

# SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IDEAS

## CALLED TO BE SAINTS

### GOALS

What is theosis? Why is it important?

Who is a saint?

Who is my patron saint? When is my nameday?

Learn about the lives of the saints

Who are the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant?

## GUIDE TO CREATING THE CURRICULUM

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### IDEAS FOR LESSON TOPICS:

Teach all topics on a developmentally appropriate level for each age group and each of these topics have the potential of being broken down into multiple lessons.

- THEOSIS: What is it? Why is it important?
  - SAINTS: Who is a saint?
  - CALLED TO BE SAINTS: Saint Paul tells us in several of his epistles that we are all called to be saints. (Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 1:1, Phillippians 1:1) What does this mean we should be doing? How do we do it?
  - CLASSIFICATION OF SAINTS: People are saints for different reasons. We tend to group saints into categories in order to quickly know something about their life. There are six basic categories of saints - the apostles, the prophets, the martyrs, the Fathers and hierarchs of the Church, the monastics, and the Just. We also often provide a title to a saint as a more specific way of knowing about their life at a glance. Such as: Equal-to-the-Apostles, Fool-for-Christ, Unmercenary, Hieromartyr, etc. What do each of these mean?
  - HOW TO READ AN ICON: Almost always, the saint's name will be written on their icon. If their name or title is not provided or it is written in a language we cannot read, how can we still know about the saint by looking at their icon? (How they are dressed? What do the color of clothes mean in icons? What are the saints holding in their hands? Etc)
  - WHO ARE THE SAINTS IN OUR CHURCH?: Learn about the saints in your parish's narthex, nave, and altar. Who are they? Learn about their lives. If needed, have a mini lesson on the parts of an Orthodox church.
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- **PATRON SAINTS:** Who is my patron saint? When is my nameday? How do you celebrate a nameday? Who is our parish's patron saint? When is our parish's nameday? What do we do on our parish's nameday? Who is our parish priest's patron saint? Who are my classmates' patron saints? Who are my family's patron saints? Who are my godparents' patron saints? How can we use our patron saints as an example in our own life today? For example, if your patron saint is Saint Nicholas - you could work towards anonymously giving someone money so they could pay a bill they can't afford to pay. You could work toward anonymously giving gifts to help someone instead of waiting to receive gifts.
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### **ACTIVITY IDEAS:**

- Create a class book of the saints you studied
  - Create a class book about everyone's patron saint and nameday
  - Create a map / bulletin board showing where the saints lived
  - Spend several lessons sitting in your church learning about some of the icons on the walls and ceiling
  - Create a class book telling of the lives of the saints on the walls and ceiling of your church
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IDEAS

## THE BIBLE

### GOALS

Who wrote the Bible?  
Who decided which books would be included in the Bible?  
What is the Old Testament?  
What is the New Testament?  
Do we use the Bible during our church services?  
Why is the Bible relevant and important to me?

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- How did the Bible come into being?
  - What is a covenant?
  - What is the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament?
  - How do you read the Bible?
  - OLD TESTAMENT: Read stories. Who are the people in the stories? What are some things I need to know in order to understand the context of the stories in the Old Testament? How does the Old Testament apply to my life today?
  - NEW TESTAMENT: Read stories. What are the different parts of the New Testament? (Gospels, History of the Early Church, the Epistles, and Revelation) Who wrote them? Why? How does the New Testament apply to my life today?
  - When do we use the Bible? (Church services, prayer, for reading on our own and with others)
  - Why is the Bible important and relevant to my daily life?
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### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Create a timeline of when some of the people lived & where events occurred
  - Create a map of where people live and where events happened
  - Create a class book of the students' illustrations of their favorite stories of the Bible
  - Create a play for the parish about what they learned over the year or favorite stories
  - Create a video to explain a lesson or to share what the students have learned with others
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IDEAS

## PRAYER, FASTING, & ALMSGIVING

### GOALS

How do I pray? When do I pray?

What is fasting? Why do we fast? How do we fast?

What is almsgiving? Who do we help? How do we help?

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- FASTING: (PLEASE SEEK GUIDANCE FROM YOUR PARISH PRIEST BEFORE PREPARING THIS LESSON. HE KNOW THE PARISH'S NEEDS BEST.) When do we fast? What do we fast from? When and how do we start? Why do we fast?
  - PRAYER: When do we pray? How do we pray? Sometimes we pray by ourselves and sometimes with pray with others. Why do we pray?
  - ALMSGIVING: What is almsgiving? Is it always giving money or is it sometimes giving of your time? Who should I help? How should I help others? When should I help others?
  - FASTING, PRAYER, & ALMSGIVING: Fasting should always be accompanied with prayer and almsgiving. Why?
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### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- FASTING CLASSROOM POTLUCK: Each child brings in a homemade fasting food to share during Sunday school along with copies of the recipe to share with students. Encourage the kids to help their parents make the dish - because kids who help make the food, typically will be more willing to try it. You could make a class book with photos of the shared dishes and recipes or simply send home copies of the recipes to parents. You can also tell you students to put a star or check mark on the recipes that they enjoyed eating so their parents know which recipes to make at home.
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- **FAMILY & CLASSROOM ALTARS:** Where do you put a family or classroom altar? (If at all possible, on an east facing wall. Why do we do this?) What do you include in a family or classroom altar? (It can be as simple as a couple of icons and your prayer book or include much more such as all the family's patron saints, a small censer, an oil lamp, a Bible, prayer books, candles, etc.) Have the children help you set up a classroom altar and use it every Sunday. Send home a handout explaining what a family altar is and why we have them. Include a drawing or photo of an example of a family altar and possible items to include in it. Some families will already have a family altar while others simply weren't sure what to do or didn't realize they should have one. Include some links with where to find icons, censers, oil lamps, candles, and prayer books.
  - **TEACHING ASPECTS OF PRAYER:** How do we make the sign of the cross? Many of us assume this is only something little ones need to be taught. Include the big kids in this lesson too because some of them may never have been taught. For older children, don't ask who knows how to make the sign of the cross. Just teach the whole class - teach them in a way that explains why we make the sign of the cross, that we use our right hand and why, how we place our fingers and why, & what touching our forehead, chest, and shoulders mean. Demonstrate and then ask everyone to make the sign of the cross together. Don't single out the kids that don't know how to do it. Everyone does it together. You could even make it a little bit of a history lesson and explain why Roman Catholics make the sign of the cross slightly different from Orthodox. ~ How do we make prostrations? When do we do them? ~ How do we light a home censer? When do we use it?
  - **ALMSGIVING PROJECTS:** Have the students help with one of the parish's organizations that is collecting money or items to help others or create a project for the students to work on to help others. Ideas - **PARISH OR COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY:** Ask parents to let their children pick out several non-perishable food items at the store and bring them to church. Kids love to participate and will take ownership of a project when they are allowed to make choices themselves instead of parents handing them a few cans and telling them to give it to their teacher. ~ **HOMELESS BAGS:** Does your parish have homeless individuals visiting your priest? Provide Father with ziploc bags he can hand out when people come to ask him for help. Include things like water bottles, non-perishable snacks, hand wipes, toothbrush & toothpaste, comb, kleenex, travel shampoo, etc. ~ **HELP FOSTER CHILDREN:** Contact your local foster care office and ask them what they need in the way of donations. Provide a lesson to your students about foster care. (Foster children can not stay with their parents for one reason or another and need to live with a new family they've never met before. This can be scary for them and they often come to these new families with nothing more than a few belongings in a pillow



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case or trash bag.) The social workers will let you know what they need. Sometimes it's backpacks or bags for the children to carry their belongings. Sometimes it's blankets or stuffed animals to provide the children with a little comfort as they move them to a new house. Sometimes it's with Christmas presents. ~ ST. NICHOLAS PROJECT: Collect funds to be given to Father so that he can provide money to one or more individuals or families in the parish who are struggling and need help to pay bills. How did St. Nicholas try to help people? (Anonymously. He didn't want anyone to know it was him because it wasn't important to him to be thanked or recognized for the help he provided. We can try to imitate St. Nicholas in this way - by giving quietly and anonymously to those in need.)

- LIVES OF THE SAINTS: Learn about several saints and the ways they helped others. Did they give them money? (Ex: St. Nicholas) Did they pray for them? (Ex: St. Paisios) Did they protect them from danger? (Ex: St. Maria of Paris) Did they provide care for them? (Ex: St. Stylianos) How can we be more like these saints today?
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IDEAS

## CHURCH HISTORY

### GOALS

Create a general timeline of major events in the life of the Church, learn about what happened, and why this is important to know today

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- HOLY LAND REVEALED by Jodi Magness, The Great Courses Audio Book
  - THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH THROUGH THE AGES by Sophie Koulomzin: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.32000003394477&view=1up&seq=1> ~ The hard copy version is out of print, but if you can get your hands on it, the book is an excellent resource!
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### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- CREATE A TIMELINE: Use fax paper, sentence strips, or other option to create a bulletin board or hallway timeline of the events you study in the life of the Church. Decide where you want to start - Old Testament, at the birth of Christ, or another point of significance. Use drawings of people and events whenever possible to aid children in remembering the information taught.
  - BULLETIN BOARD: Create a bulletin board that explains each major point of study for the students. Decide whether you want to create the bulletin board in the classroom or the parish hall. Let your students help with setting it up - this will help them remember the details of the lesson(s) better.
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- **CREATE POWERPOINT/KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS, VIDEOS, OR PLAYS:** Our children have some amazing talents when it comes to creating electronic presentations, videos, or writing a play script. There may be some adults in the parish that can help with this too.
  - **ICONS:** Learn about what is happening in the icons depicting historic events of the Church.
  - **VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS:** Take a tour of Agia Sophia in modern day Istanbul, the Holy Land, or places in Alaska where saints taught the native people about Orthodox Christianity.
  - **CREATE A CLASS BOOK:** About historical events you learn about - students can illustrate the events and write a short summary about what happened.
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IDEAS

## THE SACRAMENTS

### GOALS

- What is a sacrament?
- What happens during each of the sacraments?
- Why are they important?

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- SACRAMENTS: What is a sacrament? What does sacrament mean? Oftentimes, seven sacraments are listed, but the Orthodox Church has not officially declared we have only seven sacraments. It's more complicated than that. Why? Discuss with your parish priest how he would like you to structure the lessons on the sacraments.
  - BAPTISM: When are we baptized? Who baptizes us? What happens at a baptism? Why are we baptized? What are the role of godparents? Who are my godparents? What are patron saints? Who is my patron saint? When is my nameday? How do we celebrate namedays?
  - CHRISMATION: What is chrismation? Have I been chrismated? When did it happen?
  - EUCHARIST: When do we receive Holy Communion? What is Holy Communion? How do I prepare to receive Holy Communion?
  - CONFESSION: What is confession? When should I go? How often should I go? What happens during confession? What do I say? Does the priest tell other people what I confess? Why is it important to go to confession?
  - HOLY UNCTION: What is Holy Unction? When do we receive it? How does this help me?
  - MARRIAGE: What is marriage? What happens at a wedding? What are the different parts of the wedding service? Why are weddings important?
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- **ORDINATION:** Who can be ordained? Why? Where did ordination come from? What is the role of someone who has been ordained a deacon, priest, or bishop?
  - **BURIAL OF THE DEAD:** Why do we have a special service for someone when they die? What happens at a funeral? We sing/say, “May their memory be eternal.” What does this mean? How do we make kolyva. What does it mean and why is it important?
  - **MONASTICISM:** What is monasticism? Who can become a monk or a nun? Where do they live? What happens when they decide to become a monk or a nun? Why is monasticism important?
  - Which sacraments can we receive only once and which ones can we receive over and over again?
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### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- **CREATE VIDEOS:** Have your priest explain each of the sacraments you will be studying. Include video clips or photos from some of the recent sacraments at your parish.
  - **CREATE STORIES & ILLUSTRATIONS:** Explain each of the sacraments for younger students along with some illustrations. Tell them what happens during the sacraments and how people react to them. For example, oftentimes there are celebrations after a baptism, wedding, or ordination. For funerals, you can help them understand how to process grief. We tell someone who has lost a loved one, “May their memory be eternal!” Why do we do this? We can say prayers for those who have passed away. We can make kolyva to pray for them and remember them.
  - Teach the kids how to make prosphora & why we make it
  - Teach the kids how to make kolyva & why we make it
  - **CREATE A BULLETIN BOARD:** If available, have the children bring in a photo from their baptism and create a bulletin board explaining the sacrament of baptism. Have students bring in a picture of their parents wedding and create a bulletin board about the sacrament of marriage.
  - **LEARN HYMNS:** Learn some of the hymns that are sung specifically at certain sacraments. What do these hymns mean?
  - **ICONS:** Teach the kids about what is going on in the icons depicting sacraments
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IDEAS

## THE DIVINE LITURGY

### GOALS

- Learn about the Divine Liturgy
- Nurture family discussions about the Divine Liturgy
- Foster deeper participation in the Divine Liturgy

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- HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIVINE LITURGY
  - LITURGIES OF ST. BASIL, ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, AND PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY
  - PARTS OF THE DIVINE LITURGY
  - PRACTICAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE DIVINE LITURGY
  - USING OUR SENSES DURING THE DIVINE LITURGY
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### ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- CREATE VIDEOS: to explain different aspects of the Divine Liturgy
  - INVITE AN ICONOGRAPHER to teach the kids about icons
  - ICONS: Teach the kids how to read an icon - What do the colors mean? What do the clothes mean? What do the objects or people in their hands mean? Why are saints depicted the way they are?
  - MAKE BEESWAX CANDLES: You might be able to take a field trip to a local monastery or you can gather the supplies and teach the kids yourself
  - MAKE A TIMELINE: Have the kids put the parts of the liturgy into the correct sequence
  - CREATE STORIES OR CLASS BOOKS: as a teaching tool or as a lesson review for students to share what they've learned
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- TAKE A CHURCH TOUR: Teach your students about the different parts of an Orthodox church, the icons on your parish's walls and ceiling, and some of the objects you see while in the church.
  - VESTMENTS: Ask your priest if he could explain his vestments to the kids
  - HYMNS: Learn some of the hymns sung at every Divine Liturgy
  - READ STORIES ABOUT THE DIVINE LITURGY
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