

Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – All Saints’
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 11:32-44

Note: This is the lesson plan for All Saints Day. Check with your clergy person about what propers you are using for this Sunday. Some churches use All Saints, others use the Sunday Propers.

Background: During the last weeks of Ordinary Time in Lectionary Cycle B, the Gospel of Mark, our primary guide, continues. The kingdom of God is open for all people. We hear this message in the readings about the rich man, the disciples jockeying for position, the blind man, the saints, the poor widow, and even Pilate as he queries Jesus about being a king. We don't have to pass an entrance exam; we are already in the kingdom. Through all the changes that occur in our lives, what will not change is God's love for each of us. The kingdom that Jesus is proclaiming is already here and yet is also still to come – the undercurrent of Advent, which is coming near.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

We step aside from the flow of the propers and celebrate all the saints. We stop. We notice. We are surrounded by a flock of witnesses in our midst -- many who have gone before us, some we are just now releasing, and still more with a full life ahead of them. Jesus raises back to life his friend, Lazarus. Lazarus will eventually die, but for now, those who are following Jesus need to know that death has had its stinger removed. "Unbind him and let him go", says Jesus. Each of us, on our last day on this side of life, will know that unbinding and that letting go.

Theme: Saints

Before Class: The focus of today's lesson is All Saints Day. Instead of focusing on the Scripture appointed, we have activities featuring Saints - to include the "saints" among us -- which is all of us! Two separate craft ideas are offered. You choose which one you want to use.

For the Saint's medallions, you will need to make the Corn Starch Clay – (see recipe below), a few toothpicks, and some scraps of cardboard. If you do not have time to make clay, you can find some at your local craft store. Or instead of using clay, you can bring in stamp pads and white paper to make ‘saint prints’. A container of wipes would be helpful -- or at least paper towels and some water. You may need a copy of The Hymnal.

Corn Starch Clay

1 cup corn starch

2 cups baking soda

1 1/4 cups water

Mix all ingredients in a sauce pan. Cook over medium heat stirring constantly until the mixture looks like mashed potatoes. Spoon mixture onto a piece of aluminum foil spread out flat on your counter. When the mixture is cool enough to touch, knead it a few times. Place clay in a plastic bag and refrigerate.

The clay will keep for weeks in the refrigerator. (It also can be colored by adding food color when the mixture is still liquid.

Beginning: If you are comfortable using music in your class, begin the day by teaching one verse of "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God." (Hymnal, # 293). If you would like to play the song for the children, there are many sites that have the music. Here is one that has the piano accompaniment. <http://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh712.sht> and video of a parish singing the song that you could play for the children. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weBT5FgApKY>.

If you are not comfortable singing, simply tell the children that today is All Saints' Day, and we will be figuring out what that means.

Opening Prayer: Thank you God, for bringing us saints as examples. Help us to remember that you also call each of us to be a saint. Amen.

The Story: Tell the children that we call people who choose to follow Jesus "saints." "Saints" help other people to follow Jesus. Today we have a story of two sisters and a brother. The sisters are named Martha and Mary and their brother is named: Lazarus. They are all saints.

Mary follows Jesus and so her friends follow her to Jesus. Martha follows Jesus and her friends follow Jesus. Lazarus was supposed to be dead, but Jesus raised him from his death, called upon him, and he also followed Jesus. So we could say Saint Mary, Saint Martha, and Saint Lazarus followed Jesus.

Do we know any "saints?" Are there any saints in our room now? (Ask the children: "Is _____ - and fill in the name of one of the children -- a saint? Keep going until you have named each child.)

Saint Prints:

Option One: Give each child a chunk of the Corn Starch Clay you have made, and let them play with it. You could show them how to make a model of themselves -- a very simple "snow man" technique making three balls and placing them on top of each other -- or a ball and a cylinder, placing the ball on top of the cylinder. Pinch out arms, if you want. Let them parade their saints around the table.

Then, tell the children that God has given each of us a thumb print that is different from anyone else's. Take a minute to notice each other's thumb prints. (Since you have been working with the clay, it will be easier to see the markings on our thumbs.) Tell them we could call our thumb prints our Saint Prints. Then give each child a small piece of the clay - and show them how to make a ball, and then flatten it on a little piece of cardboard. Tell them this will be their Saint medallion. Show the children how to make a thumb print in the middle and, if they want, scratch their initials underneath it with a toothpick. Tell the children these will need to dry, so you will take care of them and next week they can take them home with them. When you have finished, give the children either the wipes or paper towels and water to get all the clay off their hands.

Option Two: If you have decided to do the ink thumb prints, be sure to explain to the children that each of us has a different thumb print - no two are exactly alike. Then, give each child a square of paper and let them take turns pressing their thumb on the ink pad and transferring their print to the paper. Tell them that these are our Saints Prints and they can take them home with them after class.

Getting Closure: If you sang "I sing a song of the saints of God," you could close by singing it again. Or, if you choose not to do so, invite the children to greet each other, using Saint before their names. Hi, Saint Colin, I am Saint Hilary for example. You will be greeting the children in the same way, also.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for calling us to be your saints. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – All Saints’
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 11:32-44

Note: This is the lesson plan for All Saints Day. Check with your clergy person about what propers you are using for this Sunday. Some churches use All Saints, others use the Sunday Propers.

Background: During the last weeks of Ordinary Time in Lectionary Cycle B, the Gospel of Mark, our primary guide, continues. The kingdom of God is open for all people. We hear this message in the readings about the rich man, the disciples jockeying for position, the blind man, the saints, the poor widow, and even Pilate as he queries Jesus about being a king. We don't have to pass an entrance exam; we are already in the kingdom. Through all the changes that occur in our lives, what will not change is God's love for each of us. The kingdom that Jesus is proclaiming is already here and yet is also still to come – the undercurrent of Advent, which is coming near.

A Notation for This Week’s Gospel

We step aside from the flow of the propers and celebrate all the saints. We stop. We notice. We are surrounded by a flock of witnesses in our midst -- many who have gone before us, some we are just now releasing, and still more with a full life ahead of them. Jesus raises back to life his friend, Lazarus. Lazarus will eventually die, but for now, those who are following Jesus need to know that death has had its stinger removed. "Unbind him and let him go", says Jesus. Each of us, on our last day on this side of life, will know that unbinding and that letting go.

Theme: Saints

Before Class: You may choose to go online to www.patriarts.com to see what a commercial company has done with saint medallions made from river rocks to get the idea of the craft suggested for today.

You will need river rocks (or other smooth stones you have found, many times you can find these at an art store or a plant store). You will need paint and small paint brushes. Bring a cardboard box to contain the painted stones so you will be able to give the dried stones to the children next week.

Make copies of the scripture for today, which is found at the end of this lesson.

Beginning: Tell the children that today is All Saints Day and ask them to define a "saint."
Have a conversation with them about saints.
I wonder if you can think of any saints? (allow them time to respond)
I wonder if saints have to be dead? (No.)

I wonder what you would think if I told you that you all are saints? (Help them to understand that saints are people who follow Jesus and that saints are not perfect, they just want to be close to God and do things that help them to be close to God)

Opening Prayer: Thank you God, for bringing us saints as examples. Help us to remember that you also call each of us to be a saint. Amen.

The Story: John 11: 32 - 44 Pass out copies of the scripture that has been broken up into a script. Explain to the children that we are joining this scripture - in progress. Martha and Mary had sent word to Jesus that their brother, Lazarus, was very sick. Jesus did not come at once. By the time Jesus does arrive, Lazarus has been dead 4 days and his family is very sad.

You will need to get volunteers to read each of the different parts or use different voices.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder why Jesus brought Lazarus back to life? (We believe he wanted people to know that life will go on after death.)
- Did Lazarus eventually die? (Yes, but the Bible does not say when.)
- I wonder why we have this story for All saints Day? (Possibly because what was important to Jesus is that all of us are loved, all of us are called to be saints -- on this side of life as well as on the other side.)

Activity: Each of us is a saint, and each of us is a different saint. Each of us has gifts that we bring to the world. So, each of us can make a Saint Medallion that stands for us alone. Saint Medallions are rocks with pictures or symbols that remind represent that saint.

Invite each child select a rock and a paint brush. Invite the children to create their own medallion. If they are good at baseball, maybe they will want to paint a baseball or a bat, for instance. Or they can simply paint their rock in a color they like. Suggest that they also put their name on the rock. When they have finished, assemble the rocks in a cardboard box to dry.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for bringing us saints so we can learn from them. Be with us as we strive to be your saints and do those things you have called us to do. Amen.

John 11:32-44

Narrator: When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him,

Mary: ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’

Narrator: When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said,

Jesus: ‘Where have you laid him?’

Mary and Crowd: ‘Lord, come and see.’

Narrator: Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said,

Jews: ‘See how he loved him!’

Narrator: But some of them said,

Jews: ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?’

Narrator: Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said,

Jesus: ‘Take away the stone.’

Narrator: Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him,

Martha: ‘Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.’

Jesus: ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’

Narrator: So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said,

Jesus: ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.’

Narrator: When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice,

Jesus: ‘Lazarus, come out!’

Narrator: The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them,

Jesus: ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year B – All Saints’
Lesson Plans for Adults

Scripture: John 11:32-44

Note: This is the lesson plan for All Saints Day. Check with your clergy person about what propers you are using for this Sunday. Some churches use All Saints, others use the Sunday Propers.

Background: During the last weeks of Ordinary Time in Lectionary Cycle B, the Gospel of Mark, our primary guide, continues. The kingdom of God is open for all people. We hear this message in the readings about the rich man, the disciples jockeying for position, the blind man, the saints, the poor widow, and even Pilate as he queries Jesus about being a king. We don't have to pass an entrance exam; we are already in the kingdom. Through all the changes that occur in our lives, what will not change is God's love for each of us. The kingdom that Jesus is proclaiming is already here and yet is also still to come – the undercurrent of Advent, which is coming near.

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Theme: Saints

Before Class: Cut a couple of sheets of paper into little strips about an inch high and a couple of inches wide. Make enough so each person in your group has several pieces. Have pencils or pens on hand. You will need Bibles and copies of The Book of Common Prayer and may want to have a few copies of The Hymnal.

Beginning: Remind the group that most Episcopal Churches will use the readings for All Saints Day (which is on November 1) at the worship services today, so those are the scriptures we will use today. You may wish to make sure you have a common understanding of the word "saint." (Yes, it means well-known saints like St. Francis or the disciples, and includes people the world has noticed like, for example Mother Theresa, and those quiet, everyday people who follow Jesus. Saints can be found among those who have left this life and among those still alive, including us.)

Opening Prayer: For all the saints who from their labors rest, we give you thanks, for the hundreds and thousands still in our midst who make the world bright with their love, we give you thanks. Amen.

Option: The passage appointed for today lands in the middle of a story, and if you have time, you can begin the reading at the beginning of Chapter 11 to capture the full story. Alternatively, you can give the class a brief synopsis of what comes before the reading for today starts. Before verse 32, Martha and Mary had sent word to Jesus that their brother, Lazarus, was perilously sick. Jesus does not come at once. By the time Jesus does arrive, Lazarus has been dead 4 days and the family is in full grief.

The Scripture: John 11: 32 - 44. Ask for volunteers to read the different parts: Mary, Jesus, "the Jews", "some of them," and the narrator. (see below for script if you choose to do it in parts)

Reflection Questions:

- Notice the wide variety of emotions in verses 32 - 37. (Mary's grief and faith that Jesus could have saved her brother, Jesus weeping. The conflict for "the Jews" in verses 36 and 37.)
- Notice the significance that Lazarus has been laid to rest in a tomb covered with a stone.
- Notice the conflict for Martha who knows that Lazarus has been in the tomb four days yet Jesus is saying to take away the stone.
- I wonder what Jesus was gently trying to convey as he stood in front of the tomb. (Not that he is doing some kind of magic, but that God hears his plea and people will believe that God has sent Jesus.)
- What does Jesus command, after he has prayed? (verse 43b)
- What does Jesus tell them to do? (verse 44b)
- Lazarus will eventually die - probably of old age. What do you suppose was his reaction upon finding himself "alive" again? (Confusion? Disappointment? Delight? We do not know.)
- As Lazarus was "unbound" how might others in the group have also become "unbound?"
- I wonder in what ways does this passage "unbind" us?

Getting Closure: Put the scraps of paper you prepared where all in your group can reach them. Invite them to write on a slip the name of a person in their life who has been a saint to them. Could be a grandparent who has long since died, could be a special teacher, a mentor, a friend - living or dead. Invite them to take a piece of paper for each person they think of. Tell them that the closing prayer will be reading these names in thanksgiving.

Closing Prayer: Dear God, we remember today all these saints (read all the names) and give you thanks for their lives among us. Help us to remember the example they set for us and guide us on our journey through this life. Amen.

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