

LESSON 23

Following the Church



Learning Objectives

In this lesson you will:

- Understand the **rules of the Church** we are to follow.
- Understand how these rules help us grow in love of God and neighbor.
- Increase our desire to grow in love and moral goodness.

Opening Prayer

O Lord, teach me your ways, so that I might follow you.
Enlighten my mind and strengthen my heart, so that I may
love your commands. Amen.



Opening Activity

Scan the QR code to access the online resources.

FaithOfTheMountain.org/grade4/lesson23

Introduction

To live in God’s kingdom, we must follow the rules established by his Church. Following Jesus means following his church. The Church’s rules are not burdensome. Jesus gave us a new law, “Love as I have loved.” Does this mean Jesus put an end to the Ten Commandments? Not at all. Jesus said: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Mt 5:17). Jesus also reminds us that if we obey his commandments, we will be the greatest in his kingdom (see Mt 5:19).

Christians are to obey the Ten Commandments. Why? There are many answers to this question. People obey laws for different reasons. Some obey out of fear. They fear they will be punished if they disobey. Jesus tells us to obey the Ten Commandments out of love. When we keep these laws, we show love for God and others. We also grow more holy.

Reflection Questions

1. *Why do you think it is important to follow the law?*
2. *How do you follow Jesus’ law?*

Point **1**

Rules of the Church

In order to grow in love of God and other people, the Church invites us on a journey of good habits. Sometimes what is asked of us can seem hard, but these rules are a way of living a real and authentic Christian life. These rules, also called the Precepts of the Church, help us to be good disciples of Jesus.

Here are the Church's Rules:

1. Attend Divine Liturgy on all Sundays and all **Holy Days** of Obligation.
2. Confess your sins at least once a year.
3. Receive Holy Communion at least during the Easter Season.
4. Fast and abstain on the days determined by the Church.
5. Help provide for the needs of the Church.

Point 2

Sundays, Holy Days, and Holy Communion

The Church invites us to the Divine Liturgy to bring us closer to Jesus. In fact, the Church has a liturgical calendar. Throughout the liturgical year, we celebrate different parts of God's holy Word.

The Church, like a caring mother, invites us to partake of the Holy Communion and be reconciled to our brothers and sisters. Joining others in communion is a way to bring us closer together.



Point 3

The Mystery of Penance, Fasting, and Supporting the Church

Following Jesus means making decisions. Each day we must choose to turn away from sin and return to God's friendship. We call such actions of turning around "conversion." We celebrate this conversion in the Mystery of Penance. We confess our sins to the priest. We tell God we are sorry. We promise to do better. We receive God's forgiveness. We are reunited with God and the Church. The third Rule of the Church says to celebrate Penance frequently, so that we are always reminded of God's love for us.

Fasting and abstinence are two ways to show sorrow for sin and to practice spiritual discipline. They detach our heart from the things of this world and focus our attention on God. **Fasting** means eating less. For example, the Church asks us to not eat for one hour before Holy Communion. **Abstinence** means not eating a specific type of food, like meat, or other things we enjoy. Days of fast and abstinence may vary from country to country. Maronites in the United States fast on Ash Monday and Great Friday of the Crucifixion. We abstain from meat on Ash Monday and all Fridays during Great Lent.

Finally, we support the Church through our time, talents, and treasure, which will be explored in the Reaching the Summit section.



Activity 1

Maronite Holy Days

Directions: Turn to page 382. Study the Maronite Holy Days until you learn them. To test your knowledge, match each Holy Day in Column B with the date in Column A.

A

- ___ 1. November 1
- ___ 2. December 8
- ___ 3. December 25
- ___ 4. January 1
- ___ 5. January 6
- ___ 6. February 9
- ___ 7. Forty Days After Easter
- ___ 8. August 15

B

- A. All Saints' Day
- B. Ascension Thursday
- C. Assumption of Mary (Dormition)
- D. Epiphany
- E. Immaculate Conception of Mary
- F. Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)
- G. New Year's Day
- H. Feast of Saint Maron

Activity 2

Reasons to Attend Church

Directions: Here are some reasons to attend Church on Sunday. Check the three you think are most important.

- ☐ Everyone else goes.
- ☐ My parents tell me to go.
- ☐ I receive Jesus.
- ☐ People will think I'm good.
- ☐ I offer Jesus to the Father.
- ☐ We grow more united as a Church.
- ☐ God tells us to go.
- ☐ I like the singing.
- ☐ I become closer to God.

Bonus: Write two additional reasons not mentioned here.

1.

2.



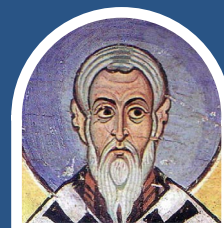
Maronite Wisdom

“Now, O Lord, we implore you, with the fragrance of this incense, to remember the Church you have built and protect your flock from evil.”

— *Book of Offering: Consecration and Renewal of the Church*

My Role Model

Saint Ignatius, Patriarch of Antioch



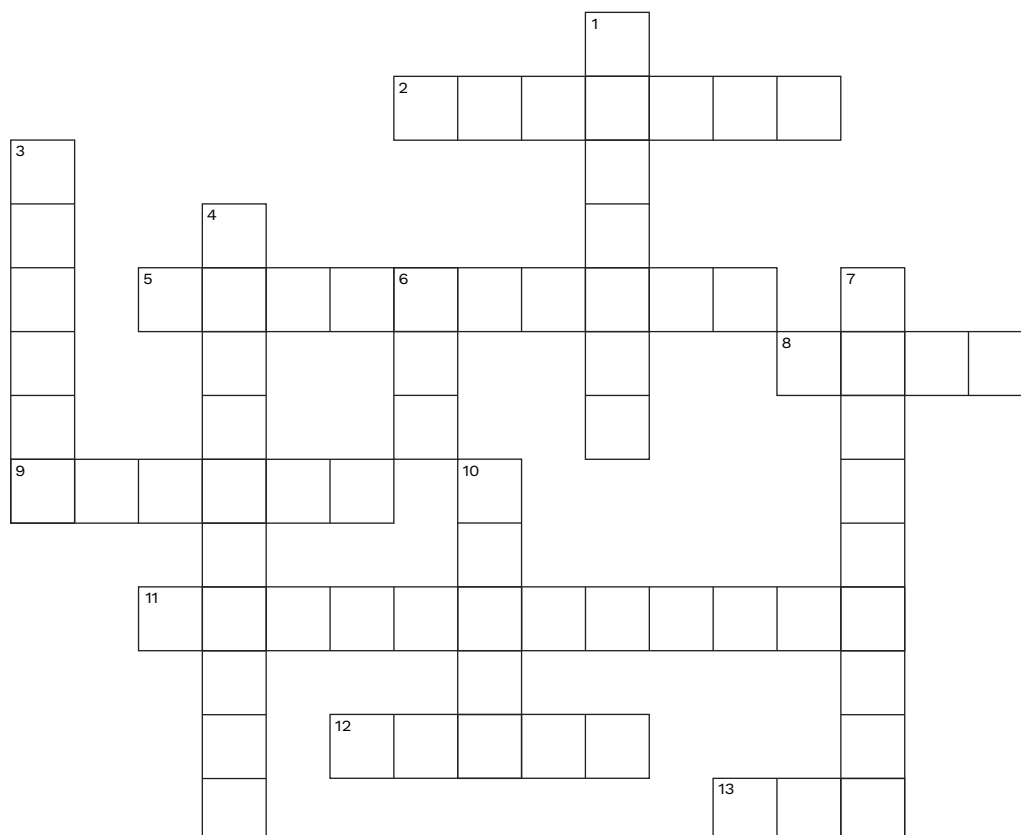
Ignatius was Bishop of Antioch in the second century. He urged Church members to obey the Ten Commandments and the Church’s rules. One day, Ignatius was arrested. He was taken by ship to Rome for execution. Along the way, he wrote letters. He told Church members to be faithful to the message of Jesus. Here is what he wrote: “Keep the commandments of the Lord. That way, you will grow in faith and love. Be obedient to your bishop, as Jesus obeyed his Father and the apostles obeyed Christ.” We honor Saint Ignatius of Antioch as a role model of Church living. His feast day is December 20. We pray that we, too, may obey the commandments and Rules of the Church.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, pray for us.

Recall



Use the clues to complete the crossword puzzle.



The Church has five rules. They help us form good [9 ACROSS] and grow in [10 DOWN] goodness. Obeying these rules helps us love [6 DOWN] and other people. Here are the [12 ACROSS]:

- 1.** Worship God on Sundays and Holy Days of [5 ACROSS]. Enjoy the Lord's Day. Do not [8 ACROSS].
- 2.** Receive Holy [7 DOWN] at least once a year, especially during the Season of the Glorious [11 ACROSS].
- 3.** When we receive Holy [7 DOWN], we are reminded of Christ's Glorious [11 ACROSS] and his promise to always be with us.
- 4.** Keep the [1 DOWN] and [4 DOWN] laws.
- 5.** Help support the [3 DOWN].

Weekly Journal



Think about Jesus' great love and mercy for you in the Divine Liturgy and in the Mystery of Penance.

Write: One way you can show greater love toward the Divine Liturgy.

Concluding Prayer



Lord, God, you chose Saint Ignatius of Antioch to preach the Good News. May we keep his teaching in our hearts. May we remember the Commandments and Rules of the Church. Help us follow the example of Saint Ignatius of Antioch in our lives. We praise you, now and for ever. Amen.

Climbing the Mountain

Bonus Materials for Students & Teachers



Mt 5:17–20

The Law and the Prophets

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Reflection

Jesus reminds us that everything matters to him. Every moment, every person we meet, and every law he gave us matters. In our ordinary day, we can often take shortcuts. But Jesus reminds us that he sees everything and that by breaking his commandments and causing others to follow suit, we will be the least in the kingdom. At the same time, if we live these commandments and teach others, we will be the greatest in the kingdom. Following Jesus means that we follow him with everything we have. There are no half saints.

Saintly Quote

“Whoever truly loves God, whoever keeps his commands, the Lord will come and make his dwelling in his heart.” — *Saint Gregory the Great*

Questions

1. How does the demand of Jesus to keep all the Commandments and teach others to do the same make you feel?
2. What can you do during times of temptation?

Reaching the Summit

For Teachers & Parents



“The precepts [Rules] of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor.” — CCC 2041

Lord’s Day

The first Rule of the Church also reminds us to obey the third commandment, “Keep holy the sabbath.” We should not work on Sundays, unless work is necessary. (Taking care of patients in a hospital is necessary work.) The purpose of sabbath rest is to honor God. When we rest and relax with our families, we grow in love of God and one another.

Catholic Social Teaching

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

“The apex of biblical teaching on work is the commandment of the sabbath rest. For man, bound as he is to the necessity of work, this rest opens to the prospect of a fuller freedom, that of the eternal sabbath (cf. Heb 4:9-10). Rest gives men and women the possibility to remember and experience anew God’s work, from

Creation to Redemption, to recognize themselves as his work (cf. Eph 2:10), and to give thanks for their lives and for their subsistence to him who is their author.”
— CSDC 258

Supporting the Church

Time: We take part in parish activities—religious education classes, social justice projects, fundraisers, and so forth.

Talent: We share our talents (singing, reading, decorating, teaching, cooking, and other skills) with the parish. We volunteer to help whenever we can.

Treasure: We give money to the Church. Every Sunday at the Divine Liturgy, there is a collection. Money is collected for the upkeep of the Church.

Discussion Questions

1. How can you instill the Church Rules in your child?
2. Besides those listed above, what are some ways you can support the Church?



Words to Know

Q. What is **abstinence**?

A. A spiritual discipline whereby we refrain from eating a specific type of food, like meat, or other things we enjoy. All Maronites who are physically capable should abstain from meat on Ash Monday and the Fridays during the Season of Great Lent.

Q. What is **fasting**?

A. A spiritual discipline whereby we eat less and refrain from eating between meals. Fasting can also mean giving up some of our favorite things. The Church asks us to fast one hour before Holy Communion. All Maronites who are able should fast on Ash Monday and Great Friday of the Crucifixion.

Q. What are **Holy Days**?

A. Certain days throughout the year when we have the duty of celebrating the Divine Liturgy. (Find the list of the Holy Days of Obligation for Maronites on page 382.)

Q. What are the **Rules of the Church**?

A. Five rules that help us form good habits that, in turn, help us grow in goodness. Obeying these rules helps us love God and other people. (Find the rules on page 381.)



**Scan this QR Code for
more information.**

FaithOfTheMountain.org/grade4/lesson23