

HILDA OF WHITBY

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Assorted craft materials, jars, containers, string, toilet paper rolls, etc.
- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

Bring in an odd assortment of items that can be used for a creative exercise. You may wish to include various jars and containers, toilet paper rolls, string, assorted craft materials, and any unwanted items of a workable size that you have access to. Divide your teens into groups of two to five and tell them that their challenge will be to use some of these items to build something useful. Allow each group an equal number of items from the stack and provide them with a set amount of time to design and build their invention. When the time is up, allow the teens to present briefly, and if you wish, select a winner.

FOR GROUPS OF THREE OR LESS, YOU MAY WISH TO ALLOW EACH TEEN TO DESIGN AN ITEM ON THEIR OWN. FOR GROUPS OF MORE THAN 25 YOU MAY NEED TO RESTRICT YOUR ‘INVENTION’ TIME SO THAT THERE IS TIME TO PRESENT.

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order for service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: PERSONAL INVENTORY

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- Share this quote with your teens: **“Why should there be hunger and deprivation in any land, in any city, at any table, when man has the resources and the scientific know-how to provide all mankind with the basic necessities of life? There is no deficit in human resources; the deficit is in human will”.** – Martin Luther King Jr. What do you think King meant by “human resources”?
- What sort of “resources” do *you* have? How do you use them?
- What sort of “spiritual” resources do you think we might have, and how could they benefit the Church?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don’t otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *The quote specifically refers to scientific know-how, but when we say “resources” we usually mean not just money, materials and manpower, but also things like inventiveness, empathy and communication. When we look at the*

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world around us and see the feats of engineering, science, technology, arts and so on, we know that if we directed the same resources at the issues mentioned by King, amazing things could be accomplished.

- *We all have resources, even if they seem modest. We each have a network of people that we know. We also have abilities, skills and talents that we can use. We may also have material resources that are ours to do with as we please. All people tend to direct their resources towards whatever matters most to them. You may use them to study hard or to earn enough to buy something you really want. But perhaps you also use what you have to help and encourage others.*
- *Scripture tells us that believers have also been given “spiritual gifts” that are to be used in the loving service of the Church. There are several different “gift lists” in the New Testament and each is a bit different, but some of the gifts that are listed there include: teaching, encouraging, giving, mercy, serving, leadership, faith, prophecy and discernment. (See Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28, Ephesians 4:11).*

THE LESSON: A WISE AND DISCERNING MIND

Lessons 13-42 follow a slightly different format from previous lessons. The story of the saint being studied is interspersed with verses from scripture that provide added perspective. You may prefer to read the lesson text aloud together as a group, or ask the teens to read it silently to themselves.

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.”
(1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

Throughout the centuries God has given to the Church men and women of remarkable and diverse gifts. A line from one of the collects in the Prayer Book expresses praise to God for these “gifts of grace” and asks that the Church “may never be destitute of the same”. This year’s lessons are introducing us to a wide range of believers who lived in different places and had very different gifts, but who shared a common faith in the Giver of those gifts. This unit will look at “graciously gifted” saints of the Middle Ages.

“Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.”
(John 4:35)

Hilda was born into a royal family in seventh century England. It was a turbulent time with many warring kingdoms in the land. Christianity was just beginning to take root again following the collapse of the Roman Empire. This was partly due to the work Patrick had done in nearby Ireland, as well as the result of Pope Gregory the Great sending evangelists and assigning an Archbishop to Canterbury. It was in this setting that Hilda’s story unfolded.

Hilda was baptized with her family at the age of 13, but it was not until she was 33 that she became a nun. She had only been in her community a year when she was asked to become the abbess. Some years later Hilda was chosen to found a new monastic community at Whitby. This was to be a “double community” with both men and women, who would live separately but worship together.

“It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment.”
(Philippians 1:9)

Hilda came to be known for her great wisdom, her energetic spirit and her excellence in overseeing the community at Whitby. During her years as abbess she was sought out by kings for her advice, and when it

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became necessary to hold a meeting between the Irish Christians and the Roman Christians, Whitby was chosen as the site for the synod.

Not only was Hilda gifted in these ways, but she was also a woman who could see gifts in others and did what was within her power to cultivate them. When it came to Hilda's attention that a simple herdsman (Caedmon) who lived near her abbey had been given a musical gift, she encouraged him to join the community and put his gift to greater use. In the days that followed, Caedmon put to music much of the story of scripture. Caedmon's music was special because it was written in the common language (instead of Latin), so it could be understood by all the people. Sadly, most of what he wrote has since been lost, but we can be sure that it was a great blessing to the community at Whitby and beyond.

Hilda was very sick for several years before she died, but she continued to work hard for the wellbeing of the community under her care. She lived to the age of 66, and a record left by The Venerable Bede says of her, "All who knew her called her mother because of her outstanding devotion and grace".

(SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: THE VENERABLE BEDE, "THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE", TRANS. A.M. SELLAR | DAVID FARMER, "OXFORD DICTIONARY OF SAINTS" | JUSTO GONZÁLEZ, "THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY, VOLUME 1" | GERARD SAMPSON, "LAYMAN'S BOOK OF SAINTS" | WIKIPEDIA.ORG, "HILDA OF WHITBY".)

Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What "gifts of grace" did Hilda have? How did she use those gifts?
- How do you think other people might have seen Caedmon? What did Hilda see?
- What can we learn from Hilda's example?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Hilda would have had advantages arising from her family connections and a privileged upbringing. She clearly had gifts of leadership, the sort of gifts that were so obvious that they resulted in her promotion to abbess within a year of her joining a convent, and later being chosen to run a community for both men and women. The fact that she was sought out by kings and also chosen to host the synod suggest that she was both wise and diplomatic. Her response to Caedmon also tells us that Hilda was discerning and someone who knew how to encourage others to do their best with what they'd been given.*
- *Others may have seen Caedmon as common and unworthy of the sort of opportunity and encouragement that Hilda offered to him, but Hilda could see that regardless of his origins and occupation, Caedmon had a gift. Hilda took an interest in this simple herdsman and wanted to see him thrive and use his gifts. She had the vision to realize that such gifts could be a great blessing to the monastic community and the Church beyond.*
- *Bede's summing up of Hilda tells us that she was devout and gracious. All of the extraordinary gifts that she had were put into action to serve God, often by building up the believers that she led and came into contact with.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY "AT-HOME CHALLENGE" IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

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Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Review today's lesson. Choose a line of scripture or a phrase from the story of Hilda that you find edifying, inspiring or instructive:

Throughout this week, spend some time prayerfully reflecting on the phrase you've chosen. Decide on one concrete action you can take this week based on your reflections, *and* share your reflections and your plan of action with a friend.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following prayer.

O God, who by thy Holy Spirit hast given unto one man a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge, and to another the gift of tongues: We praise thy Name for the gifts of grace manifested in thy servant Hilda, and we pray that thy Church may never be destitute of the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECT OF A DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH, POET, OR SCHOLAR, P. 317)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.