

WEEK 3: WORSHIP IN THE CATACOMBS

PRE-K - KINDERGARTEN

GOALS

What is a catacomb?

Why did they worship in the catacombs?

LESSON

Tell story about the period of persecution in the early Church

Discussion about martyrs and catacombs

There was a time when the rulers of the land did not like Christians. Some of these rulers were mean to the Christians and some of the rulers even killed the Christians! They wanted everyone to worship them and when the Christians refused to do so, then they punished them. A martyr is someone who was killed because they believed in God. Sadly this happened, but we remember these saints and how much God meant to them. They refused to worship anyone except God. When you look at an icon in your home or in our churches, you will usually know that a saint is a martyr because they are holding a small cross in their hand. Because the rulers were being so mean and nasty to the Christians, they had to hide in secret places with others in order to pray and receive Holy Communion. One of the places they hid was a catacomb. A catacomb is an underground tunnel dug by people. For a long time, Christians worshiped in the catacombs - until one day St. Constantine made a new rule that said nobody could be mean or kill Christians anymore.

Activity: Oftentimes, martyrs are depicted on icons with a cross in their hand. Show icons of martyrs and point to the cross each of them is holding in their hand.

You can use your own icons, show icons you found online, or use the printouts from Orthodox Pebbles (<https://orthodoxpebbles.com/saints/all-about-saints/>)

Who is a martyr? (A person who will always say they love God, even when someone is being mean to them)

Show photos of a catacomb:

- <https://fakegenesis.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/catacombs-rome-01.jpg>
- https://www.kissfromitaly.com/img/tours/48_rome_catacombs.jpg
- <http://www.wheresmalta.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Catacombs-in-Malta.png>

What is a catacomb? (It is an underground tunnel dug by people)

Why did the Christians pray in the catacombs? (Because they needed a place they could gather together to worship God without being punished by the rulers)

WEEK 3: WORSHIP IN THE CATACOMBS

1ST - 2ND GRADE

GOALS

What is a catacomb?

Why did they worship in the catacombs?

LESSON

Tell story about the period of persecution in the early Church
Discussion about martyrs and catacombs

There was a time when the rulers of the land did not like Christians. Some of these rulers were mean to the Christians and some of the rulers even killed the Christians! They wanted everyone to worship them and when the Christians refused to do so, then they punished them. A martyr is someone who was killed because they believed in God. Sadly this happened, but we remember these saints and how much God meant to them. They refused to worship anyone except God. When you look at an icon in your home or in our churches, you will usually know that a saint is a martyr because they are holding a small cross in their hand. Because the rulers were being so mean and nasty to the Christians, they had to hide in secret places with others in order to pray and receive Holy Communion. One of the places they hid was a catacomb. A catacomb is an underground tunnel dug by people. For a long time, Christians worshiped in the catacombs - until one day St. Constantine made a new rule that said nobody could be mean or kill Christians anymore.

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Who is a martyr? (A person who died because they said they believed in God)

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What is a catacomb? (It is an underground cemetery dug by people)

Why did the Christians pray in the catacombs? (Because they needed a place they could gather together to worship God without being punished by the rulers)

WEEK 3: WORSHIP IN THE CATACOMBS

3RD - 5TH GRADE

GOALS

What is a catacomb?

Why did they worship in the catacombs?

LESSON

Tell story about the period of persecution in the early Church

Discussion about martyrs and catacombs

There was a time when the Roman Empire ruled a huge part of the world. These emperors enjoyed the glory and honor that people devoted to them, but the Christians refused to treat the emperor as if he were a god. They believed that there is only one God and the emperor was not Him. This made the emperors angry and as each of them came into power, they saw the Christians as a threat to their supreme authority. Some of these emperors began to punish the Christians, while others would kill the Christians when they found out their beliefs. This is called persecution. A martyr is someone who was killed because they believed in God. Sadly this happened to many Christians, but we remember these martyrs and how much God meant to them. When you look at an icon in your home or in our churches, you will know that a saint is a martyr because oftentimes they are holding a small cross in their hand. Because the Roman emperors treated the Christians so poorly, the Christians had to hide in secret places in order to pray and receive Holy Communion together. One of the places they hid was in a catacomb. A catacomb is an underground cemetery dug into the earth by people. For a long time, Christians worshiped in the catacombs - until the Emperor Constantine (St. Constantine) made a new rule stating that Christians would no longer be killed. But before Christianity was legal, the Roman colosseum was used as a way to punish slaves, criminals, and Christians by forcing them to fight one another in gladiatorial games or facing wild animals. Many Christians were martyred in the Roman colosseum.

EARLY CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

Show photos of symbols: See worksheet provided

The Good Shepherd - This is the most widely seen symbol in the catacombs. Sheep were a source of wool, milk, cheese, and meat. The shepherd would guide his sheep to nurturing pasture, would search for them when they wandered off, and would risk his life to protect them. The shepherd represents Christ and the lamb around his shoulders represents the soul that He has saved.

Monogram of Christ - It is represented by interweaving the first two letters of Christ (in Greek). If this symbol was placed on a grave, it meant that a Christian was buried there.

The “orante” - a figure with open arms praying represents a divine peace

A dove - holding an olive branch also represents a person with divine peace

A fish - In Greek, it says IΧΘΥΣ (ichtùs), which is a acrostic for Iesùs Christòs Theòu Uiòs Sotèr = Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.

The Alpha and the Omega - Are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This represented that Christ is the beginning and the end.

An anchor - is a symbol of salvation

A peacock - is a symbol of immortality

SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Show icon of St. Ignatius of Antioch: <http://d2aic5imlif5n2.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/728-ignatios-antioch-13-800.jpg>

One of them was St. Ignatius of Antioch. He was a bishop from Asia Minor, which is in the country of Turkey today. He was a bishop who was arrested and sent to Rome to die in the arena. The emperor hoped that his death would send a message to all Christians that they need to offer up incense to the Roman emperor instead of to God. St. Ignatius is often

depicted in the Roman colosseum while being attacked by lions when you see his icon. He had a deep love for God and absolutely no one could change his mind about it!

Who is St. Ignatius? (He was a bishop from Antioch who was arrested and sent to the Roman colosseum because he was a Christian.)

Activity: Oftentimes, martyrs are depicted on icons with a cross in their hand. Show icons of martyrs and point to the cross each of them is holding in their hand.

- St. Sophia and her children: <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/0b/df/9b/0bdf9beb34149eafba394969e3fa73dd--faith-hope-love-christianity.jpg>
- The Holy Chinese Martyrs: <https://andreasblom.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/chinesemartyrschernyak.jpg>
- St. Peter the Aleut: https://ellampson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/250px-saint_peter_the_aleut.jpg

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EARLY CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

During the Time of Persecution

THE GOOD SHEPHERD



MONOGRAM OF CHRIST



ORANTE



DOVE



FISH



ALPHA AND OMEGA



ANCHOR



PEACOCK



WEEK 3: WORSHIP IN THE CATACOMBS

MIDDLE SCHOOL

GOALS

What is a catacomb?

Why did they worship in the catacombs?

LESSON

Read: pages 47 - 53 in "The Orthodox Christian Church Through the Ages"

by Sophie Koulomzin (page 61 on the digital version bar)

Answer & Discuss Questions

What does persecution mean?

an effort to get rid of, subjugate, or kill people based on membership in a religious, ethnic, social, or racial group

Who is a martyr?

A person who was killed because they refused to worship anyone but God

Oftentimes, when you see an icon of a martyr, they are holding a small cross in their hand indicating their martyrdom.

Who was St. Ignatius of Antioch?

He was a bishop from Asia Minor, which is in the country of Turkey today. He was a bishop who was arrested and sent to Rome to die in the arena. The emperor hoped that his death would send a message to all Christians that they need to offer up incense to the Roman emperor instead of to God. St. Ignatius is often

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The Orthodox Christian Church Through the Ages by Sophie Koulomzin

Chapter 9: Persecutions -

<https://babel.bathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.32000003394477&view=1up&seq=61>

One of the ways that early Christians were persecuted was forcing them to fight in gladiatorial games or facing wild animals in the Roman colosseum.

Discuss religious persecution in modern times or *St. Ignatius of Antioch*.

What is a catacomb? <https://www.catacombe.roma.it/>

*Based on what you read on pages *The Orthodox Christian Church Through the Ages*, why do you think the early Christians gathered in the catacombs to worship?*

Show a photo of a catacomb. Show photos or drawings of Christian symbols that were used to communicate during Christian persecution in the early Church and in the catacombs. Can you identify or label the photos of early Christian symbols? Sometimes, multiple symbols were placed together.

EARLY CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

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