Catholic Heroes of the Faith

Student Handouts for

The Saint Perpetua Story

STUDENT

Table of Contents

A Secret Symbol! 3

The Ixthus 4

Say What? 5

Dig into the Story! 6

Dig Deeper 7

Who Am I? 8

Character Counts 9

Story Mix-Up 10

Preserving Our Stories 11

Interview of a Christian Who Journals 12

Craft Corner: Personal Journals 13

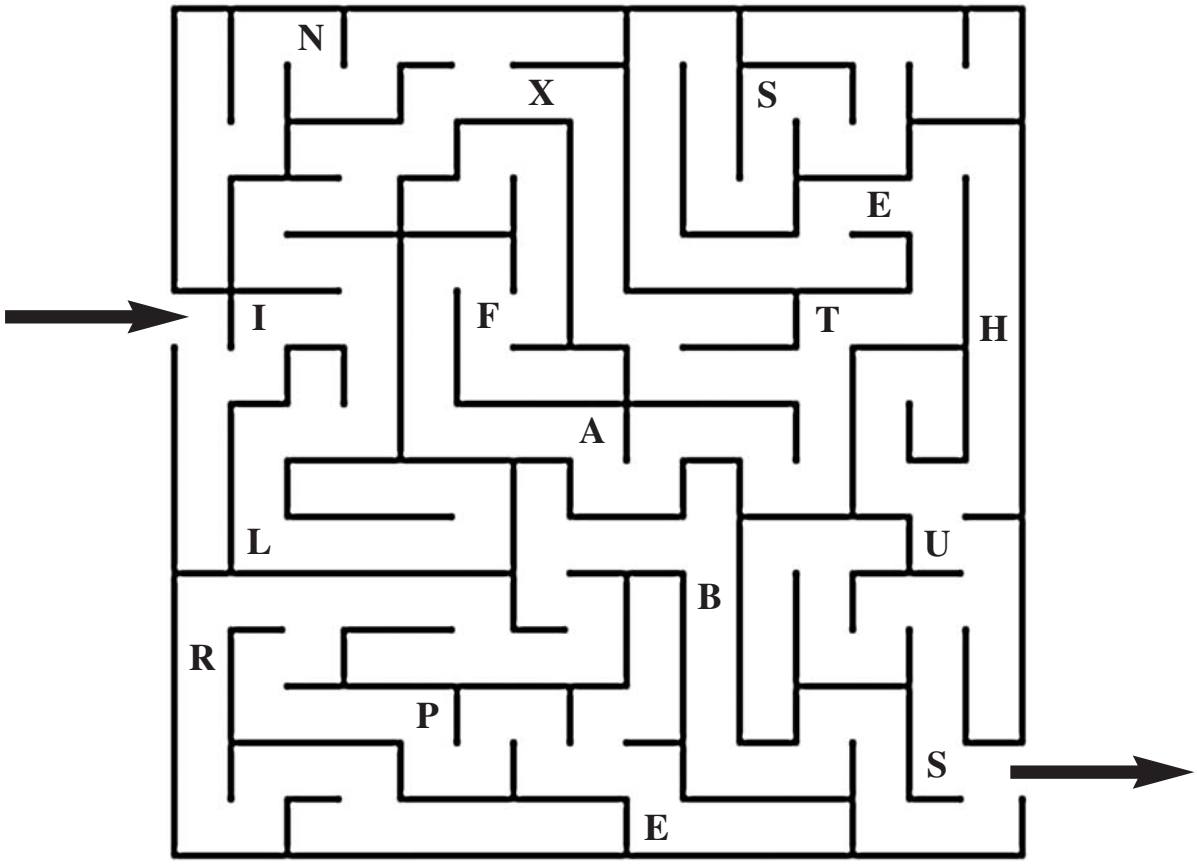
Color the Scene 14-17

NOTE: Answer key for selected pages is on page 25 of the Leader's Guide.

© Christian History Institute

A Secret Symbol!

In the time of the Early Church, sometimes being a Christian was very dangerous. Sometimes Christians had to meet and celebrate the Mass in secret. At these times, they used symbols as secret codes, so no one else would know they were Christians. Find your way through this maze. Write down the letters you come to in order on the lines below, to learn the name of a popular symbol used by the early Christians.



_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Turn to the next page to see what this symbol looks like!

The Ixthus

This symbol was used in the Early Church to help identify believers. The letters inside the fish are Greek letters, each one representing a key word in the Christian faith. See if you can unscramble the words that each of the letters represents:

Ι = SEUSJ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Χ = SITRCH ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Θ = DGO ___ ___ ___

Υ = NOS ___ ___ ___

Σ = VARIOS ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

Now fill in the blanks to see how early believers might have "read" the Ixthus:

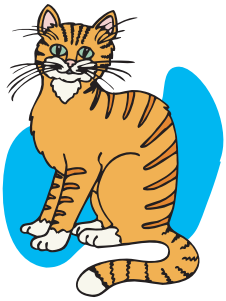
_____ _____ is _____'s _____ the _____ .

Ι Χ Θ Υ Σ

Can you make your own statement of faith using some of the symbols found in the Ixthus? Make a sentence and see if your friends can decode it!

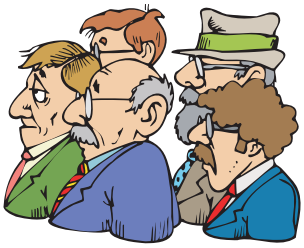
Say What?

Solve these picture puzzles. After you solve each puzzle, put the letters together on the bottom blanks to find a new word.



\+ (– o)

____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

\+ (– p) +  =

____ ____ ____ ____

____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

This word means "someone who is learning about the faith" before being baptized. Today, most Catholics come from Catholic families and are baptized as babies. Back then, most new Catholics came into the Church as adults.

Does this word describe you? If you have been baptized, do you still need to learn about the faith? How do you keep learning?

Dig into the Story!

Questions to get you thinking and talking about Perpetua

1. Why was Perpetua arrested?

2. How did Perpetua view her slave, Felicitas? Why was this so shocking to her father and other Romans?

3. In the video, some of Perpetua's wealthy friends saw her being arrested. What did they think of the Christians?

4. Why do you think the Romans tried to force everyone to sacrifice to the emperor?

5. Why wouldn't Perpetua and the other Christians offer the sacrifice?

6. What comforts did they give up in order to stick to their convictions?

7. How did God comfort Perpetua and her friends while they were in prison? How did the other believers help them?

8. After their "trial" before the Pro-counsul, Saturus turns himself in and is arrested knowing he would die too. Why would he do this?

9. What concerns did Perpetua have as the time of her death grew closer? How did God provide for her needs?

10. The conclusion of Perpetua's diary was written by someone else. Why was it so important to her that her diary be completed upon her death? If you could ask Perpetua one question, what would it be?

Dig Deeper

Thinking through some tough issues for more mature students

1. What risks did Perpetua take in order to become a Christian? Are there risks you've taken due to your faith?

2. When Perpetua is arrested, she refers to her slave as her sister. This shocked people then. When you consider race relations today, do you think people in the Church do a good job at welcoming those of different backgrounds, nations and races? Why or why not?

3. Perpetua would not sacrifice to the emperor. Are Christians today expected to do anything like that?

4. In the Roman Empire, religion and government were combined. Modern democracies attempt to keep government separate from religion with the "separation of church and state" policy. Do you think it would be good to have Christianity as the official religion of your country? Why or why not?

5. Describe Perpetua's relationship with her father. How does Perpetua show respect for her father? When does she choose to go against him?

6. Perpetua and her companions record visions they see while in prison. Through their visions, the group learns that they are to be martyred and will go to Heaven. Do you think people still see visions today? If so, how can we tell which visions are from God?

7. From Perpetua's diary we learn that Perpetua prays for her brother Dinocrates, and then in a vision sees him suffering. After days of prayer, she has another vision in which he is healed and happy. Was Dinocrates in Purgatory? Should we be praying for the souls there?

8. Some people think Perpetua would have had a bigger impact if she had simply offered the incense and then asked for forgiveness later. What do you think?

Who Am I?

One reason St. Perpetua could be so brave was that she knew who she was, and who she was following. Can you think of five things that define Perpetua? Have you ever considered the characteristics that define you and only you? Answer the following questions to get a feel for those things that make you unique!

My family:

(circle one on each line)

- Big or Small
- Table Games or Outdoor Sports
- Beach or Mountains
- Books or Television

My favorites:

- Animal - _____
- School subject - _____
- Ice cream flavor - _____

My talents:

(circle all that describe you)

Music Sports Art Reading

Math Writing Cooking Acting

Listening Being a good friend

My faith is...

(circle all that describe you)

New Growing

Strong Not ready to commit

Important

My self:

(circle one on each line)

- Tall, average, or not-so-tall
- Funny or serious
- Like to follow a plan or like to "go with the flow"

One characteristic that describes ME: _____

Character Counts

In the time of the Early Church, Christians became known for being different from everyone else. People were suspicious of their love and commitment. Some people got angry that Christians believed in the one true God and that other gods were just idols. Some people accused them of cannibalism when they heard about Jesus' Body and Blood in the Mass. And a lot of people thought they were dangerous because they wouldn't play along with what everyone else was doing.

Here are some phrases that describe the actions of the early believers, along with the character traits they identify. See if you can find the traits in the word search.

Were willing to face hardships for their beliefs **(Brave)**
Shared their resources with those in need **(Generous)**
Cared for widows, orphans and the poor **(Caring)**
Treated their slaves as equals in Christ **(Inclusive)**
Took their concerns to the Lord **(Prayerful)**
Attended Mass often **(Worshipful)**
Told their friends about the faith **(Sharing)**
Told of healings and other miracles **(Faithful)**

E B B A H G L R Q C N W I L W N R
V O H W T O F U A P K K N P U E O
M N C G S N C R F U V X D I N G E
E F B F E M I S L P P E N N H S V
L O Y J O N C S G Q I V Y M N Z I
Q K A S G T E K E Z Z H T I N S S
P U D D R S E R V P E G S J Z L U
F A I T H F U L O K G N P R G G L
G H M S M Y T J L U K P E H O M C
R Q C W K D V U D O S V N E M W N
I L F E E L F T X S C Q R Y U F I
L R W O U R Q C U H E V A R B O G
U G Q N E N O M B A D O N G V U C
Y T F Y M C Q Y H R T S P X N Z L
L T A R G V S W Z I A E M D R B O
A R Y R P K O R H N L E Y P U X W
P S Y E Z S A V P G G M L X J M V

Which of these character traits do you see in the Church today?
Which ones would you like to develop, with God's help?

Story Mix-Up

These pictures of Perpetua's story are all mixed up.
Number the pictures in the correct order.

Perpetua is allowed to have her baby with her in prison.

The pastor decides to join the prisoners.

Perpetua is taken to the arena.

Perpetua explains to her father that she is a Christian.

The believers meet in secret to worship.

Perpetua records her experiences in a diary.

Perpetua will not make the sacrifice to the emperor.

The group of believers is diverse.

Preserving Our Stories

Historians are people who find out what happened in the past. How do they do that? They interpret the clues and the records people leave behind. We human beings are remarkably good at preserving our stories or our "histories." St. Perpetua was just 22 years old, in prison, and about to be killed, yet she made sure she wrote down her story and got someone else to finish for her.

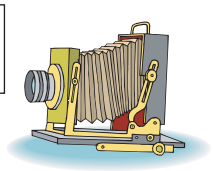
Here we see various ways that stories are passed from one generation to the next. See if you can put these clues into order of the time they became widely used.

☐

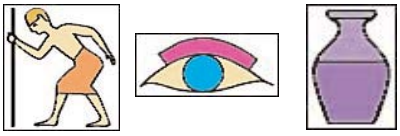
Scrolls or papyrus

☐

Videos

☐ 

Photos

☐ 

Hieroglyphics -
an ancient system of writing,
often carved into stone

☐

Internet

☐

Books

☐

Verbal passing of stories

☐

Tape recording

In what ways does your family document your life—photos, videos, cards, calendars, letters, diaries?

Interview of a Christian who Journals

Invite a Christian who has kept a personal diary, journal, or prayer journal for some time to share with your class. Here are some sample questions you can ask:

1. When did you begin journaling? What caused you to begin this habit?

2. How often do you write in your journal?

3. What is the purpose of your journal? What types of things do you record?

4. Do you think your journal might be useful to a historian in the future?

5. Who will value your journal the most? You or future generations?

6. How does journaling help you?

7. Do you ever get discouraged with journaling? What is the hardest part of journaling and how do you overcome that obstacle?

8. Do you use other ways of recording your experiences, such as photos, videos, or the internet?

9. What recording method do you feel is most important?

10. What advice do you have for us if we want to begin keeping a diary or a journal?

Enrichment Idea: Invite your guest to display one or more of his/her journals.

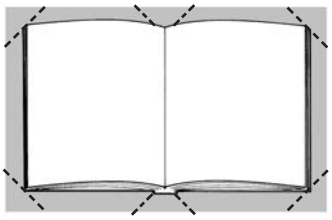
Craft Corner: Personal Journals

Supplies for each journal:
Hardback composition book (9.75” x 7.5”)
Self-stick contact paper, cut into 12” x 10” rectangle

Step 1: Lay out the contact paper with the printed side down.

Step 2: Open the composition book and lay it in the middle, to measure. Cut the corners of the contact paper, as shown in the picture at right. This will help the paper to lay nicely on the journal.

Cut as indicated by the dotted lines.



Step 3: Peel off about half of the backing on the contact paper and place the back of the composition book on the sticky paper, with the cut corners aligned with the corners of the book. Firmly press this half into place, folding the edges onto the inside of the back cover.

Step 4: Close the journal. Now peel off the rest of the protective paper and stick firmly to the front cover, folding the edges onto the inside of the front cover.

Step 5: Personalize with markers or other craft supplies.

Step 6: USE IT!!! Don’t worry about writing perfect sentences or paragraphs. Just record your honest thoughts, prayers, and experiences. If you miss a few days or a few weeks, just pick up where you left off. You may soon find that writing helps you to sort out tough problems and difficult situations.

Color the Scene #1

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:27-28

Color the Scene #2

"That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete." 1 John 1:3-4

Color the Scene #3

"For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Matthew 4:14

Color the Scene #4

"And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2:21