

Seventh Grade Session 16: Part 1 Saints Project February 5 and February 12, 2024

Next year you're moving on to Confirmation. One of the things you will do for Confirmation is to choose a Confirmation name. Now is the time to start thinking about which saint's name you will choose, and learning more about the saints so you can choose a name with meaning and that is inspiring to you as you begin your road to your own sainthood.

For the next 2 sessions you will be working on your Saint Project! These sessions will be used to give you time to review different Saints. Hopefully, you will choose a Saint that you would like as a Confirmation name.

Call to Holiness and Sainthood (Edge Middle School: Resource)

"Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." Easier said than done, right? For some people, it may seem easy. The Catholic Church recognizes hundreds of people as Saints— people like St. Paul, St. Ann, St. Francis, St. Cecilia, St. Augustine and St. Bernadette. When you hear about their lives, especially what they did and the sacrifices they made, it can be intimidating! St. Paul, for example, spent months at a time in prison because he refused to stop proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. For her Christian beliefs, St. Cecilia was sentenced to death by being boiled alive ... but that failed, so officials then tried to behead her – three times! – but that failed too. (Eventually, of course, she died of her injuries.)

Most of us can't imagine what that kind of suffering would be like, and we think that saints must be amazing people who prayed all day and never did anything wrong. But before St. Paul started spreading the news of Jesus, he persecuted and killed Christians.

St. Francis of Assisi and St. Augustine partied all the time in their younger years. St. Bernadette was a poor French girl who didn't learn to read until she was well into her teens. My point is that Saints with a capital "S" are people who basically had normal lives and made mistakes along the way.

At a critical moment in their lives, however, they recognized a call to holiness and service to God. That call extends to all of us! God expects and encourages all of us to be part of the Communion of Saints. We may never find ourselves having to choose between our Christian beliefs and certain death, we may never become priests or nuns (although some of you will) and we may continue to make wrong choices in our lives sometimes.

Still, we are called to serve God in our own way and to live a life of holiness. Holiness doesn't necessarily mean praying and fasting all day, or even going to daily Mass (although it wouldn't hurt to try it). Holiness means to follow the example and teaching of Jesus.

Read Matthew 5:43-46.

This Scripture is a great place to start your walk to holiness: Love your enemies. Be nice to people who are mean to you, or who you don't know or who don't know you exist. Go out of your way to be helpful to family members and friends, even when you might be angry with them.

Smile at or talk to people at school who other people pick on or ignore. Hold the door for a stranger, or let someone you've never met go in front of you at the checkout line in a store.

Think about how you would feel if someone did that to you, and then do it for someone else, even if it costs you a little time, money or inconvenience. With even these simple changes, you'll be on your way to living a life of holiness.

The Creed

During Mass when we say the Creed, one of the things we say is "I believe the Communion of Saints." The Communion of Saints is a fellowship, a union, between Christians, both living and dead. So we can call on those Saints, those Christians in Heaven, and ask them to pray for us.

- How many of you want to go to heaven?
- How many of you want to be a saint?
- How many of you want to be holy?

What is the funny thing about all three questions? They are all essentially the same question. How many want to go to heaven? Probably all of us. But when asked how many of us want to be holy and become saints, we become a little more hesitant.

As Catholics we have a Universal Call to Holiness

Jesus has called all of us to be saints – to be holy. He said, "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Sometimes we can think of saintly people as being great martyrs, hardcore prayer leaders or really old people.

Sometimes people think of them as being perfect and can have a hard time connecting with them because we don't think they are like us.

We don't realize that there are saints who lived normal lives.

Some more Saint Facts:

- St. Dominic Savio died when he was 15.
- St. Augustine liked to party and was known to hang around with prostitutes until he had a conversion.
- St. Gianna Molla was a mother that sacrificed her life for her daughter in the 1960s. Her children and husband were at her canonization.
- St. Maximillian Kolbe was a priest who gave his life in a Nazi Concentration Camp so that another man with a family could live.
- St. Francis of Assisi came from a wealthy family before he took a vow of strict poverty.
- Most of you have heard of Mother Teresa, who was a nun who took care of the poor.

Many times, we don't realize that we have the grace from God to be a saint. You don't have to be a priest or nun, you don't have to be old or have lived a long time ago. Being holy is about living every day of your life for God!

Some days we may do really well and other days we may fail, but as we strive to be holy, we turn back to God, seek reconciliation and strive to do better. Being holy begins with the little

things in your life: praying, attending Mass, and being kind to your friends and strangers. If you go to heaven, you are a saint. God wants us all to be saints; we are all called to holiness. We are all called to learn to fall in love with God and to seek and follow His will. He gives us the grace to be holy.

Becoming a saint doesn't mean we will live a boring life. The saints lived incredible lives of heroism, adventure, and joy. They traveled, laughed, fought for the truth, and prayed. They lived full lives.

Please do the Lesson Handout: **Understanding the Saints**

Wrap up of today's session!

- God calls all of us to lives of holiness as part of the Communion of Saints.
- Living a life of holiness means following the example and teachings of Jesus.
- We have many examples of how to do this, including the saints, as well as other people who have answered the call to serve God and His children.
- A good place to start is to follow God's call to love one another, especially strangers and enemies.

Instructions for your Saint Project in Part 2!