

Blessed is the Kingdom: An Orthodox Church School Curriculum



Lesson 9 3rd-5th grades

The Communion of Saints

Objective: Students will understand the role of the Saints in their lives and our role in the communion of Saints.

Lesson Introduction

5 min

Start by **asking**:

What is a saint?

Take answers, then **say**:

Saint means "holy one". Now only God is truly holy. He is called "the Holy One" many times in the Bible. But God shares His holiness with others. The angels are called "holy ones" in Zechariah. We, as Christians, are also His holy ones or saints. Let's listen to this part of the Liturgy.

Play the Liturgy Link of Holy Things, and then **ask**:

What is meant by "Holy Things"? (Body and Blood of Christ)

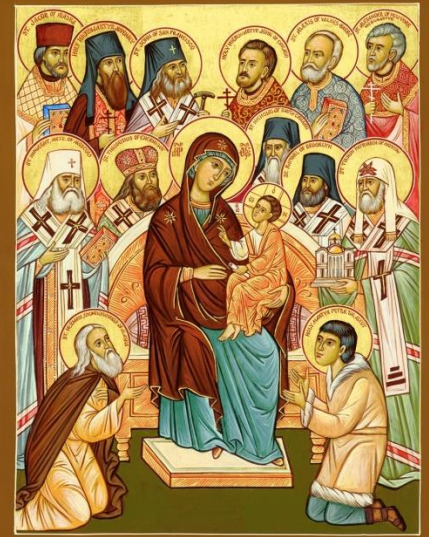
Who is meant by "for the Holy"? (Those receiving the Eucharist)

Let's listen to another part of the Liturgy. Listen for the word Holy and how they use it.

Play the Liturgy Link of One is Holy, then **ask**:

They say one is Holy. Who is that one? (Christ)

Only Christ is Holy, and our holiness comes from our communion or our connection with Him. As our likeness or connection with Christ grows, so does our holiness.



Opening Prayer

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good one.

Liturgy Links

<https://www.oca.org/media/video/20th-aac-thursday-morning-divine-liturgy>

Holy Things

Skip to 1:47:00-1:47:07 for this portion

One is Holy

Skip to 1:47:07-1:47:32 for this portion

Supplies Needed

- Computer or TV to play Liturgy Links

Lesson—25 min

Supplies Needed

- Printable prayer page
- Coloring supplies

Teacher Resources

OCA Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs: A Manual for Adult Instruction

<https://www.oca.org/cdn/PDFs/2023-0609-EOCB.pdf>

Chapter 5 The Communion of Saints in the Orthodox Church

Additional Teacher Resources

The Glorification of the Saints in the Orthodox Church

<https://www.oca.org/fs/glorification-of-saints>

Lives of the Saints

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives>



Start by **saying**:

As our connection with Christ grows, we become one with Christ. This connects us to everyone else who is one with Christ. Even death does not separate us from Christ, so it also does not separate us from those who have died. This unity or connection is called the communion of saints. All devout baptized Christians are saints, and through their connection with Christ are holy.

However, some Christians show their holiness in a particularly extraordinary way. They become examples to the rest of us, and the Church gives them the official title of "Saint". This gives them a capital "S". Do you know what it is called when a Saint is recognized by the Church?

Take answers, then **say**:

It is called glorification or canonization. Once gloried or canonized, Saints can have a feast day, liturgical prayers dedicated to them, and be the subject of an icon. Why might someone be chosen to be an official church Saint?

After **taking** answers, **guide** students through any of the following that were not mentioned:

Prophets

Evangelists

Martyrs

Ascetics

Holy Bishops

Holy Priests

Those who live a righteous life in the world

Feel free to have students look up examples of Saints from each of the categories and explain why they fit that category. Next **ask**:

How might a Saint live a righteous life in the world?

After **hearing** answers, **say**:

A righteous life could be shown through their intensity of prayer, their help to the Church, their kindness to others, their knowledge of the Church and Christ, or their courage in telling others the truth about Christ.

Lesson Continued

5 Minute Bonus

Church Patron Saint Troparion

If your parish has a Patron Saint of their Church, find the Troparion for the Saint, and play it during class.

Supplemental Ideas

Patron Saint Share

Have each student bring in an icon of their Patron Saint to share. They could also tell about their Saint's story.

Dress Like a Saint Day

Have students come to class dressed as their Patron Saint or a favorite Saint.

Silly Putty: Imprints of God

Using silly putty push it again a picture in the newspaper to create imperfect images. They resemble the original one but are never perfect, just like we resemble God's holiness, but are never perfectly holy like God.

Next **ask**:

What are some Saints that you know?

Guide students through some of the important Saints to your parish and to their families. Some examples could be:

Names Days

Church Patron Saints

Any specially displayed icons or relics of Saints in your Church

Locally celebrated Saints

Saints linked to holidays like St. Nicholas, St. Valentine, and St. Patrick

If time allows, you could take a **walk** around the Church and point out icons of specific Saints mentioned, any relics, or Saints prominently displayed on your Church's iconostas.

Finally, **ask** students:

How do the Saints help us? Why do you think we need them?

Take answers, then **say**:

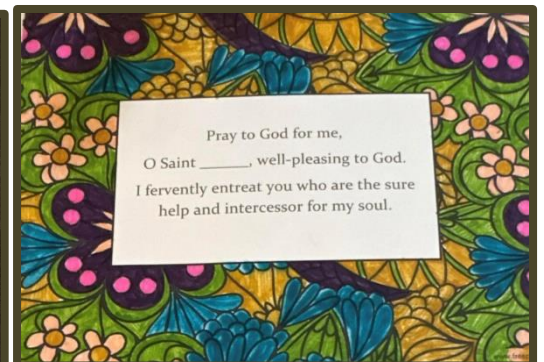
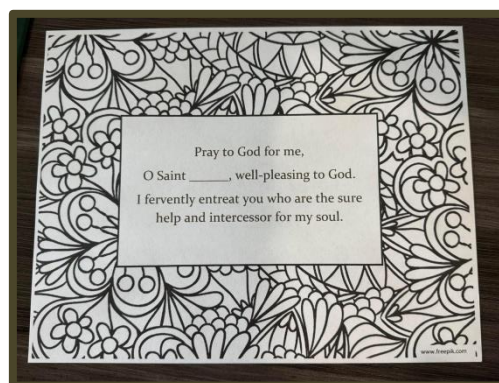
The Saints show us an example of how we could live through their examples of prayer, worship, and proclaiming Christ.

Saints also pray for us. As heavenly friends, they are close to Christ, so their prayers are more powerful. Because of this we can pray to the Saints, and ask them to pray for us. Let's practice this together.

Share the following prayer to one's patron saint.

Pray to God for me, O Saint _____ well-pleasing to God. I fervently entreat you who are the sure help and intercessor for my soul.

Practice this prayer with each of the student's patron Saints or with the patron Saint of the parish. **Hand** out the printable prayer page, and have students color the design while practicing the prayer.



Lesson Activities

Theotokos Icon—10 min

Supplies needed: 4x6 wooden plaques, printable Theotokos icons, modge podge, foam paint brushes, gold paint, gems stickers or gems with glue, glitter glue pens

Prior to the lesson, print and cut out the Theotokos icons. Start by **saying**:

Who is the only Saint found in every iconostas in every Orthodox Church? (Take answers.) The Theotokos hangs next to the icon of her son. She is highly honored because she gave birth to Christ, but also because her love for Christ overflows into love for all of His disciples. She loves and prays for us constantly.

Student will paint the wooden plaques gold, and then allow to dry for a few minutes. Then put modge podge on the wooden plaque, place the Theotokos icon centered on the plaque, then modge podge over top of the entire icon--smooth any ridges or bubbles when still wet. When dry small ridges or bubbles we show up less. Add gems and glitter glue around the edge of the wooden plaque and around the halo if desired.



Communion of Saints Relay—10 min

Supplies needed: hula hoop; cone or some item to act as a turnaround point

Start by **saying**:

As saints of Christ's church, we are all connected. There is a communion among saints. This hula hoop is going to represent our connection to each other through Christ. We will continue to grow our community each time we go around the cone—just like Christ's community grows.

Students line up at one side of the space with the cone at the other end. The first person holds the hula hoop and runs with it around the cone and back. The next person in line grabs on to the hula hoop too, and they go together around the cone and return. Then a third person adds on, then a 4th, and this continues until everyone has connected.

If there are too many students for one hula hoop, you can use additional hula hoops as needed or break the class in half and take turns.



Closing Thoughts— 5 min

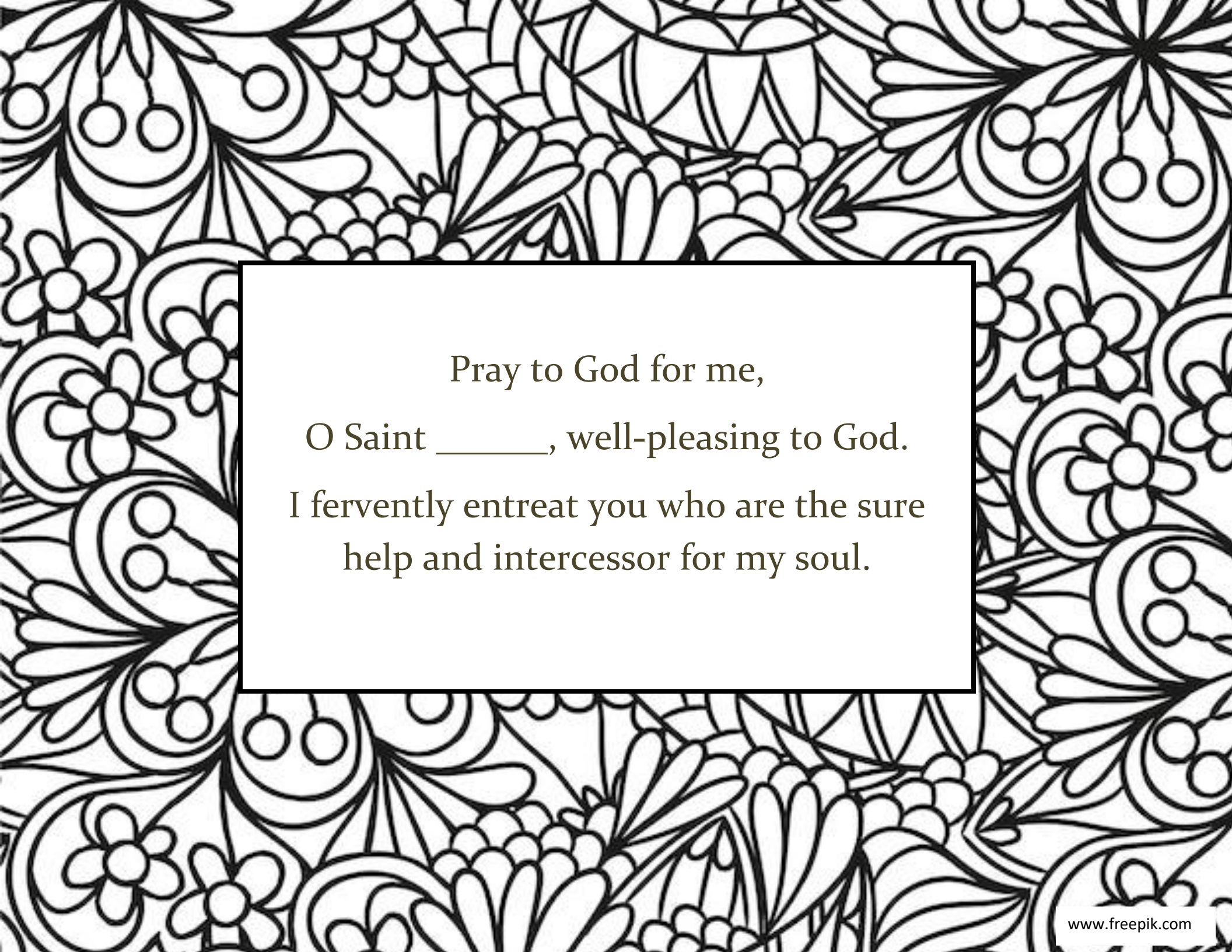
Practice the prayer to one's patron saint one more time using either the parish patron saint or another saint of note in the parish. Remind students that they can add this in with the Jesus Prayer at any time.

Closing Prayer

It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos we magnify you!

Theotokos Icon Printable 1





Pray to God for me,
O Saint _____, well-pleasing to God.
I fervently entreat you who are the sure
help and intercessor for my soul.