

Level: High School

Bible Verse: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works..." (Ephesians 2:10)

"I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20: 35)

Objectives:

- **Introduce** the idea that like St. Herman of Alaska, who followed in the footsteps of the first Apostles as a missionary saint, we are all created by God's hand for the purpose of doing good works.
- **Explore** the life of St. Herman of Alaska as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of his canonization this year on August 9, 2020.
- **Challenge** students to consider how we can perform good works that show our love and praise to God.
- **Act** by collecting funds with the OCMC Mission Coin Boxes. Throughout Great Lent support the work of the Mission Center so that many more can be empowered to share Christ's love to the world just like St. Herman.

Overview:

- Opening Prayer For Missions
- Icebreaker - Hagoo
- Activity #1 - Read and discuss the Bible Verses, Ephesians 2:10; and Acts 20:35.
- Activity #2 - Read and discuss the life of St. Herman of Alaska
- Activity #3 - Making an Impact
- Activity #4 - Assemble OCMC coin boxes and sing/read the troparion of St. Herman. Offer the students cookies or biscuits following the lesson.

Materials: Paper and pen. Optional: Cookies or Biscuits to share with students.

Note to Teacher: The Orthodox Christian Mission Center proclaims the Gospel message to all people around the world who are seeking the Body of Christ. Much like the Apostles spreading the Word of God, missionaries are sent to apply their unique talents, experiences, and gifts to serve the church. They go out to different countries to start their ministries as the Lord has prepared them. Their good works of helping people are not for their own glory, but the glory of God. It is important for students to have a foundation for understanding that God created them for a specific purpose, to live a life of doing good works, according to their own gifts, in His name. By sharing with the students, the life of St. Herman of Alaska, whom we honor with his 50th anniversary of his canonization this year, we have a modern role model among the apostles and missionary saints to show us how our good works can glorify God.

Pray: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, we pray for all people from all nations that they may come to know You. Help us to care for the spiritual and physical needs of others around us and around the world. Teach how to show Your love and peace to others. Grant us the courage to answer Your call. Amen.*

Icebreaker: Hagoo
 Have your group for two lines and stand facing each other. These will be your two teams. Next have one player from each team at opposite end of the line. Players will stare into each other's eyes and then bow to one another calling out Hagoo. Each player will then walk toward and past each other without laughter, breaking eye contact, or smiling while the teams attempt to make the passer-by from the opposite team burst into laughter (without touching them). If a player should crack a smile, they join their opponent's line. The game ends when there is only one team left, or everyone is laughed out.
Modification: If your lesson is time sensitive, have each team track points. First one to 'x' points win the game.

Activity #1: Read with the students or ask volunteers to read the bible verses. Then discuss each one.
 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works..." (Ephesians 2:10)
 "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20: 35).

Note to Teacher: Explain to the students that we are all crafted by God to be members of the Body of Christ. We have been designed with a specific purpose; to do His good works just as Christ did. They are not for our own sake, but for the glory of God. What this means is that each of us is called to participate in the work of the Church. We are active participants in the liturgy, active in prayer, and bringing comfort to those whom God has brought before us (friends, classmates, family and strangers). God has assigned good works to each us, that are according to our gifts. He sets us apart to fulfill His holy Will. Our good deeds and works are to bless others, those who are weak and seeking Christ. As St. Paul quotes our Lord in the book of Acts, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Missionaries in our Churches today are one example of working members of the body of Christ. They imitate the Apostles and Missionary Saints of the Church by leaving their homes to go too far regions like Albania, Kenya, Romania, South Korea, Guatemala, Sweden, and Alaska. Sometimes they do not know the people or language where they will serve but go because God has called them. They trust that God has equipped them with the gifts to bring the fullness of Christ into the lives of the people they serve. Missionaries may have worked as priests or deacons serving local parishes and now lead congregations or teach at seminaries in foreign countries. In other cases, some are schoolteachers or youth

workers and now educate native communities about the love of God. (Additional examples: Doctors, Nurse, therapist, etc.) They have been set apart by God who has prepared them for their ministries. He will also prepare you for yours, if you allow Him.

- St. Paul classifies works into two categories: Dead works & Living works
 - Dead works - works that are evil like murder and robbery, as well as, good works done only to bring attention or glory to ourselves. An example is when you give money to the poor and feed the homeless only when people are watching and praise you.
 - Living works - works that are good and with the purpose to glorify God. We rely on God for the strength and grace to accomplishment our deeds and seek to bring Him glory.

Discussion Questions:

- *Why do you think God gives us each unique gifts?*
- *How do we know what kind of work God is calling us to do?*
- *How do we know whether our works are living or dead?*
- *Why do we give Glory to God, rather than to ourselves?*
- *With what attitude should we approach the work God has set before us?*
- *Is it a bad thing to feel good about the works you have done?*
- *Why do we as Christians need to perform good works in order to live out our faith fully?*

Ask the students to share what good works they think missionaries do when serving in a foreign country. Ask them what challenges they think missionaries will face. Apply these thoughts as they are reading the life of Saint Herman.

Activity #2: Read to the students or have them take turns reading portions of the life of St. Herman of Alaska.

Discussion Questions:

1. *In what ways did the work of St. Herman give glory to God?*
2. *With what attitude did Saint Herman approach the work God had given him?*
3. *How do the works of Saint Herman impact us today?*
4. *Why do we consider St. Herman to be a role model for living the Christian faith?*
5. *Discuss what do you think St. Herman meant when he said, "From this day. From this hour. From this minute. Let us love God above all and fulfill his Holy Will."?*

Ask if anyone's saint was a missionary. Find comparisons with St. Herman.

Activity #3: Making An Impact

- Pass out a piece of paper and a pen to each student. Ask students to think about their different gifts/skills that God has given them. Example: They may be singers, dancers, athletes, or writers. They may love to cook, or volunteer at local shelters.
- Next, ask them to think about where they can apply their gifts within their local community to make a positive impact. Example: Join the church choir, help teach folk dancing, volunteer to coach elementary sports, write thank you notes, or even help cook meals for the local homeless shelter or ministry.
- Finally, ask them to write down the name of one person they can talk with to help guide them to a ministry. It could be someone from church, a schoolteacher, or a family friend.
- Challenge the students, in the coming weeks and during the season of Great Lent, to make a positive impact. Remind them that God has prepared and equipped them with their unique gifts. It is up to us to decide how to use them. You may discuss as a group or one-on-one to share their efforts. Remember this is an opportunity in this fasting season to offer your time and glory to God.

Activity #4: Assemble the OCMC Coin Boxes

Discuss how these funds will be used to support the ministries of the Mission Center to send people who have answered God's call. Send the boxes home with the students and ask them to fill them and return the boxes at a time you decide upon. Encourage the class to pray for OCMC missionaries and mission priests regularly. A listing of our current missionaries can be found on our website at https://www.ocmc.org/about/active_missionaries.aspx. Remember if you have cookies or biscuits available, pass them out to the students. If your class meets before Liturgy, plan a distribution following the service or during Coffee Hour. Go online to www.ocmc.org under **Resources** and click **For Sunday School** tab for digital copies of this lesson.

The Life of St. Herman of Alaska

Teacher's Page

Feast day: August 9

This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the canonization of Saint Herman of Alaska, the patron saint of North America, and one of the greatest modern missionaries of our time.

As a young boy, Saint Herman loved going to church and prayed every day. When he was a teenager, he felt a calling to become a monk, so he went to live at the Holy Trinity-Sergius Monastery. One day, the young monk found a cancerous sore on his neck. The pain was terrible. Instead of going to the doctor, Saint Herman went to his cell and prayed with warm tears to the Mother of God asking her to heal him. When he slept, the Theotokos appeared to him in a dream. The next morning, Saint Herman was amazed to see that he was healed and confirmed his devotion to Christ.

After five or six years, Saint Herman moved to Valaam Monastery, located on a large island in the middle of Lake Ladoga near modern-day Finland. He loved the monastery, his brother monks, and Abbot Nazarius. He studied the church, learned how to care for the sick, ministered to the poor and needy, and prayed for the dying ones. One day, Abbot Nazarius was asked to select a mission team to join Russian fur traders on a journey to Alaska and bring the message of Jesus Christ to the native people. He chose Saint Herman to join them. Saint Herman accepted the call of missions with great zeal and set off to Alaska.

It took them almost an entire year to arrive at Kodiak, Alaska. Saint Herman and the other missionaries traveled 7300 miles by foot and boat. This was the longest journey in Orthodox missionary history. They thanked God for keeping them safe and went out to share the message of Jesus. The missionaries built schools, churches, and baptized thousands of the native people, known as Aleuts. The Aleuts welcomed Saint Herman and the missionaries. Over the years, the missionaries endured hunger, cold, and mockery in their efforts to share the teachings of Jesus Christ with the people of Alaska. The lives of some of the missionaries were lost, some lost faith, and others passed away, but the Lord permitted Father Herman to labor the longest.

Father Herman loved the native people and showed this through his missionary work. He defended the Aleuts before governors and fur traders who abused and forced them into slave work. He nursed and visited the sick, prayed for those who were dying, and comforted those who lost loved ones. He regularly shared the teachings and messages of Christ. His teachings respected and found fulfillment of their native customs and traditions. Above all, Father Herman especially loved the Aleut children and would often bake cookies and biscuits for them. They started calling him "Apa" which means grandfather. He took care of the orphaned and set up a school for them. It is no wonder that the natives loved him and came far and wide to hear him tell the stories of Christ and His love for them.

Those who knew Saint Herman would describe him as a simple monk who was meek, kind, gentle, always with a pleasant smile, humble, and quiet. He wore a deerskin shirt, a faded cassock and boots. Around his body, he carried a sixteen-pound cross every day, like the desert fathers, to show his humility before God. He spent much of his time working, leading services, helping the native people, and struggling to be like Christ. Saint Herman would say, "From this day. From this hour. From this minute. Let us love God above all and fulfill his Holy Will."



Later in life, Saint Herman made his new home on Spruce Island, a small island covered with forest. Spruce Island reminded him of the beloved Valaam Monastery, so he named it "New Valaam." For his first whole summer, he dug a cave in the ground with his hands and started a garden. By winter a cell was built nearby to keep him warm. He lived there alone for forty years where he prayed and carried out his missionary work. People would often ask him, "How do you manage to live alone in the forest? Don't you ever get lonesome?" He would reply, "No, I am not here alone! God is here, as God is everywhere. The Holy Angels are here. With whom is it better to talk to, with people or the Angels? Most certainly with Angels."

Many people knew Saint Herman as a wonderworker and told miraculous stories of his life. One night, by chance, his disciple Gerasim witnessed him carry a large log so heavy that it normally would have taken four men to carry. Another time there was a flood on the island and it was threatened by a great wave. Everyone was frightened. Saint Herman took an icon of the Theotokos, placed it on the beach and prayed to the Mother of God. The wave never passed the holy icon.

On December 13, 1837, at the age of 81, Saint Herman fell asleep in Lord. His face was filled with a radiant light and nearby inhabitants saw a pillar of light rising about his home on Spruce Island where he was buried. On August 9, 1970, he was officially canonized as an American Saint. He was a true and living example of our faith. Let us follow in his footsteps and give our whole life to Jesus Christ.

O, Holy Saint Herman of Alaska, pray unto God for us!

St. Herman Troparion Tone 4

O Blessed Father Herman of Alaska,
 North Star of Christ's Holy Church,
 The light of your holy life and great deeds,
 Guides those who follow the Orthodox Way.
 Together we lift high the Holy Cross,
 You planted firmly in America.
 Let all behold and glorify Jesus Christ,
 Singing His Holy Resurrection.