

**Level:** Middle School

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

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:11-13)

**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
- Icebreaker - Screaming Toes
- Activity #1 - Read and discuss the Bible Verses, Ephesians 2:10; 4:11-13
- Activity #2 - Read and discuss the life of St. Herman of Alaska
- Activity #3 - Word Search
- Activity #4 - Assemble OCMC coin boxes and sing/read the troparion of St. Herman. Offer the students cookies or biscuits following the lesson.

**Materials:** Copies of the St. Herman Alaska Word Search for each student. 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 us how to show Your love and peace to others. Grant us the courage to answer Your call. Amen.*

**Icebreaker:** Screaming Toes  
 Have your group stand and form a tight circle facing inwards. Everyone looks down and picks a pair of toes to stare at. When the leader counts down or says 'Go!' or 'Look Up' everyone must look up into the eyes of the feet they picked. If two participants are looking at each other than they must scream (not too extreme) and they are out. Keep going until there are two or one player(s) remaining who are/is the winner(s).

**Activity #1:** Read with the students or ask volunteers read the bible verses. Then discuss each one.  
 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works..." (Ephesians 2:10)

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:11-13)

**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. 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 in bringing comfort to those whom God has brought before us (friends, classmates, family, and strangers). God has also assigned to us each works, that are according to our gifts.

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 to 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 indigenous communities about the love of God. (Additional examples: doctors, nurses, therapists, etc.) God has prepared them for their ministries as he will prepare you for yours, if you allow Him.

**Discussion Questions:**

- *What does it mean to be a member of the Body of Christ?*
- *How are we supposed to use our gifts to fulfill God's work?*
- *With what attitude should we approach the work God has set before us?*
- *Why is it important that we do good works?*
- *Why do you think God gives each of us unique gifts?*

*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. *How did Saint Hermon use his gifts to fulfill God's work?*
2. *With what attitude did Saint Herman approach the work God had given him?*
3. *How did the work of Saint Herman impact us today?*
4. *What were some of the barriers he faced during his ministry in Alaska? What unique gifts did God give Saint Herman to overcome them?*
5. *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 or find comparisons with St. Herman.*

**Activity #3: St. Herman Word Search**  
Have students complete the included word search.

**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. Remember if you have cookies or biscuits available to pass them out to the students. If your class meets before Liturgy, plan a distribution following the service during Coffee Hour. Go online to [www.ocmc.org](http://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."



*The Life of St. Herman of Alaska*
*Teacher's Page*

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.

# St. Herman, Missionary of Alaska

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NAZARIUS  
RESURRECTION  
SPRUCE  
VALAAM

AMERICA  
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