

Lesson No. (35)

Saint Athanasius
The Defender of the Orthodox Faith

References

The Biography of Athanasius the Apostolic
The Holy Fire, by Robert Payne

Notes for Servants

- ★ Be honest in your service, in preparing the lessons, and pray for the children of your class, that there may arise from among them one such as the great Saint Athanasius or Cyril in the future. You will have joy for this blessing.

Objectives

General: Being firm in faith until death.

Specific: The children will be able to:

- A. Confess their faith and witness Christ with full confidence.
- B. Learn that they do not have to be killed to become martyrs, it is enough for them to suffer for His name.
- C. Know that if they deny Jesus before man, He will deny them before His Father.

Bible Verse

" Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. "

(Philippians 2:11)

Teaching Aids

An icon of St. Athanasius.

Instruction

- (1) Review last week's lesson.
- (2) Who remembers the verse?
- (3) Remind the children about the church occasions for the coming week.
- (4) Teacher should prepare the appropriate questions to emphasize the objectives during the lesson.

Story Time

Little is known of St. Athanasius' early life. However, there is one story that has been passed on. One day, when St. Athanasius was a young child, he was playing with his friends in the water. Athanasius pretended to be a priest baptising his friends. Meanwhile, Pope Alexander was watching the children play from his room. He was amazed to see that the child, Athanasius had performed the baptism perfectly, as any priest would do. Pope Alexander asked someone to bring the children to him. The pope asked the children what they were doing, and Athanasius admitted that he was playing with his friends by baptising them. The pope decided to anoint the children with mairon as all the rest of the baptism had been performed. He then took Athanasius into his own care. St. Athanasius lived with the pope from then on.

Athanasius was later ordained a deacon. He served in the church, read the Bible and prayed. Soon a large heresy arose in the church (a heresy is a teaching that is against the church doctrine). A man named Arius preached this false doctrine, denying the divinity of Christ. There was going to be a big debate, between the Arians and the Orthodox. Pope Alexander asked Athanasius to participate. Athanasius, at only 25 years of age, fought the heresy of Arianism with all his might, and was victorious. He later became the twentieth Pope of the See of St. Mark and he laid the foundations of the Orthodox Creed that we recite every week in Church. However all throughout his life, he had many problems with the Arians.

At one time, someone said to Pope Athanasius, "The world is against you."

His reply was, "And with God's grace, I am against the world." Because of his love for God, truth and his people, he was sent into exile five times, but the Lord was always with him, gave him power and victory.

Notes:

You can give the children an idea about the defence of Athanasius against Arius, and laying the foundations of the Orthodox Creed. See to it that the children study the Creed and recite it daily.

Discussion

- 1 - Follow up the story by talking about it with the children.
- 2 - Continue the discussion while they do the activity.

Learning Activities

Activity Sheet.