

A MANTLE

Salt of the Earth: Palestinian Christians in the Northern West Bank: A Study Guide (leader version)

<http://www.saltfilms.net>



Summary: This lesson looks at the family of the Church worldwide, and our place in it. We will meet Fr. Tomie, the Orthodox priest for Tubas, Burqin, and Zababdeh. The class should consider the responsibility of being in relationship with other parts of the Body of Christ, and what that relationship looks like.

Supplies: Everyone should have a Bible. Bring copies of this session's student guide. You should have a chalkboard or flipchart. If you have a wall map, mark the locations of Tubas, Burqin, and Zababdeh.

3 min **Prayer and introduction**

Greet everyone and invite people to share any reflections they may have from the previous week's Daily Walk. Hand out the student guides and introduce today's study: *Today we will look at the family of the Church, and relationships within the Body of Christ. We will meet Fr. Tomie, the Orthodox priest for churches in three towns. On Fridays, he leads worship in Tubas (too-BAHS), on Saturday in Burqin (bur-KEEN), and Sunday in Zababdeh (za-BAHB-deh).* If you have a map, point out the locations of these towns on it. Invite someone to open the session in prayer or use the sample prayer at right.

Sample prayer

Merciful and loving Lord, teach us how to be your church. May we be knit together in unity. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

3 min **Scripture**

Invite someone to read Romans 15:22-29 aloud.

15 min **Questions**

On the board, create three columns titled "Rome," "Jerusalem," "Macedonia and Achaia," and "Spain." In groups of 2-4, discuss this question:
What messages does Paul have for people in these four places?
With a few minutes left, call the conversations to a close and invite comments from the groups. Fill in the chart on the board.

Leader Notes Romans

Paul did not start the churches in Jerusalem or in Rome. He had significant disagreements with the apostles and other early Christian leaders about who can become Christian and what it means to follow Christ (Acts 15, Galatians 2). However, Paul clings to the vision of unity in the church, insisting that the Gentile churches he founds be one with the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. He comes to Christians in Rome with a desire for mutual encouragement in the faith (1: 12). Yet the burning goal for Paul is to get to Spain, to share the gospel with those who have not yet heard.

20 *Film*
min Show “A
Mantle”
segment of
the film.

Leader Notes film

Fr. Tomie Jubran Samara Daoud is the Greek Orthodox priest for churches in three different towns. Every Friday he serves the Church of the Holy Trinity in Tubas, a town of 16,000 with around fifty Christians. We see him cut the bread as he prepares the Eucharist. Before it is baked, it is impressed with a stamp “IC-XC, NI-KA,” meaning “Jesus Christ conquers” in Greek. From the center, he cuts out a cube, which signifies Jesus Christ. He cuts a cross in it and then pierces the center, remembering the cross and the piercing of Jesus’ side. He also cuts pieces commemorating the saints of the church and in the name of the congregation’s faithful, both departed and living. As Fr. Tomie carries the bread and wine out to the people, he chants prayers for the church and the world. The Bread and wine are mixed together and served to the people with a special spoon. Fr. Tomie explains that the spoon reminds us of the tongs the angel used to bring burning coal to Isaiah’s lips, cleansing him of sin (Isaiah 6). At the end of the service, bread that was not used in the Eucharist is given out to the congregation.

Fr. Tomie comments on religious tourists and pilgrims and how few actually visit Christians in the area. He refers to the remaining Christians in the land as living stones, and expresses concern about how they are dwindling.

On Saturdays, Fr. Tomie goes to Burqin, a town of 10,000 with approximately 100 Christians and a historical church. In Luke 17 Jesus heals ten lepers, and one (a Samaritan) returns to thank him. From that moment, that place was venerated. At the time of the visit of Queen Helena (Constantine’s mother) to the region, improvements were made to the site as a church. At the heart of it is a cave with a hole in the roof, where food would have been lowered down to the lepers where they lived in quarantine.

When Fr. Tomie arrives, he finds graffiti written on the church doors in chalk, including “There is no God but God. Islam is the solution.”

On Sundays, Fr. Tomie serves the largest of his parishes, the one in Zababdeh, which has 700-800 members. With approximately 2,000 Christians and 1,000 Muslims, Zababdeh is the only majority Christian town in the area. Fr. Tomie prepares himself for worship as he puts on special vestments, each with a special scriptural prayer.

“First Visit to an Orthodox Church--Twelve Things I Wish I'd Known” by Frederica Mathewes-Green is a fast and fun introduction to Orthodox worship: www.frederica.com/orthodox/o12th-mrb.html.

15 **Questions**

min As a group, discuss the following:
How do the messages listed on the board speak to the church today, in America, in the Middle East, and elsewhere?
Do they apply to us, and how?

4 **Closing and prayer**

min Solicit prayer concerns from the group and then close in prayer, using your own or the sample prayer at right.
 Remind group of Daily Walk opportunities and plans for your next meeting.

Sample prayer

Gracious and loving God, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. Teach us to support and encourage one another, and give us the wisdom to be your faithful witnesses to this world. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

<p>Daily Walk An invitation to daily prayer and witness</p>	
<p>Daily Prayer: <i>Frame your daily walk with this series in prayer—feel free to use your own prayer or the one provided:</i> As you are three in one and one in three, Holy Trinity, teach us how to be the Church. Teach us to be in relationship with one another, sharing our gifts and diversity. And teach us to be united as one Body. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.</p>	<p>Daily Action: Available online: http://www.saltfilms.net/guides/mantle-student.pdf</p> <p>Day 1) <i>Read Scripture:</i> Romans 1:8-15.</p> <p>Day 2) <i>Hear from a Holy Land Christian:</i> An interview with Dr. Bishara Awad, founder of Bethlehem Bible College. http://www.worldvision.org/worldvision/mag.nsf/0/0d20c78943897b8c8825678a000345f5?OpenDocument</p> <p>Day 3) <i>Learn more:</i> Background and statistics about Palestinian Christians. http://www.al-bushra.org/holyland/sabella.htm</p> <p>Day 4) <i>Be inspired:</i> Partnership grows between Christians in Chapel Hill and Zababdeh. http://www.upcch.org/modules/tinycontent1/index.php?id=29</p> <p>Day 5) <i>Share:</i> Take time to tell someone new about how you've been moved this week by this Study Series. Invite him/her to pray with you.</p> <p>Day 6) <i>Act:</i> Support the Churches in Danger project to help stem the tide of Christian emigration from the Holy Land. http://www.pcusa.org/give/online/projectSelectAction.do?numberString=E051646</p>