to the king and said, "Your Majesty, why should we waste our time worshipping these silly gods that are only stone statues? They cannot love us. We cannot love them. Let us worship the real God, who loves us and will always love us. This is the God who rules the whole world."

The king was not happy with Catherine's words. He wanted everyone to think of him as the ruler of the world. But Catherine was a very good speaker. He was worried: What if everyone listened to her?

The king had many wise men in his kingdom. They not only read books but wrote books, too. He was sure they knew all the secrets of the world. He was sure they must know more than this one young girl!

So he called the wise men to his palace. He ordered Catherine to come, too. He said to his wise men, “Show everyone that you are smarter than this young girl. Don’t let her make people believe that this God of hers is real.”

Catherine and the wise men talked in front of crowds of people. She spoke with grace and power. She knew that she was speaking the truth: Jesus Christ is the true God! Though the wise men tried hard to speak against her, Catherine was stronger and wiser than all of them. By her wonderful words, Catherine convinced many of them to become Christians!

The king was furious. He put the wise men in jail, and Catherine, too. But nothing could stop the truth that stone statues are not God. Jesus Christ is God, and Catherine told many, many people about Him. She is a saint of the Church, and a defender of the faith.

To read more about St. Catherine, visit the “Feasts & Saints” section at www.oca.org.

After reading the story, ask, “What is one thing that both Saint Stephen and Saint Catherine did?” (*They told others about Jesus Christ. Both men and women have defended the faith in this way.*) (7 mins)

5. Have students stand in a circle and read the story of Saint Dorothea themselves. They may find her name difficult to pronounce, so be sure to review it with them, and if they hesitate while reading, simply pronounce the name for them.

Saint Dorothea

1. Do you think it’s easy to be a Christian?
2. Sometimes it’s not easy at all!
3. Long ago, a young Christian girl named Dorothea got into big trouble.
4. In her town, all Christians were being put in jail and killed.
5. Dorothea was told that she would also go to jail and be killed because she was a Christian.
6. Dorothea was not afraid. She said, “I thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, that You are calling me to Your wonderful Kingdom.”
7. So Dorothea was led to jail, praying as she walked along, with a quiet smile on her face.
8. Many people were watching from the side of the road. One was a young man.
9. The young man laughed at Dorothea. He thought she was stupid to believe in a Kingdom she had never seen.
10. The young man called out to her as she passed. He said, “Hey, send me some apples and roses from that Kingdom of yours!”
11. Dorothea looked right at him. She smiled and said, “Yes, I will send you apples and roses.”
12. The young man laughed again. It wasn’t even the right time of year for apples and roses!
13. Dorothea kept walking to jail, and to the place where she would soon be killed.

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14. Suddenly a boy came up to the young man as he stood by the side of the road.
15. The boy said, “Here are the things you asked for.” He handed the young man three beautiful apples and three bright red roses.
16. The boy was an angel of God, sent by Dorothea to show the young man God’s power and love.
17. That young man changed a lot. He no longer laughed at Christians.
18. In fact, he became a Christian himself. He and Dorothea both got to be with Our Lord Jesus Christ in His glorious Kingdom.
To read more about St. Dorothea, visit the “Feasts & Saints” section at www.oca.org.

After they have read the story, ask: “How do you think the young man felt when he received the roses and apples?”
(*Encourage the children to see that it must have been a very powerful experience.*) (8 mins)

6. If you’ve chosen to provide an apple snack, ask the children, while they enjoy the snack, which saint the apple might remind them of (*Saint Dorothea*). Whether there is a snack or not, put these words from a troparion for Saint Catherine on the chalkboard:

By your virtues as by rays of the sun
You brought light to the unbelieving philosophers,
And like the most bright moon
You drove away the darkness of disbelief from those walking in the night.

Say the words together as a closing prayer, ending by making the sign of the cross and saying, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen”

Session One: What Is a Defender of the Faith?

Intermediate Level (Ages 10-12)

Theme

As we grow and change, we become more able to act as defenders of the faith. Saint Paul gives us an example.

Objectives

1. To **consider** what it means to “defend” someone or something.
2. To **tell** how Saints Catherine, Poplia, and Stephen defended the faith.
3. To **choose** a way they themselves might emulate something one of these saints did.

Materials

- ◆ Bibles
- ◆ Pencils and paper.
- ◆ To share: Thin black-point markers, thick-point markers in various colors, scissors, glue, rulers, poster board (*enough for each student to cut 6 strips 1” x 8” — you could also use the cardboard from cereal boxes*), various colors of construction paper.
- ◆ For each student: 7 paper fasteners (also called brads), 6 cardboard/poster board strips (as above).
- ◆ Icons of Saint Stephen and Saint Catherine.
If you have or can borrow actual icons, use them. If you do use the icons available at www.oca.org, it would be a good idea to back them with stiff card stock, so they can stand up and the children can see them easily.
- ◆ Copies of the stories Saint Stephen the Deacon, Saint Catherine Defends the Faith, and Saint Poplia of Antioch from the Resources Section of this lesson, for students to use in group work. Decide how many copies you will need based on the groupings you will have: Each group studying the life of a saint should have up to 5 members, and you may want the groups to have a few copies of the story, or a copy for each group member.
- ◆ A simple snack (optional).
- ◆ A small square box (not rectangular), or a cube that you make yourself from sturdy paper or card stock (*see cube template in the Resources Section*); 4” per side is a good size.

On each of the six sides write one of the following:

- a. Your friend is getting teased
- b. Your mom is sick on Monday morning
- c. Someone says, “People who go to church are stupid”
- d. Your baby brother grabs the dog’s tail
- e. You saw Tim push David, but the teacher thinks Chad did it
- f. _____(*Leave blank*)

Background Information for the Teacher

This session helps students understand that the faith has always had to be defended. Saints of the early Church, like the three presented here, made that defense in various ways. The stories of Saints Stephen, Catherine, and Poplia are different, yet each of them defended the faith.

The session also emphasizes that Saint Paul, one of the greatest defenders of the faith, had to “grow into” that ministry. He was an early and ferocious enemy of Christianity who had to change, learn, and pay attention to God’s call in order to become a defender. Students can be helped to realize that they, too, can grow in their faith and in their ability to defend it. This point is reinforced by an activity in which students construct a “growing” cardboard figure that provides an enjoyable way of thinking about growing in faith.

Defenders of the Faith

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Procedure

1. Open by singing or saying the Lord's Prayer. (see the *Resources Section* at the end of the unit for the words and music).
2. Write the word DEFENDER in large capital letters on the chalkboard. Ask students to copy it onto a piece of paper, and then to write around it several words/phrases that it brings to their minds. (*Each student should write at least 6 words/phrases, and more if they wish.*) Words you can suggest if needed: protect, protector, take care of, watch over, fight for, keep safe, shield, guard, secure.

When everyone has finished, ask students to share some of their words, and to talk about why they chose them. Then ask, "Do you defend people or things? How do you defend them?"

Next, have students stand or sit in a circle for a game of "Defenders." They will take turns gently tossing the cube or box you have prepared. For whichever side lands up, they will state a way in which they might defend someone or something.

Give students 2 turns each (*depending on the time you have*) and encourage them to come up with at least two answers for each side.

Here are some suggested answers (*but let students come up with their own*):

- a. You can defend a friend from those doing the teasing. You can also tell the teasers to stop, and "defend" them from being thought of as mean people.
 - b. If you help your mom on a busy Monday morning, that's a way of "defending" her from getting sicker or feeling worse. Or you can "defend" her health by getting her some orange juice to help her feel better.
 - c. If a person says it's stupid to go to church, you can defend your faith by saying that you know it's not stupid but smart, or by reminding the person that Jesus Christ prayed daily in the temple or synagogue. He is the one who established the Church.
 - d. You might defend your baby brother from getting nipped by removing his hand from the dog's tail; even some friendly dogs may nip or bite when taken by surprise. (You are also defending the dog from getting accidentally hurt by the baby!)
 - e. In this situation you can defend Chad by telling what you saw, or by privately encouraging Tim to tell the truth.
 - f. The student can think of a situation, and a way in which he or she might be a defender in that situation. Some students may have trouble thinking up something; if so let them toss again. (10 mins)
3. Divide the class into 3 groups, and give each group copies of one of the saints' stories from the Resources Section. Let groups read and talk about the stories together, and then be ready to present their stories to the rest of the class. Ask them to begin their presentations by telling the one thing they agree as a group is most important about their saint. Then they can "fill in" the rest of the story. Ask them also to point out any details in the icon that reflect the story. When the groups have finished, ask the whole class to identify some ways in which each of these saints was a defender of the faith. (15 mins)
 4. Ask the class, "Do you think most people are ready to defend the faith when they are young, or do they become ready as their knowledge grows?"

After students offer answers, read together Acts 9:1-22. This story of Saint Paul's conversion from the days when he was Saul, persecutor of the Church, may be familiar to students already. But emphasize the point that Paul had to grow and change dramatically in order to become a defender of the faith.

Read Acts 17:22 ff. to show how Paul became a defender. Ask students to think of some ways in which they can grow and change so that later they can be defenders of the faith. Ask them to think of short single-word answers, and put their words on the chalkboard. (*Suggested words: pray, read, study, listen, worship, sing, learn, ask.*) (5 mins)

Lesson Outline – Teacher Guide

Developed by the Department of Christian Education, The Orthodox Church in America

5. Give each student 6 cardboard strips to make a “growing defender” (*see template in the Resources Section*). Show them how to make an “X” with two strips--help them to poke a hole at the intersection, and let them fasten the two strips with a paper fastener. Help them use the other strips to make two more X’s so that each student has three. (*Note: If using cereal boxes, have the blank side as the front side.*)

Have each student put one X on the table in front of him or her, and then put a second X above it so that the ends overlap. Help them poke holes through the ends, and attach the two X’s with paper fasteners. Have them do the same with the third X. Then, cut off the top two sections of the third X. (*See illustration in the Resources Section.*)

Next, have students cut feet, arms, heads and hats from construction paper, decorate them, and glue them to the cardboard. (*See illustration in the Resources Section.*)

Finally, have them choose three or four words they can write on the strips from among those you have put on the chalkboard. (Choices may vary.) Have them put their names or initials on the backs of their figures.

Let students practice having their figures “grow” as they push the feet together, and shrink as they pull the feet apart. Remind them that we can all grow into being good defenders of the faith, as Saint Paul and many others in the Church did. (10 mins)

6. Read 2 Peter 3:18 together. Ask students to pray during the coming week that God will help them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Close by singing or saying the Lord’s Prayer together. (*Students may take their “growing defender” figures home.*)

Session Two: We Are Defenders of the Faith

Intermediate Level (Ages 10-12)

Theme

The saints and other people give us examples of how to be defenders of the faith.

Objectives

1. To **tell** how two modern people, St. Elizabeth and Fr. Arseny, defended the faith.
2. To **relate** facts about these two people and the three studied in the previous session.
3. To **choose** a Bible passage that reflects what it means to defend the faith.

Materials

- ◆ Bibles for students to share.
- ◆ Unlined 4” by 6” index cards (have a few for each student, either in white or in a variety of colors from which students may choose.)
- ◆ Markers in various colors, plus small decorative materials (beads, bits of ribbon, small stickers and colored stars, etc.) with which students can decorate cards. Also provide glue or tape for attaching decorative pieces to cards.
- ◆ Scissors, paper, pencils to share.
- ◆ Icon of Saint Elizabeth. (commemorated on July 5)
If you have or can borrow actual icons, use them. If you do use the icons available at www.oca.org, it would be a good idea to back them with stiff card stock, so they can stand up and the children can see it easily them.
- ◆ Copies of the stories Saint Elizabeth the New Martyr and Father Arseny from the Resources Section for students to use in group work.
- ◆ A light inflated ball (such as a small beach ball) that students can toss to one another without getting hurt.
- ◆ A simple snack, if you wish to have one after the session.

Background for the Teacher

In this session, students will encounter two holy people who did not live in the early centuries, but in the 20th century. The first of these two people is Saint Elizabeth the New Martyr, a member of the Russian royal family who converted to Orthodoxy, became a nun and abbess, and was martyred under the Communists. The second is Father Arseny, the priest who was a prisoner in the Gulag who performed miracles and saved several fellow prisoners from despair, later becoming a spiritual guide to many.

Becoming familiar with these people will help students see that “defending the faith” against terrible odds is not something that was done only by the early saints; people close to our own time have done it too. The session also calls on students to think about how they themselves can be defenders of the faith by having them choose a Bible passage that expresses their ideas.

Procedure

1. Open by singing or saying the Lord’s Prayer. (see the *Resources Section* at the end of the unit for the words and music).
2. Briefly review the lives of Saint Stephen and Saint Poplia, using the two stories in the Resources Section of the previous session to provide main points. (5 mins)
3. Divide the class into two groups, and tell them that each group will be studying the life of a 20th-century person who was a defender of the faith. One is Saint Elizabeth the New Martyr, and the other is Father Arseny, not a saint but a person considered to be very holy, and someone who worked miracles.

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Give each group copies of one of the stories in the Resources Section, with pencils and paper. Ask the groups to read the stories, and be ready to tell the rest of the class about the person's life. Each group should also be ready to give answers to these questions:

- a. How did this person defend the faith?
- b. What special difficulties did this person face?
- c. What did the group find to be most interesting or impressive about this person?

Let the groups do their reading and discussion, and then report.

(15 mins)

4. Sing or say this troparion for Saint Elizabeth together (Tone 4)

Emulating the Lord's self-abasement on the earth,
You gave up royal mansions to serve the poor and disdained,
Overflowing with compassion for the suffering.
And taking up a martyr's cross,
In your meekness you perfected the Savior's image within yourself.
Therefore, with Barbara, entreat Him to save us all, O wise Elizabeth.

Ask students to point out some ways in which the troparion reflects the facts of Saint Elizabeth's life. (*Make sure students understand the meaning of "emulating," "self-abasement," and "disdained."*)

(5 mins)

5. Use the ball for a review game. Toss the ball to a student, and ask that student to tell one thing about Saint Stephen. That person tosses the ball to another student, who tells one thing about Saint Catherine, and so on. Go in this order: Stephen, Catherine, Poplia, Elizabeth, Arseny. Continue until you have 3 statements (*or more, if the activity is going well*) for each of the five persons studied. If a student can't come up with something, he or she should pass the ball to someone else. But on their next turn, they should try to come up with 2 things about any one of the 5 defenders.

(8 mins)

6. Put these Biblical phrases on the chalkboard:

Choose this day whom You will serve: as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15)

On the day I called, You answered me, O God, and You increased my soul's strength. (Psalms 137:3)

Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the tricks of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11)

Let students choose one of these verses, or another from the Bible or a prayer they know and like, one that expresses their ideas about defending the faith. Students can make decorated "reminder" cards, writing the chosen verse in nice lettering and decorating the card with the materials you have provided. (*Students can take the cards home today.*)

Discuss these questions

- ◆ In America, we live among many people who are not Orthodox, and in some cases not Christian. What is the best way to live among our neighbors in a loving way, but still stand by our faith?
- ◆ What can be some simple but not easy ways of defending the faith: Wearing a T-shirt with the name of an Orthodox summer camp on it? Wearing a cross? Not going to a dance or party because it takes place during Holy Week?

Let students grapple a little with these difficult questions, not necessarily coming up with solid answers.

Encourage them to pray about these questions during the weeks to come.

(10 mins)

7. Close with the Lord's Prayer.

MUSIC RESOURCES

The Lord's Prayer

(musical settings for the Lord's Prayer are available on the next two pages)

Our Father,
Who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

The Lord's Prayer

Plain Chant

Soprano
Alto

Tenor
Bass

Our Fa - ther, who art in heav - en, hallowed be Thy

Name, Thy King - dom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in

heav - en. Give us this day our dai - ly bread; and forgive us our

trespasses as we forgive those who trespass a - gainst us; and lead us

not into temp - ta - tion, but deliver us from e - vil. A - men.

The musical score is written in a plain chant style with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). It consists of five systems of music, each with a Soprano/Alto part on a treble clef staff and a Tenor/Bass part on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are printed below the notes. The first system begins with the lyrics 'Our Fa - ther, who art in heav - en, hallowed be Thy'. The second system continues with 'Name, Thy King - dom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in'. The third system continues with 'heav - en. Give us this day our dai - ly bread; and forgive us our'. The fourth system continues with 'trespasses as we forgive those who trespass a - gainst us; and lead us'. The fifth system concludes with 'not into temp - ta - tion, but deliver us from e - vil. A - men.' The music is primarily composed of chords and simple melodic lines, characteristic of plain chant.

The Lord's Prayer

Plain Chant

Voice 1
Voice 2



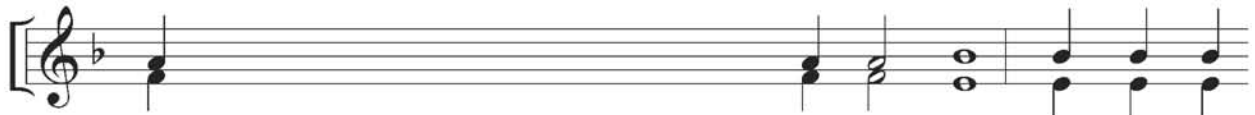
Our Fa - ther, who art in heav - en, hallowed be Thy




Name, Thy King - dom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in



heav - en. Give us this day our dai - ly bread; and forgive us our



trespasses as we forgive those who trespass a - gainst us; and lead us



not into temp - ta - tion, but deliver us from e - vil. A - men.

Defenders of the Faith

Educational Materials for the 2006-2007 OCAV/Holy Synod Theme

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY RESOURCES

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Level: lesson #1
People Serving Others



EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY RESOURCES

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Level: lesson #1
Vested Deacon



EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY RESOURCES

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Level: lesson #2

Template of shield

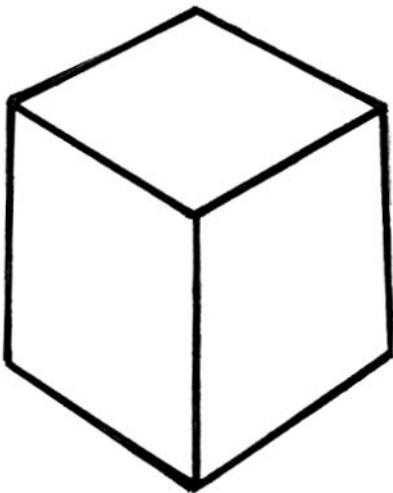
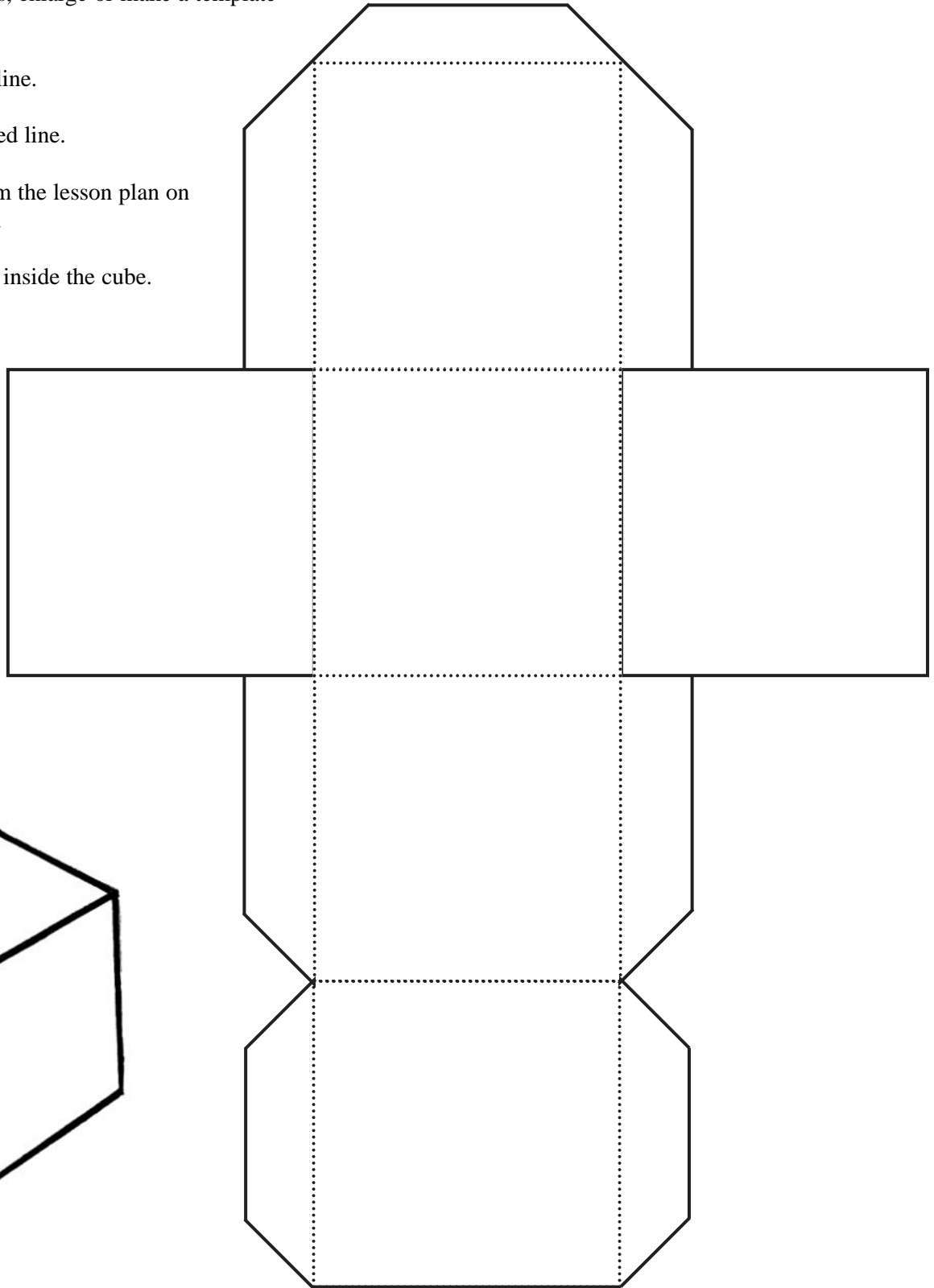


EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY RESOURCES

Junior Level: lesson #1

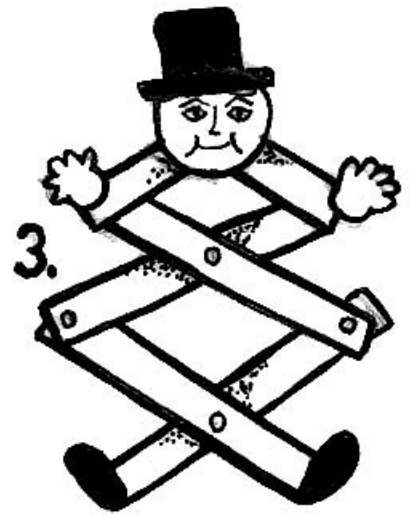
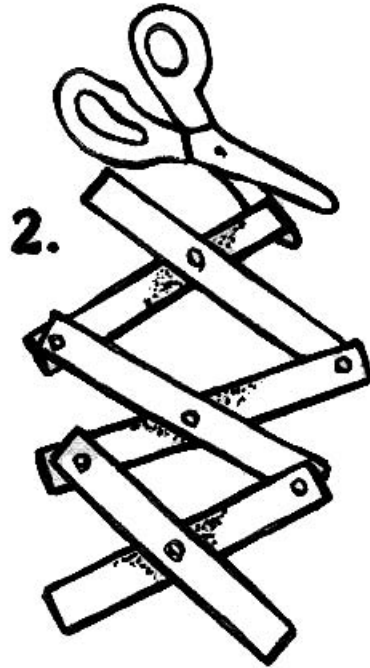
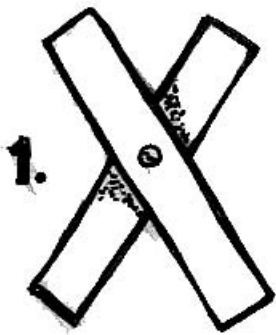
Cube template showing six equal boxes in the shape of a cross.

1. To create a box with 2” sides, make a photocopy of this page.
For larger sized boxes, enlarge or make a template with the same layout.
2. Cut along each solid line.
3. Fold along each dashed line.
4. Write the phrases from the lesson plan on each side of the cube.
4. Glue or tape each tab inside the cube.



EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY RESOURCES

Junior Level: lesson #1
Growing Defender figure



Defenders of the Faith

Educational Materials for the 2006-2007 OCAY/Holy Synod Theme

READING RESOURCES

Intermediate Level: lesson #1

Saint Stephen the Deacon

Our Lord Jesus Christ helped people every day. He told His good friends that they should help people, too. He also told them to teach everyone about Him.

Jesus told His friends, the apostles, to visit cities and towns. In these cities and towns, they could tell everyone about Him. They would share with people the things that Jesus Christ had taught them and shown them. They could tell everyone that Jesus wanted them to have life forever in His Father's Kingdom.

The apostles knew many people who were sick, or poor, or hungry. They wanted to help these people. But they also needed to travel around to teach everyone about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. So they asked for helpers to take care of the poor, hungry, and sick people. The first helper they found was Stephen. He gladly helped and served other people. He became a deacon of the Church in the city of Jerusalem. Stephen served food to the hungry, and cared for those who were sick or poor. Other deacons worked with Stephen, and the Church helped people from all over the area where the apostles traveled.

Stephen also told others about Jesus Christ. Most people were glad to hear his words. But some were angry. They said, "Why is Stephen telling us that we should love God more? Why does he want to change the way we live? We are good enough already!" They told others not to listen to Stephen. But Stephen went on telling everyone about Jesus Christ. Finally his enemies' anger became so great that they stoned him to death.

As he was dying, Stephen raised his eyes upward. He saw a vision of the heavens opening, and of Jesus Christ standing with God the Father. Stephen said, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Then he died.

Stephen was a deacon who gave service to many people. He was close to God, and he became a saint. Stephen was a defender of the faith.

To read more about St. Stephen, visit the "Feasts & Saints" section at www.o.ca.org.

READING RESOURCES

Intermediate Level: lesson #1

Saint Catherine Defends the Faith

Long ago in the country of Egypt, a young woman named Catherine was growing up. She was very smart, and loved to learn new things. She spent many hours reading and talking with her teachers. She thought about the world and all the things in it.

Many people in Alexandria did not know that Jesus Christ is the one true God. They worshipped many false gods. The king himself worshipped these false gods. He ordered everyone else to worship them, too.

But an old Christian teacher wanted Catherine to know the truth. He told Catherine that Jesus Christ is the true God. The teacher told Catherine to pray, and to learn more about the true God. Catherine did pray. She did learn more. The more she prayed, and the more she learned, the more she loved God and wanted others to know about Him.

Catherine was very brave. She went to the king and said, “Your Majesty, why should we waste our time worshipping these silly gods that are only stone statues? They cannot love us. We cannot love them. Let us worship the real God, who loves us and will always love us. This is the God who rules the whole world.”

The king was not happy with Catherine’s words. He wanted everyone to think of him as the ruler of the world. But Catherine was a very good speaker. He was worried: What if everyone listened to her?

The king had many wise men in his kingdom. They not only read books but wrote books, too. He was sure they knew all the secrets of the world. He was sure they must know more than this one young girl!

So he called the wise men to his palace. He ordered Catherine to come, too. He said to his wise men, “Show everyone that you are smarter than this young girl. Don’t let her make people believe that this God of hers is real.”

Catherine and the wise men talked in front of crowds of people. She spoke with grace and power. She knew that she was speaking the truth: Jesus Christ is the true God! Though the wise men tried hard to speak against her, Catherine was stronger and wiser than all of them. By her wonderful words, Catherine convinced many of them to become Christians.

The king was furious. He put the wise men in jail, and Catherine, too. He tortured her, and finally had her killed in a terrible and painful way: she was placed on a wheel with sharp edges that cut her body until she died.

But nothing could stop the truth of what Catherine had said. Stone statues are not God. Jesus Christ is God, and Catherine told many, many people about Him. She is a saint of the Church, and a defender of the faith.

To read more about St. Catherine, visit the “Feasts & Saints” section at www.oca.org.

Defenders of the Faith

Educational Materials for the 2006-2007 OCAY/Holy Synod Theme

READING RESOURCES

Intermediate Level: lesson #1

Saint Poplia of Antioch

The Roman Emperor Julian was one of the great enemies of the Christian faith. He had once been a Christian. Then he decided that he no longer wanted to follow Christ. He would rather go back to worshipping the many pagan gods he had worshipped before he knew Jesus Christ. For this reason he is called Julian the Apostate. An apostate is the opposite of an apostle—not a faithful follower, but a person who abandons the faith.

As emperor, Julian expected everyone to do as he was doing. He gave special privileges to those who worshipped idols, but harshly persecuted Christians.

During the days of Julian's reign, a young widow named Poplia (sometimes her name is spelled "Publia") lived in the city of Antioch. She gathered other women in her home for prayer and work to help the poor. Her little community later became a monastery, and Poplia was chosen as its abbess or leader. She also was ordained a deaconess (a woman deacon).

In the year 362, the Emperor Julian visited Antioch. His fancy procession passed the chapel of Poplia's monastery, and as he passed he heard the nuns chanting the words of Psalm 115: "The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak ; they have eyes, but they do not see, they have ears but do not hear."

Julian was sure that Poplia was deliberately chanting these words to show everyone her disapproval of his worship of idols. He told one of his nobles to go into the chapel and tell Poplia that she and her nuns were no longer to chant psalms.

As he passed the chapel again on leaving Antioch, he again heard the nuns' voices, with Poplia's leading the chant. They were chanting the next verses of the psalm: "They have hands, but do not feel, they have feet but do not walk, and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them."

Now the emperor was truly angry, and his pride was offended by this woman who refused to obey him — him, the emperor! He had Poplia dragged out into the street, and told her that when he returned from his next battle he would have her put to death, along with all her nuns. She was taken to jail.

But Julian never returned from the battle. He was killed, and when that news reached Antioch, Poplia was set free. She lived for many more years as a nun and a woman of prayer. Poplia died peacefully in the year 370.

To read more about St. Poplia, visit the "Feasts & Saints" section at www.oca.org.

READING RESOURCES

Intermediate Level: lesson #1

Saint Elizabeth the New Martyr

As a lovely young German princess who was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria of England, Elizabeth seemed to “have it all.” She was considered to be one of the most beautiful women in Europe, and lived her life in splendid surroundings.

But there was tragedy in her family--she lost her mother and a brother early in life, and she was well aware of those who were poor and suffering in the world. As wealthy and beautiful as she was, Elizabeth had a loving and tender heart.

Elizabeth married the Russian Grand Duke Sergei, a cousin of Tsar Nicholas II. As his wife, she discovered and “fell in love with” the Orthodox faith. She sent letters to her Protestant grandmother, the Queen of England, explaining her decision to become Orthodox. She went to church regularly, and grew in her faith. Some years later, when her husband was brutally assassinated, that faith was her rock and support. She offered her husband’s assassin her forgiveness, visiting his jail cell to urge him to pray and ask for God’s mercy.

Later, Elizabeth became a nun and opened a monastery in Moscow to serve the most needy, ignored, and desperate people of the city’s terrible slums. Among the monastery’s activities were regular Sunday afternoon gatherings for poor working women. The women were invited to hear concerts or interesting speakers, and the nuns showed them love and respect, serving them tea and sweets.

As revolutionary fever grew in Russia, members of the royal family became targets for hatred and violence. Elizabeth continued her life of prayer, her work with the poor, and her deep and loving concern for Russia. But now, some of the revolutionaries saw her as a German “alien” and an “enemy of the people” simply because of her birth as a royal person.

There is a lot we can say about this saint of the Church. But let’s take one story about her that tells us a lot about what it means to be a defender of the faith. It is something that happened at the very end of her life, after she had been threatened several times by the revolutionaries. They had come more than once to the monastery to arrest her, but turned away when she politely but firmly stood up to them.

Finally, though, she was taken away. Her companion, the nun Barbara, insisted on going with her, and later with some other royals they were killed in a terribly brutal way. They were thrown alive down a mine shaft, and large logs were thrown down on top of them to make sure they would die, if the fall had not already killed them.

Yet for many hours afterward, voices were heard coming from the mine shaft. They were singing hymns and prayers. The voices grew fainter as time went on, but the impression they left could never die: Even as a hideously painful death approaches, people can pray and show their faith in God and His promise of life forever in His Kingdom.

*(Learn more about Saint Elizabeth in the book *Ella’s Story*, by Maria Tobias.)*

Defenders of the Faith

Educational Materials for the 2006-2007 OCAY/Holy Synod Theme

READING RESOURCES

Intermediate Level: lesson #1

Father Arseny

In Communist-controlled Russia, priests, monastics, and believers suffered great persecution and hardship. They were unjustly accused of being enemies of the Communist state, and were sent to prison camps in bitterly cold Siberia. There they worked alongside real criminals as well as other falsely accused condemned people. The labor was killing hard, the conditions primitive, and the atmosphere full of hatred, anger, and despair. Father Arseny was a prisoner in such a camp.

In recent years, former fellow prisoners have come forward with stories of their extraordinary experiences with Father Arseny in the camp. He literally saved the lives of some whose sense of hopelessness drove them to plan on killing themselves. He performed miracles. Most of all, his humility and his true Christian love for every human being reminded others that God is present even in the most terrible circumstances. His example gave them the courage to go on with their lives.

Father Arseny fully lived the horror of the camps. He saw many around him die. He himself was beaten, intimidated, starved, and worked to exhaustion. Sometimes, as a priest, he was singled out for special humiliation and brutal treatment. But the following story tells us that it's still possible to be a human being under the most dehumanizing of circumstances. It's possible to preserve the image of God in the midst of godlessness.

One day Father Arseny and a young student were ordered into a "punishment cell" because another prisoner lied about them to the camp authorities. This cell was actually a small house with walls and floors covered in metal sheets and nothing to keep out the wind and cold. Most prisoners who were sent to this house froze to death within two hours. And now the frail priest and the thin student were pushed through the house's front door by guards who locked them in and hurried back to the warmer barracks.

Alexei, the young student, said, "The only way we could survive would be to jump up and down to keep ourselves warm. But we'll be too exhausted to do that for long. This is the end, Father—we will certainly freeze to death, and soon, too."

Father Arseny was silent, and Alexei asked, "Why don't you say something?"

Then the priest answered, "I was praying to God, Alexei."

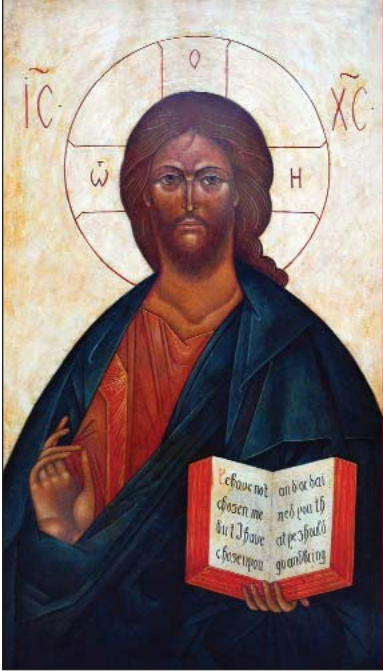
Alexei thought to himself that there was no point in praying when there was no chance of escaping death, but he began listening to Father Arseny's prayer. Numb with cold so that he could hardly breathe, he found that some words of prayer came back to him (he had been to church once as a child). He began saying the words with the priest.

As hours went by and the two men prayed, Alexei had a vision of his mother, putting something warm over him. At first he thought he was losing his mind, but as the words of prayer continued, the cold seemed to disappear. Everything was warm, full of light, and all fear and anxiety were gone.

Two days later, guards came to the house, expecting to find two frozen corpses. Instead the old man and the young man stood, their clothes covered with frost. When they returned to the prisoners' barracks, they told the other amazed prisoners, "God saved us." And from that day on, Alexei was a believer who helped others to carry on and not to lose hope, urging them to rely on God as Father Arseny had taught him to do.

*Learn more about Father Arseny in the book *Father Arseny, 1893-1973: Prisoner, Priest, Spiritual Father*, translated by Vera Bouteneff.*

ICON RESOURCES (larger format versions are available at www.oca.org)



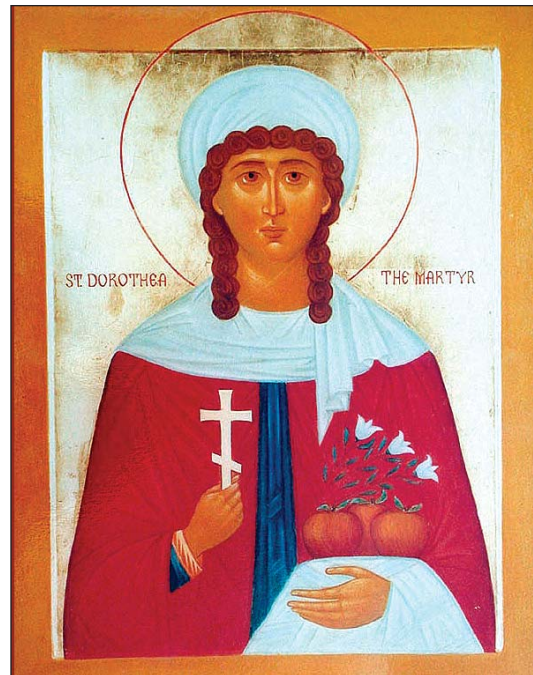
Christ the Teacher



St. Elizabeth the New Martyr



St. Catherine the Greatmartyr



St. Dorothea the Martyr



St. Stephen the Protomartyr

About the “Defenders of the Faith” Lesson Outlines

This curriculum was developed by Valerie Zahirsky, co-chair of The Orthodox Church in America’s Department of Christian Education. Contributors include Victoria Jones and the teachers of the Eastern Orthodox Youth Camp, Kansas City, KS, and Christine Zebrun, co-chair of department and artist for this curriculum.

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