



Living A Sacramental Life

Living A Sacramental Life

Unit 1 – Lesson 1

Study Guide for Teachers and Homeschoolers

Prayer Before Studies to be read by one student or by all students and teacher(s)

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Begin with *O Heavenly King, the Trisagion, and Lord's Prayer, then:*

O God our Father, through the grace of Your Holy Spirit – by which You made fishermen into Your all-wise Apostles – enable us to learn and understand the teachings of Your Son's True Faith, so we may live in accordance with Your Will, and be made worthy to one day dwell in Heaven with You, Your Son, and Your Holy Spirit, and with all Your Saints. + Amen.

Goals

✠ Grades K-2

Convey what sacraments are and how they are important in our lives as Orthodox Christians.

✠ Grades 3-5

Identify different sacramental moments, their definitions, and which we have or can experience in our lives.

✠ Grades 6-8

Reflect on the writings of St. Paisios and how God's love is crucial for us to be vessels of holiness in the world.

✠ Grades 9-12

Discuss what sacraments are and how they impact our ability to be holy in our daily lives and in our interactions with others.

Lesson Outline

- Open with the prayers above (2 min)
- Distribute the lesson (*page one, age-level activity, and pens/pencils or crayons*)
- Have students take turns reading page one. *For grades K-5, read portions or provide a summary of page one. (7 min)*
- *All Grades:* Brief discussion based on page one content, using scripture citations, quotes, and questions like these to spark dialogue: (8 min)

⊗ **What is a sacramental life?**

⊗ **How can we be holy?**

⊗ **Are we called to be saints? Why?**

Grades K-2: Concept of being holy

Grades 3-5: God created us to be holy

Grades 6-8: Being holy guides our choices

Grades 9-12: Holiness is a way of life

- Begin handout activity, review instructions by grade level (2 min)
- Students complete activity (8 min)
- Discuss/recap activity and what was learned (5 min)

Grades K-2

Activity Answers

1) B,C 2) A,C,D 3) A,B,D

- Complete "Living a Sacramental Life" activity (8 min)
- Discuss answers for "Living a Sacramental Life" activity (3 min)
When complete, collect these pages from all students, saving them for the last day of Church School when the same page will be shared again with students, comparing their answers with today's, to see what they've learned during the school year.
- Close with the prayers below (2 min)

Tips & Hints

- *This lesson is designed for 45 minute class sessions and can be modified based on your schedule and format.*
- Content from this lesson can be used "out of the box" or supplemental to existing lesson plans.
- Share the **Parent Overview** in a timely manner (no later than Sunday afternoon), so parents can discuss and explore lesson topics with children at their convenience during the coming week.

- **Student Handouts** should be shared in print or digital format with the youth before or no later than the beginning of class.

Encourage young people to keep the handouts, as certain features carry-over and will be referenced in future lessons.

- **Resources to have on hand:** Bibles, pencils or pens (or crayons/markers), access to web-based links in the lesson.
- Ask open-ended questions which may lead the conversation to reveal their thoughts about God.
- As parents and teachers, we may not readily have all the answers, but we have the ability to inspire a desire in children to love God, which can benefit them throughout their lives.

We can always engage our priest to get answers we need and circle back with students next week.

- Pray for your students by name at least weekly.
- Be a positive examples of Christian love and living the Faith. May God bless you in your efforts to educate our young people!
- Questions, ideas, feedback, and suggestions can be directed to the publishers at orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

Prayer After Studies to be read by one student or by all students and teacher(s)

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Conclude with the Hymn to the Theotokos and then:

O God, our Father, we thank you for the blessings received in Your Son's True Faith, help us, through Your Holy Spirit, to apply this knowledge to our words, thoughts, and deeds, that we may live as You desire, being made worthy to receive your precious gifts, glorifying You as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. + Amen.



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Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord!

It's common to hear priests talk about 'sacramental life' in the Orthodox Church. What is a 'sacramental life'? How is it different from our everyday life?

☞ It means happiness, right? Well... not really.

Living A Sacramental Life

In modern society, Christianity is often belittled. There are many reasons, some of which are less reasonable than others, and usually the devil is behind the attacks against the Church. Yet, Jesus Christ assures us that His Church will never be defeated (Matthew 16:18) by sin or evil. This does not excuse us from being obedient and faithful Orthodox Christians.

In fact, one reason the Christianity is criticized in society is because of the visible gap between what Christians say they believe, and how they actually live or express themselves in words and actions. As Orthodox Christians, we believe in a God Who became human as an infant, grew, lived and then publicly died in utter humiliation, and rose triumphantly from the dead restoring humanity to full communion with God. This should be awe-inspiring and motivate believers to live according to Jesus' teachings. So why is it that many Christians behave and speak in ways which are impatient, greedy, petty, judging, unmerciful, or even violent?

Do we act as followers of Jesus Christ?

Are our words, thoughts, and deeds sacred and holy?

The question of human evil is complex, and the gap between the sacred and profane has been apparent from the Church's earliest days. The 'life of the world' which is 'passing away' (1 Jn 2:17) intrudes on us every day. But there is a remedy.

The Mysteries of the Orthodox Church aren't just people in funny robes chanting words and marching around a building. They show us a different way to live. The Church gives us words – and music – to hear; icons to see, touch, pray before and venerate; incense to smell and accompany our prayers; bread and wine to offer for sanctification and receive as spiritual nourishment.

Each of these affirm that life, in its entirety, is sacred. The senses, the matter, that we inhabit and use every day – far from being ordinary, plain, unworthy or dirty! – are in fact sacred. Life is given to us by God from the very beginning, and because it is given to us by God, it is 'very good' (Gen. 1:31). The entire purpose of the Liturgical Mysteries is to give thanks to God for the good things we have. Not only does God give us these good things, but He gives us Himself, in the Eucharist as a shared meal for the community of believers.

The Liturgy teaches us with words, and also shows us, even taking us by the hand and leading us, to an 'attitude of gratitude' for the Good Things we receive. The reason we go back again and again to the Divine Liturgy, is so we can continue learning how to love unconditionally the way that Christ loves us. After encountering Jesus Christ in the liturgy, we are commanded to take this 'attitude of gratitude' back with us out into the world and show Christ's love to others.

'The sacramental life' of Orthodox Christians isn't just showing up for liturgy on Sunday. It is realized in everything we say and do, guided and motivated by the love and gratitude we receive unconditionally from God.



☞ From the Scriptures

- Genesis 1:31
- 1 John 2:17
- John 13:34-35
- John 14:27

☞ From the Saints

'To the fleshly [life] belongs hope in one's own self, in one's honour, riches, in one's own strength... to the spiritual [life] belongs hope in God alone. To the fleshly [life] belong anger, wrath, malice and the desire to be avenged in word and deed; to the spiritual—meekness, innocence and long-suffering. To the fleshly [life] belongs immoderate self-love, to the spiritual—love of God and man.'

- **Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk**, *Counsels on the Particular Duties of Every Christian III.1*

The power of love works in two ways. It torments sinners, even as happens here when a friend suffers from a friend. But it becomes a source of joy for those who have observed its duties.

- **Saint Isaac the Syrian**

☞ Thoughts to Consider

'Centuries of secularism have failed to transform eating into something strictly utilitarian. Food is still treated with reverence... To eat is still something more than to maintain bodily functions. People may not understand what that "something more" is, but they nonetheless desire to celebrate it. They are still hungry and thirsty for sacramental life.'

- **Alexander Schmemmann**, *For the Life of the World*

Discussion Questions: The Sacramental Life

1. What does the word sacred mean? What makes something sacred?
2. In the liturgy, we hear the priest say, "Holy Things are for the Holy." Who and what is He talking about?
(Hint: what is about to take place in the liturgy?)
3. Why do we need to live a sacramental life? Why does it sometimes take effort to do what is holy (sacred or right)?
4. Is the Church invalidated or less holy because there are bad people – or, rather, people who do sinful things – who come into the Church? Why or why not?
5. Listen to the song *Sacred* by Depeche Mode (<https://youtu.be/KBFIVfymbd0>). What do the lyrics say about living a life of holiness? How can a sacred (or sacramental) life help us stay focused on God?
6. How can a sacramental life help us stay focused on God? List sacramental acts/practices we can use...circle those you already do in your spiritual life.

The Sacred in Your World

Read this extended quote from St. Paisios of Mount Athos (1924-1994) and then answer the questions below.

“Some people tell me that they are scandalized because they see many things wrong in the Church. I tell them that if you ask a fly, “Are there any flowers in this area?” it will say, “I don’t know about flowers, but over there in that heap of rubbish you can find all the filth you want.” And it will go on to list all the unclean things it has been to.

“Now, if you ask a honeybee, “Have you seen any unclean things in this area?” it will reply, “Unclean things? No, I have not seen any; the place here is full of the most fragrant flowers.” And it will go on to name all the flowers of the garden or the meadow.

“You see, the fly only knows where the unclean things are, while the honeybee knows where the beautiful iris or hyacinth is.

“As I have come to understand, some people resemble the honeybee and some resemble the fly. Those who resemble the fly seek to find evil in every circumstance and are preoccupied with it; they see no good anywhere. But those who resemble the honeybee only see the good in everything they see. The stupid person thinks stupidly and takes everything in the wrong way, whereas the person who has good thoughts, no matter what he sees, no matter what you tell him, maintains a positive and good thought.”

– St. Paisios of Mt. Athos, “Good and Evil Thoughts,” *Spiritual Counsels III: Spiritual Struggle*

What are positive things in your personal life which reflect the beauty of God’s love?

What negative things can you avoid in your life?

Describe how the Church can help you work through difficult moments or negative things, bringing you closer to God.

Remember to look for the sacred and good in the world like St. Paisios!

Your Sacramental Life

Ages 8-10 (Grades 3-5)

Let's see how your life is already sacramental and how you can grow even closer to God. Match the names of the sacred with their definitions, drawing lines between them.

Then, in the box at right, write a list of sacred experiences you already have experienced or do in your life. Put a star by the sacred moments you want to maintain in your daily routine to grow as an Orthodox Christian following Jesus Christ.

Baptism	Giving of one's self, time, talents, or treasures to help others.
Chrismation	The choral singing and chanting of the liturgical services which is a sacred expression of the teachings of the church.
Confession	The act of being merciful to others in word, deed, or thought.
The Eucharist	Dedicating a portion of one's life to the church. Examples include church school teachers, singers, readers, missionaries, greeters, altar servers, chanters, prison ministry, and hospital chaplains.
Prayer	The rite of initiation where an individual professes their belief in Jesus Christ and wants to be part of the Orthodox Faith and then is immersed in water three times.
Fasting	The images of Jesus Christ, the Theotokos, feasts and saints.
Giving Alms (Acts of Charity)	The sense of awe and wonder recognizing that we are mere creatures in the presence of God, having that same perspective with others.
Icons	The act of repenting to God in the presence of a priest who provides guidance on how to live according to God's teachings.
Self-control	The vigil service at the departure of a member of the church where the faithful pray for their soul before being buried at a cemetery.
Marriage	The means of communicating with God for Orthodox Christians, either done individually or as a community worshipping God. The words can praise God, profess a belief in God, offering gratitude to God, or asking for help from God.
Kindness	The buildings and locations of various size and style where people gather for prayer, services, and to worship God.
Vocations	The act of abstaining from certain (or all) food or behaviors as a means of preparation for a feast or liturgical act.
Liturgical Music	The anointing of an individual with Holy Chrism, sealing them with the Gift of the Holy Spirit and united to the Orthodox Faith.
Humility	The blessing by the church of two people who want to live a life united in God's love for each other and possibly children.
Blessing of things	The bread and wine, offered to God during the liturgy which are mystically transfigured into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.
Monasticism	Making a commitment to not live in excess or to avoid certain behaviors which may lead to sin or are sinful.
Church Architecture	The act of sanctifying with Holy Water items, places, or events.
Funeral	The group of men and women who "leave the world" and live in small communities, sharing all things, dedicating their life to God.

My Sacred Experiences:

Sample courtesy of Orthodox Journeys
www.orthodoxjourneys.com

What is a Sacrament?

There are many different things which are sacred or sacramental in our lives. Circle the right answers for these three sacramental activities (*there might be more than one right answer*).

Then, review the list of sacramental acts in the right column, and draw a picture of it on the back of this page!



Painting icons is sacramental because:

- A. God wants us to paint His portrait
- B. We glorify God through our creativity
- C. Icons help bring us closer to God
- D. You can't take pictures of the saints

Baptism

Chrismation

Confessions

The Eucharist

Ordination

(Deacon, Priest, Bishop)

Marriage

Holy Unction

Praying

Fasting

Joy

Feasting

Patience

Creativity

Humility *(Fear of God)*

Kindness / Gentleness

Church Music

Icons

Architecture

Monasticism

Funeral

Vocations *(singer, reader, church school teacher, FOCUS, IOCC, missionary)*

Charity / Generosity

Blessing items in church *(flowers, water, oil, fruit, candles, icons, crosses, vestments, bread, homes, cars, pets, classrooms)*



Marriage is sacramental because:

- A. Jesus blessed the marriage in Cana of Galilee
- B. Having big parties at weddings is fun
- C. God should be at the center of every relationship
- D. The Church wants every couple to be holy



Helping those in need is sacramental because:

- A. We are called to be like Christ, helping others
- B. At the Last Judgement we will be asked how we shared with those less fortunate
- C. If we help others, we gain points
- D. Loving others is part of who we are as Orthodox Christians

Living a Sacramental Life

Ages 5-18 (Grades K-12)

Today, we're going to do a sacramental assessment of you! Don't worry, it's a self-reflection and not a test. There are no right or wrong answers, only an opportunity to be honest about yourself and who you want to be as an Orthodox Christian.

Our lives provide multiple opportunities each day to be holy and good in the eyes of God. And the Church provides us with the means to grow closer to God in each moment. Whether with prayer, fasting, charitable acts, or attending divine services, our sacramental life as Orthodox Christians is God's blessings.

NAME: _____

GRADE: _____

What is a sacrament (or holy)?

I am impacted (affected, changed, transformed) by the sacramental (holy) in my life by being/doing....

*I need the sacred in my life because:
(Hint: Who doesn't want us to grow closer to God?)*

I am sacred (holy) by being/doing...

Examples of God's blessings in my life:



Introduction

Living A Sacramental Life

Unit 1 – Lesson 1

Resource Overview for Parents and Families

Questions of the Day:

- Do we act as followers of Jesus Christ?
- Are our words, thoughts, and deeds sacred and holy?

Thoughts for Parents:

Life can be busy - sometimes more than we can handle. As parents it can be difficult to always bring our "A" game to the spiritual aspects of work, home, and relationships.

It's important to make time for the holy, even in small amounts, because when our words, deeds, and thoughts are grounded in Christ, we can be examples of love, compassion, and holiness even in the most difficult situations. Being holy doesn't mean being perfect - it does mean making our best effort in the hope of bringing us closer to God and each other.

We Learned About

✠ This Week's Theme

God created us, and as His children, He gives us everything we need to live. These blessings make it possible for us to do His commandments as we journey through life.

✠ From Scriptures

- Genesis 1:31
- 1 John 2:17
- John 13:34-35
- John 14:27

✠ From the Saints

The power of love works in two ways. It torments sinners, even as happens here when a friend suffers from a friend. But it becomes a source of joy for those who have observed its duties.

- Saint Isaac the Syrian

✠ Daily Living

Living a sacramental life comes in many forms, usually involving prayer, fasting, charitable works.

Let's see how we can grow closer to God as members of His Body: The Church.

Questions for Your Kids

- Why does God bless us?
- What does it mean to be holy?
- How can we as a family be holy together? As individuals?
- Where can we be holy?

Learn and Discover Together

- How can we act as Christ's followers in society?
- How can we sanctify (make holy) the world?
- Why is it our responsibility to be Christ's Body in the world?

- What did God say after creating each part of the world?
Hint: It wasn't "This is bad..."
- What does it mean to live forever with God?
- How does loving others make us God's disciples?
- What is Jesus teaching His disciples in John 14:22-29?
- When do we read John 14:22-29 in church?
Hint: it's a day during Holy Week
- How does Christ practice what He preaches?

- How can love be a torment for sinners?
- How is love a source of joy?
- How can we observe God's commandments?
- Are we supposed to only help people we like or are our friends?
- Read about St. Isaac the Syrian here: <https://bit.ly/StIsaac-the-Syrian>
- How can we become saints like St. Isaac?
Hint: read James 2:14-26

- How can we learn from the life of the Virgin Mary how to bear Christ in our life?
- Why is prayer a sacramental act?
Hint: What does prayer do?
- How can the saints help us be holy?
- Let's learn how to sing this hymn: <http://ww1.antiochian.org/new-commandment>
- What does it mean to love one another as Christ loves us?

Tips and Hints

Use as many or as few of the questions and discussion topics above to help your children learn about the faith and how they can live a sacramental life as part of the Orthodox Faith.

Ask open-ended questions which may lead the conversation to reveal their thoughts about God.

As parents, we may not readily have all the answers, but we have the ability to inspire a desire in children to love God, which can benefit them throughout their lives.

Find moments when you can pray together as a family, and on your own, including prayers for your children to their guardian angels in your own personal prayers.

The Theotokos and saints are always available for you through prayer, ask for their help and guidance in your daily life.

Observe the fasts and feasts of the Church which can help build a structure for the holy alongside the secular for you and your children.

Glorify to God for all things!



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