

# The Holy Souls



Catholic Cemeteries  
Archdiocese of Vancouver

## Purpose:

To come to a deeper understanding of the afterlife and our connection to the souls in Purgatory.

## Lesson Focus:

*It is intended that students will...*

- Understand the value and purpose of the Month of Holy Souls in the liturgical year.
- Critically engage in the Catholic worldview of the afterlife.

<b>Lesson Plan</b>		<b>Duration: 60 minutes</b>
<b>Introduction</b> (10 min)	<b>Think-pair-share</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ “What customs and traditions does your family have for celebrating Halloween?”</li> </ul> <b>Handout: <i>Holy Souls – How Much Do You Know?</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Students answer the questions individually</li> </ul>	
<b>Guided Learning Steps</b> (40 min)	<b>Partner or small group discussion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Students share their responses from the handout with each other</i></li> </ul> <b>Whole class discussion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Go through each question, drawing out student responses for discussion, and then use the ANSWER KEY to articulate Church teaching.</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Closure</b> (10 min)	<b>Distribute <i>November: The Month of Holy Souls</i> booklets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Select an appropriate prayer to end class with.</i></li> </ul> <b>Exit Slips</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Students write down two things they learned in this lesson and one question they have.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Save these and bring them with the class on an interactive field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani (see info on how to book, included in this kit).</i></li> </ul>	

## Materials

1. Class set of photocopies: *Holy Souls: How Much Do You Know?*
2. One copy: *Holy Souls: How Much Do You Know? ANSWER KEY*
3. Class set of prayer booklets: *November: The Month of Holy Souls* (provided)
4. Class set of photocopies: “Exit Slip” handouts

# Connections to CISVA's Christian Education PLOs:



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Grade	Prescribed Learning Outcomes <i>It is expected that students will:</i>	Rationale <i>How this lesson plan integrates the PLO:</i>
CE7	<b>3.8</b> participate, through service opportunities, in the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy as a response to the Gospel Call	Praying for the dead is a spiritual work of mercy that is one of the main outcomes of this lesson. The hands-on field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani (see enclosed information on how to book) provides students with the opportunity to perform this work of mercy in an engaging way.
	<b>3.10</b> identify organizations that protect and promote the Dignity of Human Life	<i>Catholic Cemeteries</i> exists to protect and promote the dignity of the human person at the end of life. This is a recurring theme in all of our lesson plans (see data stick enclosed for more). Students will get a strong hands-on sense of this especially on the field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani (see enclosed information on how to book).
CE8	<b>B4</b> discuss examples of Judeo-Christian expressions/practices of sacred space.	The Catholic cemetery is described as sacred ground, consecrated by a bishop, and as an extension of parish life. The interactive field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani (see the information enclosed on how to book) also provides students with a hands-on experience of praying in this sacred space.
	<b>B7</b> find parallels between the Old Testament themes to Catholic traditions within the Liturgical Year.	Offering sacrifices in atonement for our sins and praying for the dead that they might be delivered from their sin are ancient practices finding their roots in the Old Testament ( <i>Job</i> 1:5; <i>2 Macc</i> 12:46). These themes permeate this lesson.
CE9	<b>A1</b> discover how we live out our covenantal relationship with God through Christ during the seasons and feast days of the Liturgical Year.	The Hallowtide Triduum and the Month of Holy Souls are the primary focuses of this resource package, and they are first and foremost all about our covenantal relationship with God, as experienced in the transition between earthly life and the afterlife.
	<b>A7</b> explore and experience a variety of prayer forms throughout the year.	Praying for the souls in Purgatory is an important outcome in this lesson (both in concept and in practice). A prayer booklet is provided and participation in a spiritual work of mercy is experienced on the interactive field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani (see information enclosed on how to book).
CE10	<b>D4</b> illustrate God's unconditional and forgiving love.	One of the main topics of this lesson is the necessity of Purgatory, and how that is best understood as a great expression of God's love and mercy.
	<b>B1</b> explain how they are made in the image and likeness of God.	It is described in this lesson how being made in the image of God is the foundational concept that guides the Catholic tradition in end-of-life issues, such as appropriate burial customs. Specific lesson plans discussing euthanasia and assisted-suicide are also included on the data stick in this resource kit.
CE11	<b>A2</b> experience a variety of prayer expression (that teach and form people in the faith), which are drawn from the history of our tradition.	Accessing an indulgence on behalf of the souls of Purgatory (which has its roots in the history of the Church) is taught in this lesson and practiced on the interactive field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani (see information enclosed on how to book). A prayer booklet is also provided, included prayers from the rich history of our Catholic tradition.
	<b>A4</b> celebrate the Feast Days of the Liturgical Year that connect to Church history.	Understanding and experiencing the Hallowtide Triduum and the Month of Holy Souls are the primary focuses of this resource package.
	<b>I4</b> participate in contemporary expressions of charitable works	Students will learn about the corporal work of mercy of burying the dead in this lesson, and they will participate in the spiritual work of mercy of praying for the dead both in this lesson and on the interactive field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani (see information enclosed on how to book).
CE12	<b>E2</b> examine contemporary dilemmas that compromise the Dignity of the Human Person	A discussion on scattering ashes is directly related to the concept of human dignity. Also, see the two CE12 lesson plans on the data stick provided, which explicitly focus on the dignity of the human person.
	<b>E4</b> participate in and reflect on activities that restore and/or affirm the Dignity of the Human Person, in light of the Gospel.	In this lesson and on the field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani (see information enclosed on how to book), students will participate in prayer for the souls in Purgatory (a spiritual work of mercy), and accessing an indulgence on their behalf.
	<b>A2</b> engage in Christian Communal Prayer	Communal prayer for the souls in Purgatory is an important outcome in this lesson (both in concept and in practice). A prayer booklet is provided and used.

# Teacher's Guide



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## Credit:

Lesson plan and accompanying materials created by Joshua Palmarin.

## Introduction

### Connect with prior knowledge

- This lesson takes for granted that students have prior knowledge and understanding of the nature of the human soul as a spiritual, non-physical entity. A basic understanding of the existence of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory is also assumed.

### Handout: *Holy Souls: How Much Do You Know?*

- It is recommended for the sake of quality of student thought, that this handout is completed in silence (also good for pacing).
- Be sensitive! Some of these questions may hit close to home for some students, especially those who have lost a loved one recently. Consider connecting with the school counselor prior to teaching this lesson if you suspect that one of your students may have an emotional reaction to the content.

## Guided Learning Steps

### Partner or Small Group Discussion

- Consider creating small groups in advance. It is beneficial for students to have meaningful discussion in small groups throughout the year, but bad habits may form in a group that has developed a negative “routine.” Changing small groups every month, such that by the end of the year each student has seen as many different faces in the class as possible, can be a good way to keep small group discussion a fresh and worthwhile activity.

### Whole Class Discussion

- Note: the ANSWER KEY draws most of its information from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the YOUCAT. Students should fill in the “Church teaching” sections on their worksheets whenever you make use of the answer key.
- In order to engage critical thinking, try asking students what *they* think the Church teaches and *why*, before divulging the answers.
- Students need to know that their opinion, whatever that may be, is respected. Remind them that expressing a different opinion will not result in a lower grade or a verbal reprimand, even if it’s contrary to Church teaching. If a student feels safe expressing their opinion, it also opens their minds to hearing others’ opinions (including the Church’s).
- For a healthy discussion, be sure to validate student input frequently. Listen well, and respond to a student’s input in a way that demonstrates that you’ve heard and understood the comment. Rewording or recapping what a student has said; asking for clarification on a detail in the comment; and asking follow-up questions are practical ways you can validate student input.

# Closure:

## **November: *The Month of Holy Souls* booklets**

- Encourage students to make use of these beautiful little booklets, and remind them throughout the month of November. Praying for the dearly departed is the best gift you can give them!

## **Exit Slips**

- This lesson plan is designed to be followed up by a field trip to Gardens of Gethsemani, where students will perform a spiritual work of mercy while gaining an indulgence for a soul in Purgatory. The content of this lesson will also be reinforced by the knowledgeable staff on site, and the Exit Slips from this activity could generate great questions to ask them. Information about the field trip is included in this kit, as is a sample of the interactive “Prayer Challenge” scavenger hunt, which will have students locating various grave markers throughout the cemetery, to pray for those souls and record information about each that they uncover on site (veterans, archbishops, children, local priests, and many others). Please see enclosed information on how to book this field trip.

# Ideas for Extension and Extra Resources:

- **Book excerpt:** C.S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, chapter 7, contains an excellent illustration of the consequence of sin. When Eustace is turned into a dragon, he is unable to rid himself of his new form. It is only when he allows Aslan to tear off his scales and bath him in water (which is a painful process) that he is truly purified and returned to his true self. This is a powerful analogy that may help students understand our redemption in Christ and the necessity of Purgatory as an expression of God's justice and love.
- **Video:** Fr. Mike Schmitz, Ascension Presents. (2016, January 6). *Did the Church Ever Sell Indulgences?* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpDUZ3kWjM8&t=238s>
- **Lesson Plans:** please see the data stick enclosed in this kit for more Christian Education lesson plans like this, covering a variety of topics, such as the value of human life; secularism and the Church; the meaning of suffering; euthanasia and assisted-suicide; Ash Wednesday; and new life after death.
- **Book:** Fr. Benedict J. Groeschel. (2009). *After This Life: What Catholics Believe About What Happens Next*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division.
  - This is an excellent personal resource for a thorough understanding of the Catholic worldview pertaining to the afterlife. It is profound and easy to understand.