

Saints and their epic stories

Aims and Objectives

- To share the lives and stories of some of the Church's Saints
- To inspire young people to live holy lives.
- To create an engaging and meaningful session that encourages young people to think about the foundations of faith in their life.
- To actively respond to the stories of Saints in a creative way.

Duration of session - One hour

Time	Activity	Resources needed
0-5 mins	Guess that Saint	Appendix 1
5-10 mins	What is a Saint?	
10-20mins	Saints Stories discussion cards	Appendix 2
20-30 mins	Saints Stories feedback	
30-50 mins	Create a Saint stained glass	Black sugar paper Tissue paper Scissors PVA glue Bin bags to protect tables
50-60 mins	Feedback and final prayer	Notes, background music, Bible.

Guess that Saint

5 minutes

Ask young people to get themselves into groups. Explain that you will read out some facts about Saints and they have to guess who you are talking about.

What is a Saint?

5 minutes

The simple definition of a Saint is someone who is in heaven. The dictionary states a Saint is: a person acknowledged as holy or virtuous and regarded in Christian faith as being in heaven after death.

This is Peter Kreeft's definitions of Saints:

Saints are not freaks or exceptions. They are the standard operating model for human beings. In fact, in the biblical sense of the word, all believers are saints. "Sanctity" means holiness. All men, women and children, born or unborn, beautiful or ugly are holy, for they bear the image of God.



Saints are not the opposite of sinners. There are no opposites of sinners in this world. Thus holy does not mean "sinless" but "set-apart:" called out of the world to the destiny of eternal joy with God.

One Catholic website states that "There are over 10,000 named saints and beati (blessed, holy people) from history, the Roman Martyrology and Orthodox sources, but there has been no definitive head count". *Taken from the Catholic Online website.*

The Catholic Church teaches that it does not, in fact, **make** anyone a saint. Rather, it **recognises** a saint.

ASK: What qualities do you think the Saints showed?

Some answers:

- They are excellent role model
- They are unusually good at teaching people to live lives of goodness
- They act as channels of God's power
- They are intercessors
- They are generous and unselfish
- They are holy and are able to interpret God and holiness for others
- They are joyful

Saints stories discussion cards

10 minutes

In smaller groups give out a Saints story. One per group. Explain that in their groups they will learn about their Saint and then have to present what they have learnt back to the group. This can be done with a drama about the Saints life, a news report or any creative way they can think of. Explain they have 10 minutes to prepare their presentations.

Saints stories feedback

10 minutes

Allow adequate time for feedback from each group.

Creating a Saints stained glass

20 minutes

Cover tables with bin bags for protection.

Using one of the Saints talked about in the session, or another well known Saint. Ask young people to create some stained glass window craft. Using the black sugar paper they need to design a framework. Once they have cut out their design move on to the tissue paper glass. Using smaller pieces of tissue paper make a collage of colour. Once completed the black sugar paper needs to be secured on top. Leave to dry.





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Feedback and final prayer

10 minutes

Allow some time for any final feedback from young people.

Final prayer

Play some quiet instrumental music in the background – we recommend the Bethel Instrumental Album.

Begin: with the sign of the Cross

Read: A reading from the First Letter of St John

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us,
by letting us be called God's children;
and that is what we are.

Because the world refused to acknowledge him,
therefore it does not acknowledge us.

My dear people, we are already the children of God
but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed;
all we know is, that when it is revealed
we shall be like him

because we shall see him as he really is.

Surely everyone who entertains this hope
must purify himself, must try to be as pure as Christ.

The Word of the Lord

ALL: Thanks be to God

Pray: Lord we thank you that we are your children, just like all the Saints.

Help us to act, speak and think in a more Saintly way.

We know Lord, that You will always guide us on our path, in the same way you guided the Saints. We believe that with You all things are possible.

And so we lift up all our own intentions in this prayer.

At this point ask the young people if there is anything that they would like to pray for.

We offer up all these prayers to Our Father in heaven as we say "Our Father..."

End with the sign of the cross.



Appendix #1 Guess that Saint

Saint #1

This Saint was born in Breslau, Poland. She was the youngest child of a large Jewish family. She was an outstanding student and was well versed in philosophy with a particular interest in phenomenology. Eventually she became interested in the Catholic Faith, and in 1922, she was baptised at the Cathedral Church in Cologne, Germany. Eleven years later she entered the Cologne Carmel Convent. Because of the ramifications of politics in Germany our Saint was sent to the convent at Echt, Holland. When the Nazis conquered Holland, she was arrested, and, with her sister Rose, was sent to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. She died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz in 1942 at the age of fifty-one.

It was her complete calm and self-possession that marked her out from the rest of the prisoners ... Many of the mothers were on the brink of insanity and had sat moaning for days, without giving any thought to their children. She immediately set about taking care of these little ones. She washed them, combed their hair and tried to make sure they were fed and cared for. – Words from Julius Marcan, a survivor of Auschwitz.

Answer: St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross/Edith Stein

Saint #2

In the 1970s, she became well-known internationally for her humanitarian work and advocacy for the rights of the poor and helpless. Her Missionaries of Charity continued to grow during her life-time, and at the time of her death, had 610 missions in 123 countries, including hospices and homes for people with HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, children's and family counselling programs, orphanages, and schools. Governments, charity organisations and prominent individuals have been inspired by her work.

Answer: St Teresa of Calcutta

Saint #3

This is this Saint's most famous exploit. A poor man had three daughters but could not afford a proper dowry for them. This meant that they would remain unmarried and, probably, in the absence of any other potential employment, would have to become prostitutes. Hearing of the poor man's plight, Nicholas decided to help him. However, being too modest (or too shy) to help the man in public, (or knowing the man too proud to accept charity), he went to his house under the cover of night and threw three purses filled with gold coins through the window opening onto the man's floor.

Answer: St Nicholas (Santa)



Saint #4

This Saint was born in Poland. In 1918 he was ordained a Priest and went all over the world preaching the Gospel. He founded monasteries in Japan and India. Because of poor health he returned to Poland. It was the start of WWII. His monastery became a temporary hospital and even acted as a publishing house for anti-Nazi publications. On February 17, 1941, the monastery in Poland was shut down; he was arrested by the German Gestapo and taken to the Pawiak prison.

Three months later, he was transferred to Auschwitz.

Never abandoning his priesthood, he was the victim to severe violence and harassment. Toward the end of his second month in Auschwitz, men were chosen to face death by starvation to warn against escapes. Kolbe was not chosen but volunteered to take the place of a man with a family.

Answer: St Maximilian Kolbe

Saint #5

This Saint was born in Italy into a very wealthy family. Growing up he love partying with his friends. At 19 he joined the army and was captured. His father paid his ransom for release. After this our Saint had visions of God. In one God asked him to repair His church. So our Saint gave all his money away to the poor. His father was very angry. After leaving his family our Saint spent his time looking after those most in need. He loved nature and there's a great story about him taming a wolf!

Answer: St Francis of Assisi



Appendix #2 Saints Stories



St. Catherine was born to nobility in Alexandria, Egypt sometime in the 4th century. Nothing factual is known of her life and legends vary. She is thought to have been very beautiful and intelligent. Legends say that she was a student of philosophy, medicine and spoke numerous languages. She loved to read and it was through her love of reading that she learned about Christianity. She never married; refusing to marry any man she did not consider her equal.

At the age of 18 legends say that she challenged the emperor on the issue of Christianity. The emperor is said to have brought in 50 philosophers to debate her ideas on Christianity. The outcome of this was that she converted all 50 of them and others including the empress herself. When the emperor ordered St. Catherine to be his mistress she refused and was subsequently tortured on a spiked wheel. When the wheel miraculously fell apart the emperor had her beheaded.

St. Catherine is said to be one of the voices heard by Joan of Arc. She is the patron saint to philosophers, wheelwrights, mechanics, millers, scribes and preachers. She is considered a protector of young girls.



Saint Moses the Black

Moses the Black was a gang leader in the 4th century. He and his gang spread terror throughout the Nile Valley. One day while on the run from the authorities, he took shelter with some monks in the desert. After observing their lifestyle, he converted to Christianity and became a monk himself.

One day, Moses was in his cell and was attacked by a group of robbers. He defended himself, and single handedly subdued the men. Then, he dragged them into the chapel where the other monks were praying. Stating he did not believe it to be Christian to beat and kill the men, he asked the monks what he should do with them. The robbers were overwhelmed and converted to Christianity.





St. José Luis Sánchez del Río

Born in Sahuayo, Mexico, José Luis grew up during the rule of the intensely anti-Catholic government of President Calles. As a child, José Luis watched his brothers bravely join the Cristeros, the rebel resistance movement fighting for Christ and against the government and its unjust policies, and wanted to fight alongside them. Despite a firm no from his parents ("You're just a kid!!"), José Luis persisted, and was eventually allowed to become the flag bearer for the Cristero forces. During an intense fight in early 1928, José Luis was captured after sacrificing his own safety by giving his horse to the Cristero general, and was sent to a local parish that had been turned into a jail.

While in custody, he was beaten by the government officials in the hopes that he would renounce his faith. He never did. Instead, he prayed the Rosary daily and maintained hope in God's plan for him to join the saints in Heaven as a martyr.

The next month, when José Luis was just 14 years old, government officials forced him to march through the town, after cutting his feet, to the cemetery. During the long and agonizing walk, he was beaten and told he would only be spared if he shouted "Death to Christ the King." Instead, he continued to march along like Christ on the road to Calvary, screaming with every ounce of his being, "I will never give in. Viva Cristo Rey (Long live Christ the King)!"

As he lay at the cemetery, dying as a martyr for the faith, he drew a cross in the dirt, kissed it, and entered into Jesus' loving embrace.





St Nicholas

At the Council of Nicea, Arius was vehemently explaining why he believed that Jesus the Son was not equal to God the Father. Bishop Nicholas became so enraged with the heresy that he approached Arius and hit him in the face.

As punishment, Nicholas was stripped of his Bishop's garments and thrown into jail to wait for the end of the council when his punishment would be decided. During the night, he prayed for forgiveness and was visited by Jesus and Mary. When asked why he was in jail, he responded, "Because of my love for you." Jesus gave him the book of the Gospels and Bishop's robes. In the morning, Nicholas was discovered wearing his robes and studying the Gospel. He was reinstated as Bishop almost immediately.





St. Kateri Tekakwitha is the first Native American to be recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church. She was born in 1656, in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon.

She contracted smallpox as a four-year-old child which scarred her skin. The scars were a source of humiliation in her youth. She was commonly seen wearing a blanket to hide her face. Worse, her entire family died during the outbreak. Kateri Tekakwitha was subsequently raised by her uncle, who was the chief of a Mohawk clan.

Kateri was known as a skilled worker, who was diligent and patient. However, she refused to marry. When her adoptive parents proposed a suitor to her, she refused to entertain the proposal. They punished her by giving her more work to do, but she did not give in. Instead, she remained quiet and diligent. Eventually they were forced to relent and accept that she had no interest in marriage.

At age 19, Kateri Tekakwitha converted to Catholicism, taking a vow of chastity and pledging to marry only Jesus Christ. Her decision was very unpopular with her adoptive parents and their neighbours