

I. RELICS

LESSON PLANS FOR THE CONSECRATION

OBJECTIVE:

To teach children that saintliness is marked by the presence of God's grace in a human being; that this grace is physically present in the body, even after death; that we honor the relics of a Saint because they are truly a part of the Saint and because God's grace continues to dwell within them.

To teach the stories of the three Holy Martyrs whose relics will be sealed into our altar during the Service of the Consecration: St. Panteleimon, St. Kyrikos and a Holy Father of Daou Pentelis.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

You'll also need the document containing the life stories of our martyrs (THE RELICS OF THREE HOLY MARTYRS).

In addition, we've included some information on other famous relics.

NOTES FOR VARYING AGE & GRADE LEVELS:

The younger the age level, the more important the tactile demonstration is; for the youngest children, this image will likely be the primary means of understanding the holiness of relics, while for the oldest ages, the demonstration is mostly fun and delicious.

Older students can be taught with more words - with younger children, a skeleton sketch of the conversation will happen, but with older children, the conversation can unfold in a more detailed and complex way.

THE PLAN

I. OPENING CONVERSATION:

Instructor should pose questions, and let students answer. Receive their answers and contemplate them aloud, discussing all of the ideas. If the kids are going in the wrong direction, after several ideas it's ok to say, "I was thinking of another idea..." to re-direct.

How does a person become a Saint? Are they just born holy?

Over time, if we cooperate, God can change our hearts and make us holy. What can we do to allow God to work in our hearts?

-- pray, love God and others, fast, receive Holy Communion and other sacraments, etc.

We say that people are filled with grace; sometimes we can see it in their eyes! Have you ever seen a person whose eyes were filled with light or with love?

We pray that the Holy Spirit will live inside of us. Is that literal and real?

-- Yes, that's literal. We receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion (literally) and we pray that He will live in our hearts. God's grace is not just an idea: it is a real thing and it can be inside our bodies or inside other things. (For instance, holy water)

God's grace is literally present in the bodies of saintly humans -- and in you!

2. HANDS-ON DEMONSTRATION:

Materials: pound cake or waffles with syrup (pancake syrup flavored strawberry or maple, etc. Color is a plus, though maple is a big favorite). Any wonderful food product that would taste good with syrup soaked into it will work. Bring plates & napkins too.

Demonstration: Show the kids the 'body' of the cake or waffle. Pour syrup over the top, and let it soak in. Cut open the cake or waffle, and examine the parts that are dry vs. those soaked in syrup.

Discussion: The syrup is like the grace of God; it flows over us and penetrates our souls and bodies. The cake/waffle is not the same after it has been penetrated by the syrup: like God's grace, it permanently transforms us. A Saint's body is soaked in God's grace, and the Holy Relics are different from plain old bodies because the grace remains.

Taste the syrupy cake/waffle. It's sweet and delicious -- like the spiritual fragrance of relics!

3. DEEPER CONVERSATION:

When someone dies, their body is still part of them, left behind. We treat bodies with respect and love. When the body also contains the grace of God, we venerate it.

Bodies should smell terrible as they decay, but some Saints' relics will exude a sweet-smelling fragrance, and sometimes they will even exude myrrh (a sweet-smelling oil.) God is letting us know that He loves His Saints and that He is with us and they are with us.

In the early years of the Church, before we had real churches, the Apostles and the Christians would go together to the places where the martyrs were buried. These were like caves, and they were called 'catacombs'. They would use the tombs of the martyrs as their altars when they did the liturgy and received Holy Communion. That's how special the relics were to them! The bodies of the Saints were known to be very holy.

Now we have churches instead, but we want to hold onto that tradition, so we place Holy Relics in the Altar tables of consecrated churches. In this manner, we always remember that the Church is built on the faith and blood of the Holy Martyrs.

Tell the students the stories of the three Holy Martyrs whose relics will be sealed into our altar. We recommend that you paraphrase the document -- there is likely not time in class to read the entire thing aloud. Indeed, students often appreciate a dramatic, spontaneous narration.

Especially as you tell St. Panteleimon's life, you might get dramatic about the various attempts to kill him, all of which he survived.

How did he survive? God must have been right there with him, filling him with strength and peace. Because people witness their deaths and can say that the Martyrs were filled with grace at the time of their death, we know for sure that their relics contain God's grace.

FINAL POINT: THE RELICS OF THESE MARTYRS WILL BE SEALED IN OUR ALTAR FOREVER. NOW WE HAVE A SPECIAL CONNECTION TO THEM. THEY WILL PRAY FOR US, AND WE CAN ASK FOR THEIR HELP.