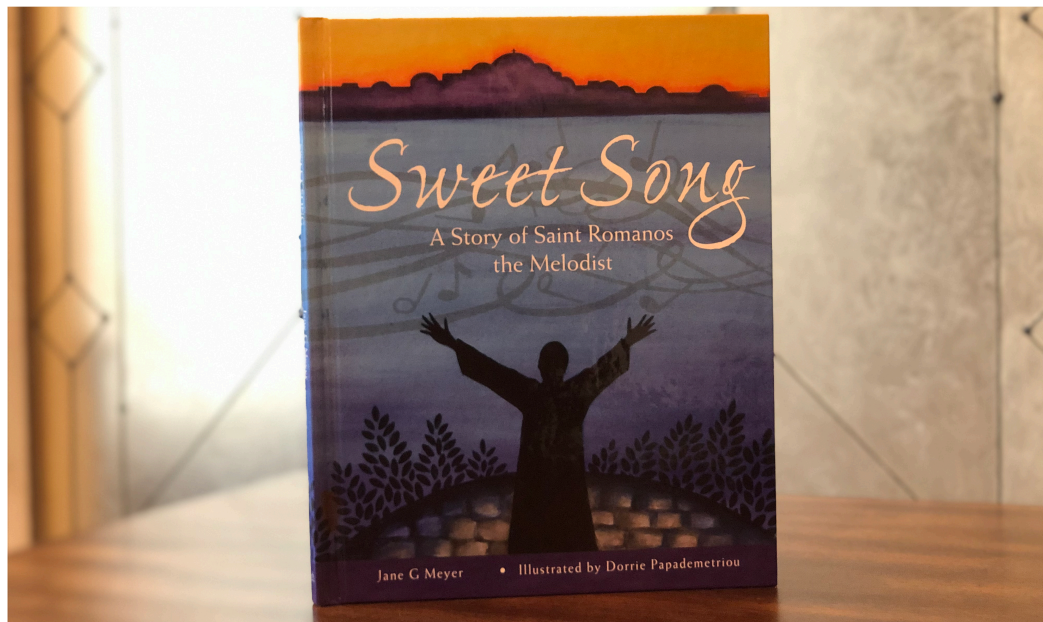


SWEET SONG

A Story of Saint Romanos the Melodist

LESSONS & ACTIVITIES FOR AGES 5 - 10



ABOUT THE BOOK

Sweet Song is written by Jane G. Meyer and illustrated by Dorrie Papademetriou

The story is best suited for children ages 5 -10. Romanos helps to care for the church of Agia Sophia, Holy Wisdom, by preparing the church for the services. The Patriarch adores Romanos because of his humble and devout

1

WORSHIP

Hymns written by
Saint Romanos

2

TEACHING

Agia Sophia
Kontakion
Icon of St. Romanos

3

PRAXIS

The life of
Saint Romanos

*"Today the Virgin
gives birth*

*To the One who
transcends all*

*And the earth
offers a cave*

*To the One who
cannot be
approached.*

*The angels with
the shepherds*

Sing His glory,

And the Wise Men

*With the Star
travel on their way.*

*For our sake a
young child is
born*

*Who is God from
all eternity..."*

- St. Romanos
the Melodist,
Nativity of Christ
Kontakion

ways and pays him as a reader of the church, even though Romanos primarily cleans and lights candles instead of singing and composing hymns. Some of the readers become jealous of him and try to embarrass him in front of everyone by insisting he sing during a service. Romanos stood silent, singing nothing. That night, he prayed before an icon of the Theotokos. Romanos drifted off to sleep and during his dream the Theotokos visited him. She presented him with a small scroll, gently pressed it against his lips, and told him to swallow it. The next day, Romanos was able to sing and compose hymns just like the readers!

FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Worship, Teaching, Praxis

Dr. Constance Tarasar wrote her doctoral dissertation on *A Process Model for the Design of Curriculum for Orthodox Christian Religious Education*. She explains that we pass our Orthodox Christian faith on to our children through a synergistic approach of incorporating participation in church services (worship), with guidance from our clergy, teachers, and parents (teaching), and living our faith daily wherever we go (praxis).



Lights inside the Church of Holy Wisdom

St. Romanos wrote thousands of kontakia and there are about 80 that have survived to today. One of the most famous ones is the kontakion sung on Christmas Day. Our children hear it being sung when we bring them to church on the feast of the Nativity of Christ. (Worship) We can read the kontakion to our children before the service or play a YouTube video of someone singing it before going to church. We can also explain the meaning of a “kontakion” so our children understand what the word refers to in context of someone talking about church services. (Teaching) Additionally, we can teach our children about the life of St. Romanos and

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[St. Romanos the Melodist - Kontakion on the Nativity of Christ](#)

YouTube: [Kontakion of the Nativity of Christ](#) in English

YouTube: [Kontakion of the Nativity of Christ](#) Greek & English

YouTube: [Kontakion of the Nativity of Christ](#) in Slavonic

YouTube: [Kontakion of the Nativity of Christ](#) in Arabic



how he dedicated his life to God. How can we learn from him and use his example in our own life? (Praxis)

LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES

Making the Most of Them

We process and learn information through all of our senses. The Church, in all her wisdom, knows this and incorporates all of our senses during the Divine Liturgy, which is a teaching service. It's important to remember this when we are preparing our lessons for our students, regardless of their age. The more senses we engage during the lesson, the more likely the student will retain the information long term.

Therefore, when planning your lessons, try to avoid only using one mode of teaching. For example, only having a verbal discussion. It's important to provide visual notes or pictures to go along with the discussion. If at all possible - and it's not always possible - provide an element that incorporates the students' sight, hearing, smell, taste, and the ability to have a hands-on element during the lesson. Again, it's not always going to be feasible to include all the senses, but try to include as many as possible.

Secondly, think carefully about what you plan for your lesson. Does each element of the lesson support the goal? Try to avoid "filler" activities as part of the main lesson. Save those for if you finish earlier than expected and have some time left over before parents pick up their children. If you choose to provide a coloring sheet, ask yourself, "How does this support the lesson's goal?" If you plan to have a discussion about the picture and then color it - great! If not, use it for the children who finish early to keep them occupied. In the classroom setting, we have

such a short period of time with our kids for religious education. Let's make the most of it!

"CHRISTIAN PASTORS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS MUST RECOVER THE EDUCATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF WORSHIP AND PRAXIS ALONGSIDE THAT OF SCHOOLING IN ORDER TO RESTORE A SENSE OF WHOLENESS TO EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH."

- CONSTANCE TARASAR,
A PROCESS MODEL FOR THE DESIGN OF CURRICULUM
FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



SWEET SONG

A Story of Saint Romanos the Melodist

LESSON & ACTIVITIES FOR AGES 5 - 7

GOALS: 1. Learn about the life of Saint

Romanos the Melodist 2. How should we treat others?

Read *Sweet Song* by Jane G. Meyer to your children.

You can either pause the story and ask some questions or ask questions at the end. (You may want to turn back to the pages where you're asking a question to let the picture remind them of what was happening.)

QUESTIONS:

Did St. Romanos work at the church?

What did he do?

Yes! He helped to light candles, clean, and (eventually) sang during the services.

Should we ever make fun of someone when they are not good at something?

Why? How should we treat others?

No! Because it hurts their feelings. All of us are good at something and not so good at something else. We should always

encourage and help one another instead of teasing them.

The readers at the church could have made a better choice about how they treated Romanos. What could they have done differently?

They could have offered to teach Romanos how to sing better instead of being jealous.

What did St. Romanos do when he was sad and wanted help?

He prayed to the Mother of God.

Can you pray to the Mother of God too when you're sad or need help?

Absolutely! She loves hearing prayers from all of us! She will ask her Son, Jesus, to help us.

What happened after St. Romanos prayed to the Mother of God?

He could compose and sing beautiful songs during the church services!

What should we do when we are mean to someone?

We should say sorry or ask the person to forgive us, just like the reader in the story.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Learn about the icon of St. Romanos



The OCA Depart. of Christian Education has provided [icons of St. Romanos](#) on their website.

Let's take a look at St. Romanos' icon! An icon of a saint always has their name written on it near their head. Sometimes it's written in a language we can't read, so how can we tell that it's St. Romanos then?

Almost always, saints are shown with something in at least one of their hands. Whatever the saint is holding gives us a clue about their life. What is St. Romanos holding? (He is holding a church and a scroll with music on it.) We learned from

our story that St. Romanos worked and sang at a church. We also learned that he wrote and sang lots of songs.

We can also look at his clothes. St. Romanos worked at a church called Agia Sophia or the church of Holy Wisdom. The emperor of the Byzantine Empire would attend services at this church. The clothes that St. Romanos is wearing in this icon were worn by the readers at the church. The colors of the clothes also tell us that he represented the emperor of the Byzantine Empire, in some way, because this particular color is called royal purple or imperial purple. There was a strict rule that only people who represented the emperor could wear this reddish-purple color.

2. What does the church of Agia Sophia (or Holy Wisdom) look like today?

There are many pictures and video tours of this church online. Do a little bit of searching online for what you want to show your children and have it prepared ahead of time.



SWEET SONG

A Story of Saint Romanos the Melodist

LESSON & ACTIVITIES FOR AGES 8 - 10

GOAL: Learn vocabulary terms

pertaining to the story before reading or listening to *Sweet Song*

VOCABULARY:

Christmas:

The feast of the Nativity of Christ

What happened on this feast day?

Jesus Christ was born of the Theotokos

Reader:

A person who is tonsured by a bishop and reads prayers, psalms, and the Epistle reading. In this story, a reader is also someone who sings during the services.

Lord, have mercy on me:

A shortened form of the Jesus Prayer - the Jesus Prayer is often said by individuals while using a prayer rope, but can be said whenever needed

Deacon:

A deacon is ordained by a bishop and is a helper to a priest or bishop. Do you have a deacon at your parish? If so, what is his name?

Priest:

A priest is ordained by a bishop. He will lead and teach people at a church about God. What is the name of the priest at your parish?

Emperor:

A ruler in charge of a large area, usually many countries. This story is referring to the emperor of the Byzantine Empire.

Ambo:

In the early Christian Church it was a raised desk or podium from which the Gospels or Epistles were read or chanted

Patriarch:

A bishop who leads several other bishops. This story is referring to the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Mother of God:

She is the one who gave birth to Jesus. She is often called the Theotokos, which means "God-bearer."

After going over the vocabulary, read the story of *Sweet Song* to your children.

ACTIVITIES:

1. What is a kontakion?



It is a poetic form frequently found in Byzantine hymnography. It can best be described as a 'sermon in verse accompanied by music.'

The term "kontakion" comes from the word "kontos," which is the shaft on which a parchment would have been rolled. The plural of kontakion is kontakia.

The kontakia were long songs that explained the meaning of the feast day. Today, the kontakia that are sung in church are much shorter in length.

It is believed that St. Romanos composed thousands of kontakia, but we only have about 80 of them today. His best known kontakion is on the Nativity of Christ sung on Christmas.

- Learn how to sing the kontakion for the Nativity of Christ - from your priest, chanter, choir director, **AGES Initiatives**, Eikona App, or YouTube

- Listen to the kontakion for the Nativity of Christ on YouTube

2. Learn about the icon of St. Romanos

See the previous lesson for details

3. Learn about church of Agia Sophia

What does "Agia Sophia" mean in English?
Holy Wisdom

What was the name of the city before it became Istanbul? Constantinople

Become a fact detective! Search for pictures, video tours, and details about the church of Agia Sophia online.

4. Learn more about St. Romanos!

Don't stop with just reading this story about him! If you have books about saints, look to see if he is one of the saints listed in the books. You can also do a search online for stories about his life. What are the same details in each of the stories you read? What are different?

Write and illustrate your own story about St. Romanos using all the details that were the same in your research.