

“MARY, QUEEN ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN, PATRONESS OF SOUTH AFRICA, PRAY FOR US

AN ACTIVITY FOR FAMILIES, RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION CLASSES, AND DIFFERENT GROUPS.

On 15th August we celebrate the patronal feast of South Africa. This is a wonderful opportunity to relate our faith to our everyday life situation by reflecting and sharing on some of the ideas suggested by this feast. Whoever leads the activity will need to read up the background material beforehand so as to be able to present it to the group in the most appropriate way.

ACTIVITY

1. Before going on to speak of patron saints explore with the group what they understand by the term patron? What is its meaning and significance? What would be its local or cultural equivalent, e.g. chief, mentor, gang leader?
2. Next give a simple explanation - *a patron is someone who has a particular interest and is willing and able to support those who are under his/her patronage.*
3. Discuss the understanding of the role of saints in the Church.
4. Possibly also discuss the question of ancestors and compare this to the Christian belief about saints.
5. Discuss the patron feast of the Assumption and consider the role of Mary, as Queen in heaven and Patroness of South Africa. What does this really mean to each of us? Do we ever think about her in that sense and pray especially for her guidance and support in rebuilding our country? Maybe we should link her with the Moral Regeneration campaign! Mary is also the Queen of Peace and we could certainly ask her help in fighting the violence and crime that destroys families too.
6. Depending on the family or group reinforce with a scripture passage, e.g. one of the readings of the day, a story, drawing, colouring-in picture, etc.
7. End with a prayer and/or song to Mary.
8. Many parishes will be offering a novena - a nine prayer campaign to prepare for the feast. This can be done at home too possibly by just praying the short intercession above.
9. As a follow-up activity look into as many patron saints as possible and invite everyone to choose a patron if they do not already have one. At confirmation the young people should choose a patron saint but they often do not know many. Encourage them to develop a relationship with their patron saint as a go-between with God, or just as a special friend of God. Using the internet and such sites as www.catholiconline.com provides many leads. Also look for African saints such as the Uganda Martyrs and Benedict Daswa.
10. Consider the various present needs in our society and invite the intercession of particular saints for these e.g. aborted babies - the Holy Innocents, rape and sexual abuse - St Maria Goretti. There are patrons for refugees, soldiers, government officials, marriage problems ... the possibilities are almost endless.
11. As all saints have their annual feast day a family could celebrate the feast days of their patron saints as well as their birthdays.
12. In the parish offer to arrange a special celebration of the parish's patron saint and involve all the parish groups, especially the children.



PATRONS

In Western society during Renaissance times artists and musicians often worked for a patron, an important person, bishop or nobleman who supported them financially and allowed them to practise their art. In all cultures political leaders too often had and still have a person under their special protection, maybe someone who was being groomed to take over from them.

SAINTS

Catholics often get accused of “worshipping” saints rather than worshipping God alone. Catholics do not worship saints but devotion to certain people who had lived a particularly good life or had been killed because of their faith in Jesus Christ goes back to the early days of the Church. The whole idea of asking these people for their intercession, for them to pray for us to God, was approved by the Council of Trent after the Reformation. We believe that inviting these saints, as “special friends” of God, to pray for us is particularly pleasing to God. Mary is of course the greatest of these “special friends” of God.

PATRON SAINTS

The idea of patron saints arose gradually in the tradition of the Church. The intention is that these are models, guides and mediators for us with God. Particular saints are honoured in different countries, dioceses, parishes and also by interest groups and sodalities or individuals. A selection of some patron saints is given below.

THE BELIEF ABOUT ANCESTORS

Traditionally in African society ancestors played a very important role in the lives of families. A particular belief about a family is that it does not only consist of its present-day members but also of those who have died and those who are still to be born. The ancestors then are those members of the family or clan who have died but they still have an influence on the life of the family.

Ancestors were not necessarily particularly good people so cannot be equated totally to the Christian concept of saints but they are considered the guardians of the moral code of the society. There is also not only the relationship of devotion but there are also elements of fear, of having to appease the ancestors.

Christianity to a large extent considered veneration of ancestors and particularly ancestor worship as superstition, which is crediting other creatures with power that belongs to God alone. There is a relationship between ancestor veneration, worship, witchcraft and magic, but equally in some European Christian practices and devotions there are elements of superstition. It is not uncommon for families to practice Christian devotions in public and traditional practices in private and the process of inculturation will gradually need to address this. Devotion to Mary is beginning to be incultured, when she is regarded as a very important and common Ancestor.

SOME PATRON SAINTS

Abortion (anti)	Holy Innocents	December 28
Animals and environment	St Francis of Assisi	October 4
Artists	St Luke	October 18
Aviators	St Therese of Lisieux	October 3
Bankers	St Matthew	Sep 21
Child protection	St Maria Goretti	July 6
Comedians	St Vitus	June 15
Cooks and housewives	St Martha	July 29
Emigrants/migrants	St Francis Xavier	December 22
Expectant mothers	St Margaret	July 20
Families	Holy Family Benedict Daswa	Sunday after Christmas February 1
Fathers	St Joseph	March 19
Forgetful people	St Anthony	June 13
Irish people	St Patrick	March 17
Grandparents	St Joachim and Anna	July 28
Lovers	St Valentine	Feb 14
Martyrs	Uganda martyrs	June 3
Marriage	Louis and Zelig Martin	July 12
Mothers	Mary	many feasts
Policemen	St Michael - archangel	Sep 29
Poor	St Vincent de Paul St Francis Mother Teresa	July 19 October 4 September 5
Refugees/migrants	St John Baptist Scalabrini	June 1
Schools	St John Baptist La Salle Own congregations	April 7
Sick people	Our Lady of Lourdes	Feb 11
Soldiers	St Ignatius	July 31
Telephone workers	St Gabriel	Mar 24
Travellers	St Christopher	July 25
TV	St Clare	August 11
Youth	St John Bosco	January 31
Workers	St Joseph	May 1