



AGE RANGE

5-12 years

DURATION

1-4 hours

Bees for Christ

Virgin Mary of the Bees Lesson Plan

*A guided outdoor Orthodox Christian learning experience
using the life and work of bees to explore unity,
generosity, attentiveness, prayer, and love.*

DURATION

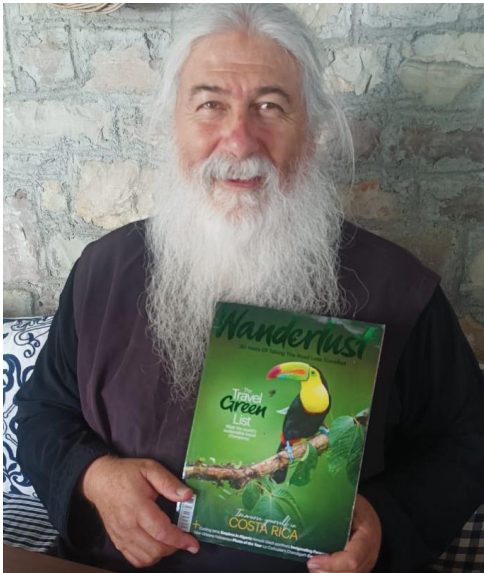
1-4 hours (adaptable based on activities,
saints referenced, and prayers completed)

SETTING

A local park, natural area, or gardening space.
May be adapted for parishes with adequate green space.



OUTDOOR
ORTHODOXY



A WORD FROM ELDER GEORGE ALEVRAS OF MOUNT ATHOS— SPIRITUAL CHILD OF SAINT PORPHYRIOS

“Saint Porphyrios’ final prayer was, ‘That they may be one’ (John 17:21). The beehive is a living icon of that prayer: many lives working as one, giving more than they take. In the wonder of God’s creation, the bees teach us a simple truth – the world is changed not by power, but by love shared in unity.’

On Bee Day, children learn not only about the miracles of God’s Creation through the humble bee but also about the sweetness of faith which is nurtured through love, prayer and care. With the guidance of the Virgin Mary of the Bees, children, families and communities come together, sharing the joy of creation and the blessings which flow when we honour the gifts of God.”



This curriculum was developed by Ambelli in partnership with Orthodox Youth & Young Adult Ministries.

Ambelli is a Greek non-profit entity.
We engage youth and families in Christian faith,
care for creation, and Byzantine cultural traditions.
Community. Culture. Christ.





BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Thoughtful preparation is one of the greatest gifts you can offer your families as you engage with the “Bees for Christ” curriculum. We warmly encourage coordinators to gather for at least one dedicated planning meeting in advance and to visit the program grounds together so your whole team feels comfortable and connected to the space before the day arrives. It’s also wise to anticipate potential technical difficulties and have a backup plan ready, so that small hiccups can be met with grace rather than stress. And wherever possible, please incorporate a live, experiential element into your “Bee Day”: a visit to a working hive, time spent wandering a garden, or a honey and bee-product tasting. These hands-on encounters with God’s creation make Bees for Christ truly memorable for children and families and are at the very heart of the Outdoor Orthodoxy vision.

The Bees for Christ Bee Day should feel like a gift of time, not a race against it. Build generous breathing room into your schedule, and trust that unstructured time in nature is not empty time; it is some of the most valuable time you can offer a child. Open the day with a moment of stillness, prayer, and intention-setting, welcoming everyone to arrive fully and leave the busyness of ordinary life. Let this spirit of intentionality carry through every transition, with quiet pauses woven alongside moments of wonder and discovery. Have your materials and handouts organized and ready to share smoothly, so that logistics fade into the background and what remains is simply families, children, and the beauty of creation holding you all together.

Finally, do not forget to preserve the story of your Bee Day. With appropriate permissions, we encourage coordinators to take photographs and document special moments of learning, discovery, prayer, and fellowship. These memories help tell the ongoing story of the Bees for Christ movement and inspire future participants to become part of it.

If your group creates written reflections, prayers, commitments, or messages during the day, consider preserving them as part of a growing Bees for Christ archive. In doing so, each Bee Day becomes connected to those that came before it and those yet to come. Future participants may read these messages, pray for the children and families who wrote them, and add their own voices to an ever-growing chain of prayer, gratitude, and care for creation. In this way, the fruits of a single day extend far beyond the event itself, becoming part of a living tradition that continues to nourish faith, community, and stewardship across generations.





LESSON GOALS

- Cultivate an appreciation for nature and prayer
- Become familiar with the holy icon, Virgin Mary of the Bees, and World Bee Day
- Observe with attentiveness the beauty and intricacies of the natural world to awaken awe and gratitude for God and all of His creation
- Understand the roles of bees and how they cooperate to deliver goodness to the planet and to humans
- Experience the power of unity and see the parallels between the Church and the beehive
- Become familiar with stories from the Bible and sayings from the Saints that call on us to emulate the bee
- Practice praying together and alone
- Identify ways to offer sweetness to the Lord and to others

PREPARATION

- Choose a safe green space, ideally with access or proximity to a flower garden or wooded park. If participants will garden or create seed bombs, secure necessary approvals and supplies in advance.
- Safeguard the space from any environmental and safety hazards.
- Bring icons of the Virgin Mary of the Bees and the saints whose stories will be covered. See Appendix A.
- Prepare and print materials needed for activities. See Appendix B.
- Bring materials and objects needed for activities. See Appendix B.
- Optional but encouraged: Contact a local or state beekeeper's association to see if they can attend and offer a short children's tutorial on the beehive.
- Leaders should familiarize themselves with key facts about bees, beehives, and best practices to support pollination. See Appendix C.
- Leaders should read through all provided materials (including stories and prayers) prior to the lesson.
- Leaders should prepare post-event materials to share with parents and participants.





LESSON OUTLINE



1. OPENING — GATHERING & PRAYER - 10 MINUTES

Location: Open green space

- Welcome participants and create a circle with everyone standing. For larger groups, invite them to form two or more circles or interconnecting loops (Figure 8 pattern).
- Initiate group prayer. Instruct children to walk slowly in one direction, softly chanting the Pascha Apolytikion: "Christ is risen from the dead..."
- Note: For 2026, the singing of the Paschal Apolytikion falls within the Paschal season.
- Change direction and softly chant "Holy God, Holy Mighty and Holy Immortal" and "Our Father." Groups of older children may also include "O Heavenly King" and "It is Truly Meet | Axion Esti."
- Invite children to walk freely, greeting each other with "Our Father" or "Christ is in our midst! | He is and ever shall be," and by exploring the natural world around them.

LEADER NOTE

Set a calm, unhurried tone from the beginning. If children arrive energized or distracted, the walking circle prayer is a gentle way to bring them into a unified rhythm. For very young children (ages 5–6) who do not yet know the prayers, invite them to walk quietly and listen, or to hum along. The goal is participation and presence, not performance.

LESSON OUTLINE CONTINUED ON PAGE 6...



LESSON OUTLINE CONTINUED...

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLY ICON: VIRGIN MARY OF THE BEES - 15 MINUTES

- Direct families to find comfortable seats.
- Invite children to approach the discovery station where the icon will be unveiled. As they approach, encourage them to close their eyes and pay attention to the sounds around them.
- Bring their attention to Jesus's words: "He who has ears, let him hear" (Mark 4:9).
- For older groups, remind them that God revealed Himself to the Prophet Elijah not in an earthquake or a storm, but in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12).
- As they approach, refer to Proverbs 20:12: "Ears that hear and eyes that see, God has made them both."
- Unveil and present the holy icon. Share the icon's story and symbolism and invite children to venerate it and observe its details. Explain the significance of World Bee Day.
- Read aloud the Apolytikion of the Virgin Mary of the Bees.
- Allow for a short open-ended Q&A.

LEADER NOTE

The unveiling of the icon is one of the most memorable moments of the day. Encourage children to approach slowly and quietly, as if entering a Church. Welcome all questions – curiosity is the beginning of love for the faith. Keep this segment to around 5 minutes so energy and curiosity are preserved for the activities ahead.

NEW FEATURE

Open a box to unveil "bee messages" and information from participants in Greece. Show a map of where the icon and messages have travelled. Underscore the universality and unity of our faith – just as bees travel, so do our good thoughts and prayers.





3. BEES FOR CHRIST ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 3A. BEE GRATEFUL - 20 MINUTES

Introduce the day's theme: participants are invited to envision this event as a celebration in God's garden.

- Invite participants to explore their natural surroundings as bees would. Each participant brings back something interesting or beautiful to share with the group.
- Elicit responses about what participants know about bees. Underscore that bees have many lessons to teach us about our relationship to God, each other, and the planet.
- As a group, call out what bees do and what they offer (honey, beeswax, pollination).
- Create a sensory experience with key bee products:
- Beeswax candle: "We use these to pray at church."
- Honey: "Bees produce it through hard work, both alone and together."
- A flower or plant: "Bees share pollen as they fly, helping plants and flowers grow – and never ask for anything in return."
- Invite participants to spend a few quiet minutes enjoying their surroundings and observing the small blessings God provides every day.
- Show icons of Saint Porphyrios and Saint Paisios and share who they are. (See Appendix A.)

"Christ is everywhere – in the flowers, in the sea, in the mountains. When we love Him, we see Him everywhere." – Saint Paisios

"Nature is the secret Gospel. When we look at it with love, it speaks to us of God." – Saint Porphyrios

- Hand out "Thank You God" and "God is Great" cards. Younger participants draw; older participants write out statements of gratitude.

LEADER NOTE

When children share what they found, affirm every response warmly – a rock, a leaf, a bug, a sound are all equally valid. During the quiet reflection time, resist the urge to fill the silence. Even 2–3 minutes of genuine stillness can be transformative.

ACTIVITY 3B. NECTAR HUNTING - 30 MINUTES

Explain that bees collect nectar from flowers using their tongue, bring it back to the hive, and use it to make honey.

- Invite participants to explore their natural surroundings as bees would. Each participant brings back something interesting or beautiful to share with the group.

"How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth." – Psalm 119:103

Assign participants the role of worker bees whose job is to collect scripture cards hidden throughout the outdoor space and bring them back to the hive (a basket). Participants may carry only one card at a time and must travel through marked areas mimicking the waggle dance.



Scripture Messages to Hide

- “God is love” | “Love your neighbor” | “Love the Lord your God with all your heart”
- “In everything, give thanks” | “Love is gentle, love is kind” | “Be of one mind”
- “By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another”
- “Forgive one another as I have forgiven you” | “Stand still and know I am God”
- “Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger”
- For younger ages, simplify: “Forgive,” “Be gentle,” “God is love.”
- As participants find their scripture, ask them to sit quietly and meditate on the words. Invite them to speak to God from their hearts about what they have read.
- Bring the group together and invite each participant to share their word of wisdom.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION

Paste the scripture messages onto a honeycomb sheet, emphasizing that the more we search the Scriptures and contemplate God’s word, the closer we feel to Him.

LEADER NOTE

Vary the difficulty by hiding some cards in plain sight for younger children and others more cleverly for older ones. Consider color-coding cards by difficulty. For children who struggle to read, pair them with an older child or leader.

ACTIVITY 3C. THE HIVE: THE POWER OF UNITY AND THE CHURCH - 45 MINUTES

Explain that bees live in a hive and work together harmoniously. Teamwork and unity are essential to their shared success.

Invite participants to ponder how we, as Christians, come together:

- Worship: At Church we all gather to worship the Holy Trinity.
- Prayer: “Our Father” — not “My Father.”
- Sunday School: We learn about Christ, the Saints, and the Church together.
- Charitable activity: United in purpose.
- Holy Communion: One chalice, united with God.
- Sacraments: We gather to share in one another’s joy — at weddings and baptisms alike.

Show the icon of Pentecost. Invite participants to notice the differences among the Apostles, and yet how each was united by the Holy Spirit.



LEADER NOTE

Give children a moment to simply look at the Pentecost icon before explaining. Ask: "What do you notice?" For younger children, focus on the flame above each Apostle. For older children, point out that the Apostles came from different backgrounds and yet became one body.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: PRAYER ROPE

Materials: One long rope, one ball, small pieces of paper, pencils, and natural or conventional building materials (twigs, leaves, rocks, string, popsicle sticks, glue).

Part 1: Prayer Rope

- Have participants stand in a circle holding the rope. Place a ball in the center resting on top of the rope.
- As each prayer intention is named, the group works together to tilt and guide the rope so the ball travels around the circle without falling off.

When the activity is complete, ask:

- What happened when someone pulled too hard?
- What happened when someone let go or stopped paying attention?
- Could any one person have done this alone?

LEADER NOTE

Expect some dropped balls and treat each one as a teaching moment: "What do we do when something is hard in the Church? We try again, together."

Part 2. Building the Hive

- Split participants into small teams of 3–5, mixing ages where possible. Each team builds a beehive using outdoor materials or provided supplies.
- Each participant thinks about one virtue or talent to offer to God and others, writes it on a slip of paper, and places it inside the hive.

Examples

- Virtues: patience, gentleness, kindness, obedience, humility
- Talents: singing, helping others, listening, reading, teaching, baking, organizing, making crafts



LEADER NOTE

Mixing ages lets older children naturally support younger ones – this models the beehive dynamic. For children who cannot yet write, a leader or older participant can write for them.

When the hives are complete, ask:

- Could you have built this alone?
- What did you learn about working as a team?
- How is your team like the Church?

Close by reminding participants that just as each piece of paper lives inside the hive, each of their gifts and prayers lives within the Church – held together and offered to God as one.

ACTIVITY 3D. BEES FOR CHRIST: SUPPORTING OTHERS AND THE PLANET - APPROX. 1 HOUR

Gather participants for a quick review. As a group, identify the bees' key attributes: hardworking, cooperative, united, selfless.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” — John 13:34

- Remind participants of the roles of bees in pollination and in supporting all plants, vegetables, and flowers to grow
- Invite participants to plant a bee-friendly garden together. Assign tasks: shoveling, planting, watering.

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” — Genesis 2:15

- At the end of the gardening, brainstorm how participants can be Bees for Christ by helping others.
- Help participants understand that our words, thoughts, and actions can sweeten our lives and the lives of others.

“Kind words are like honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” — Proverbs 16:24

LEADER NOTE

Every child should have a clear, tangible role. For children with physical limitations, roles like watering, placing seeds, or patting soil are just as meaningful. As children work, ask quietly: “Who in your life could you help this week the way bees help flowers?”

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Arts and crafts: Thank you cards for participants in Greece, personalized with the child's name and a short message, packaged with a lollipop.



4. CLOSING ACTIVITY: THE GARDEN OF OUR HEARTS - 15 MINUTES

Gather the group for a closing discussion:

- What did bees teach us today?
- What is sweeter than honey?
- How can we worship together this week?
- Each participant thinks about one Bee practice to put into place in the coming week and receives a paper icon of the Virgin Mary of the Bees and a Bees for Christ certificate.
- Remind participants that the day's event has been a celebration of God's garden – in nature, in the Church, and in our own hearts.

LEADER NOTE

When children share their one Bee practice for the week, write them down or ask them to say it aloud so others can witness their intention. Make sure parents are gathered for the final circle so the closing prayer bridges the day's experience into family life.

“The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.”

- Invite each participant to spend a few quiet moments connecting with God in the garden of their own hearts.
- Bring the group together in a standing circle. Hand out the paper icon and a beeswax rolled candle.

End with a group circle prayer, chanting:

- Apolytikion of the Virgin Mary of the Bees
- Paschal Hymn
- Take a group photo with the icon.
- Hand out take-home items for participants and families.
- Inform participants and families of National Pollinator Week (June 16–22, 2026). Review take-home items with parents.





TAKE-HOME EXTENSIONS

- Provide participants with coloring drawings to color at home and share with someone new.
- Provide tips for families on how to support bees in their homes and neighborhoods. (See Appendix D.)
- Provide icons or make plans for participants to bring the icon to their local parish on or near National Pollinator Week.
- Provide parents with the booklet Moral Law of Love by Archimandrite Arsenios Kotsopoulos.
- Encourage parents and families to make “melopites” (honeypies) – see Appendix E – to bring to the Church along with the blessing written by Metropolitan Kyrillos of Rhodes.
- Consider the home as a hive for Christ and create rituals that honor the Virgin Mary and the Saints referenced in the day’s activities.

LEADER NOTE

When speaking with parents at pick-up, keep your summary brief and warm. Send a short follow-up message within a day or two with a photo, a reminder of the Bee practice each child committed to, and a note about National Pollinator Week.





APPENDIX A. — ICONS & SAINTS

THE STORY OF THE VIRGIN MARY OF THE BEES ICON

Many years ago in Greece, a monk named Elder George (Alevras) went to a holy monastery dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. He discovered that bees used to quietly fly around the church during the Divine Liturgy without bothering anyone. They would even enter the altar and create honeycomb. Once a year, on the feast day of the church, the priest would offer a piece of the honeycomb to each Orthodox faithful along with the antidoron at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

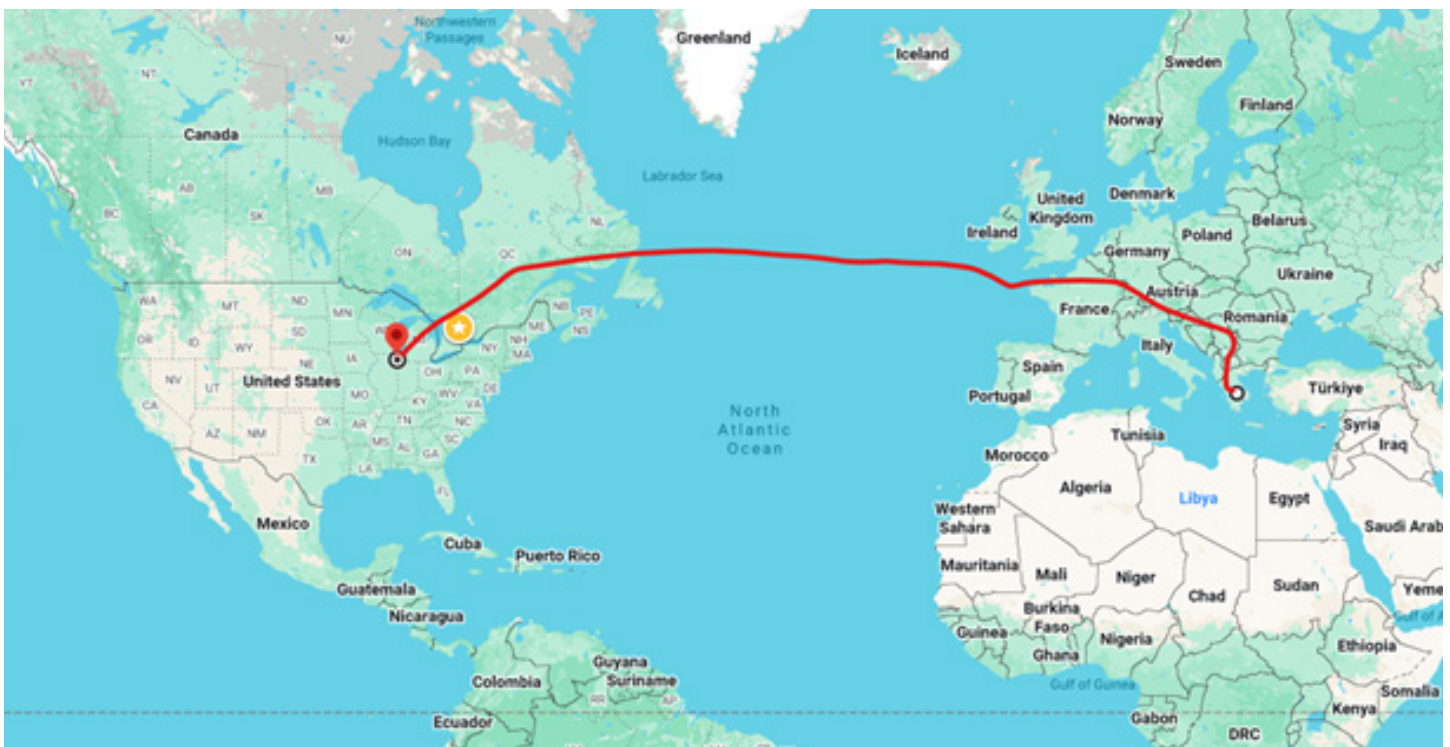
Elder George was moved by this story and decided an icon needed to be created, which was named “Virgin Mary of the Bees.”

Six years ago, Notre Dame in Paris was badly damaged by fire. Yet something amazing happened: the 200,000 bees which lived on the church’s rooftop, placed there as part of a beekeeping project, all survived the fire. Many believe it was the Virgin Mary who had saved the bees, sending us a powerful message to become like the bees: united in love and praise for God.

Each year on May 20, the world celebrates International Bee Day. As Orthodox Christians, we can become Bees for Christ – producing sweetness in our hearts and churches and sharing that goodness with the whole world!

Consider the home as a hive for Christ and create rituals that honor the Virgin Mary and the Saints referenced in the day’s activities.

ICON’S JOURNEY FROM GREECE TO THE USA



Map showing the icon’s journey from Trikala, Greece



APOLYTIKION OF THE VIRGIN MARY OF THE BEES

"We venerate your holy icon, O Mother of the Bees, and with faith and humble hearts we cry out to You: O Pure Mother, grant us your honey of mercy soothing the bitterness of our passions, and save our souls by the Grace of Your Son."

SAINT PAISIOS (FEAST DAY: JULY 12 / JULY 25)

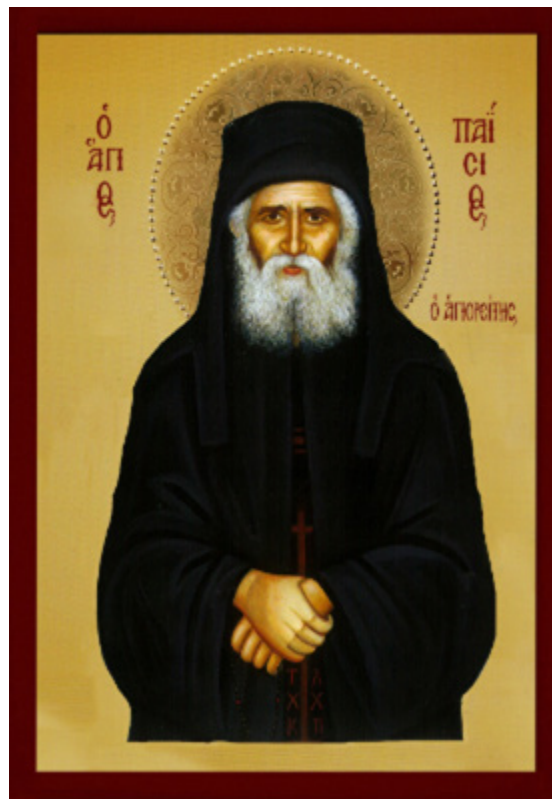
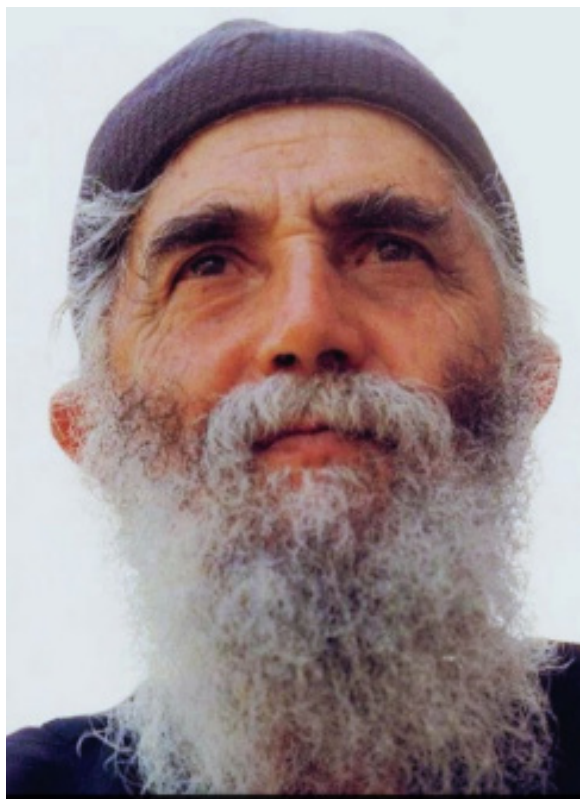
Saint Paisios is a modern saint in the Orthodox Church, reposed just 32 years ago. He was born into an Orthodox family in Cappadocia, Turkey. When he was still a baby, his whole village was forced to leave Turkey and move to Greece. Before leaving, a saint — Saint Arsenios — baptized him and foresaw that he would become a monk.

He did indeed become a monk — a kind and holy one. He spent much of his time praying and giving people advice. His prayers could perform miracles and his words sweetened people's souls.

Saint Paisios taught us that we should be like honeybees and not like flies. Honeybees see the good and beautiful things around them and fly to the flowers to draw nectar. Flies, on the other hand, are attracted to bad and dirty things. Saint Paisios tells us to focus on the good and beautiful things in our lives.

He also taught us that the prayer rope is like a personal telephone line with God. He loved to pray in nature — in the mountains and in the forests — and he cherished the Jesus Prayer, Psalm 135, and Axion Esti.

"God has placed wisdom in His creation. Even a small bee can teach us how to work and how to live."
— Saint Paisios





SAINT PORPHYRIOS (FEAST DAY: DECEMBER 2 / DECEMBER 15)

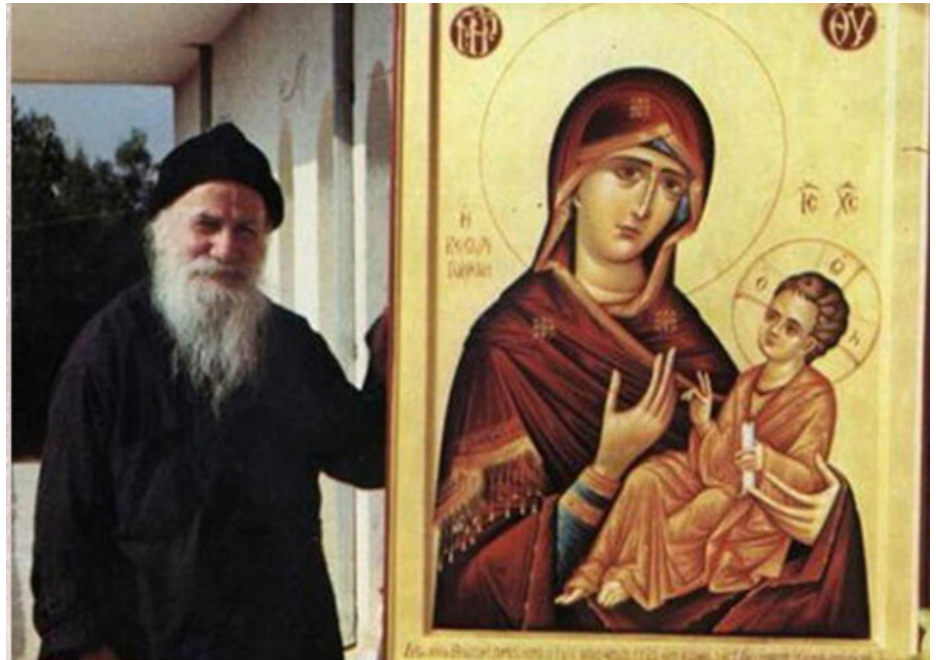
Saint Porphyrios was a holy and recent monk. When he was a young boy, he read the life of Saint John the Hutterer and was inspired to become a monk. At the age of eleven, he arrived at Mount Athos; at fourteen he was tonsured a monk.

He is known for his kindness and prayers. Because his heart was so pure, God gave him a special gift to see what people were thinking, were about to do, or had done in the past – gifts he used entirely to help them in their life as Christians.

One day while walking in the forest, he became so moved by a nightingale singing beautifully and loudly with all its might, even though no one could hear it, that he wanted his soul to sing and praise God in the same way. He also taught his pet parrot, whom he named Peter, to say the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me!”

Just before he left this world, the last words on his lips were: “That they may be one” – from Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer. He prayed that we, as Orthodox Christians, would be united in love just as the Holy Trinity is united in love.

“Christ is everywhere – in the flowers, in the sea, in the mountains. When we love Him, we see Him everywhere.” – Saint Porphyrios





APPENDIX B. — MATERIALS LIST

ACTIVITY	MATERIALS NEEDED
Opening Gathering & Prayer	- Markers or pylons (optional, for large groups using a Figure 8 pattern) - Printed prayers for leaders, if needed
Introduction Virgin Mary of the Bees	- Large printed icon of the Virgin Mary of the Bees <i>To order an icon(s), please contact ambelliorg@gmail.com at least three weeks in advance.</i> - Stand or easel for icon display - Veil or covering for the icon - Printed story of the icon and Apolytikion - Box of “bee messages” from participants in Greece - World map showing the icon’s journey from Trikala, Greece to your city
Activity 3a BEE Grateful	- A beeswax candle - A jar of honey - A flower or vegetable - Icon of Saint Paisios with short biography - Icon of Saint Porphyrios with short biography “God is Great” and “Thank You, Lord” cards (printed, one per participant) - Pencils and markers - Clipboards for writing outdoors
Activity 3b Nectar Hunting	- Scripture cue cards (color-coded by difficulty for mixed age groups) - Small boxes, string, or garden signs to hold scripture cards in place - A basket or mat for participants to deposit their “spiritual nectar” - Pylons or lawn markers to guide the waggle dance path - Honeycomb chart and markers (optional)
Activity 3c The Hive & Prayer Rope	- Icon of Pentecost (printed) - One long rope, long enough for all participants to hold at once - One small ball - Small pieces of paper and pencils or markers - Natural materials (twigs, leaves, rocks) and/or building materials (string, popsicle sticks, glue)



APPENDIX B. — MATERIALS LIST CONTINUED

ACTIVITY	MATERIALS NEEDED
Activity 3d Bees for Christ Gardening	• Designated plot of land (with permission if needed) • Bee-friendly plants (e.g., lavender, purple coneflower, wild bergamot, anise hyssop, wild indigo, black-eyed Susan) • Soil and/or compost; child-sized and adult shovels • Watering cans and access to water • Gardening gloves (optional) • Thank you cards and art supplies (optional)
General / All Activities	• Water, snacks, and napkins for breaks • First aid kit • Signed waivers (if required) • Camera or cell phone for group photo
Closing Activity Garden of Our Hearts	• Paper icons of the Virgin Mary of the Bees (one per participant) • Bees for Christ certificates (one per participant) • Beeswax rolled candles (one per participant)
Take-Home Packets	• Coloring pages (see Appendix E) • 5 Tips to Support Bees at Home card (see Appendix D) • Honeypie recipe card (see Appendix E) • Booklet: Moral Law of Love by Arch. Arsenios Kotsopoulos <i>To order the booklets, please contact ambelliorg@gmail.com at least three weeks in advance of your event.</i> • Paper icon for local parish • National Pollinator Week information (June 16–22, 2026)

HELPFUL LINKS

- National Beekeeping Federation: <https://abfnet.org/beekeeping-organizations/>
- State Beekeeping Associations: <https://easternapiculture.org/resources/beekeeping-organizations/>
- Pollinator Week: <https://pollinator.org/pollinator-week>
- Native Plants for Your Region: <https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/>

To order booklets and icons, contact: ambelliorg@gmail.com



APPENDIX C. — KEY FACTS ABOUT BEES

Leaders should familiarize themselves with the following information before the lesson.

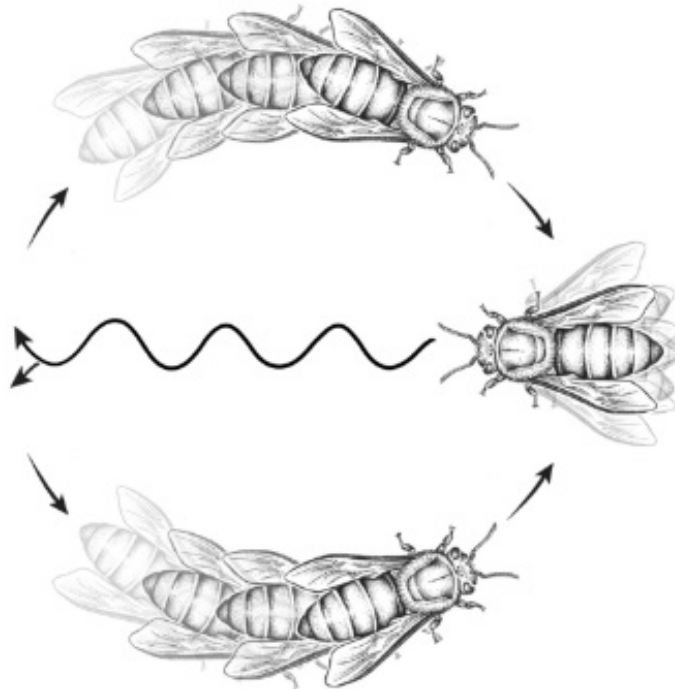
COLONY MEMBERS

- Honeybees are social insects. No individual bee can survive alone — all are dependent on each other.
- Three kinds in a colony: a queen, drones, and workers.
- The queen is the mother of all the honeybees.
- Drones are male bees that mate with the queen.
- Worker bees clean the hive, cool it, feed larvae, collect nectar, and assist with pollination. If a worker bee uses her stinger, she will die.

THE WAGGLE DANCE

Honeybees communicate by dancing. The waggle dance — shaped like a figure eight — tells worker bees where to find nectar. Three kinds in a colony: a queen, drones, and workers.

- The direction of the waggle run shows which direction the food can be found, always in relation to the sun.
- The duration of the waggle run indicates distance. A longer waggle means the food is farther away.
- A more intense waggle signals a richer food source.



Waggle Dance Illustration, Michael Hill



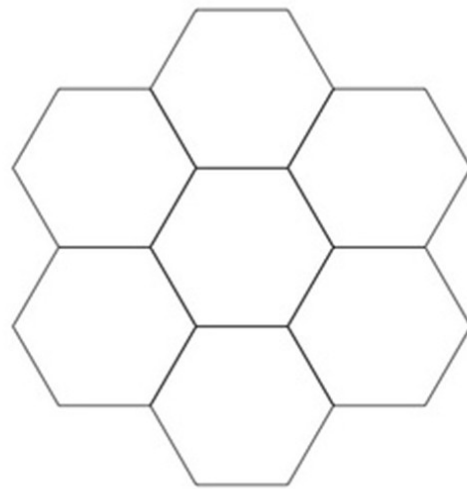
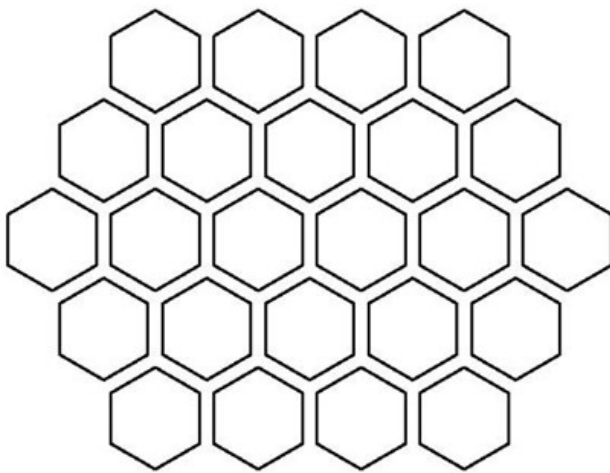
ANATOMY

- All bees have five eyes – two compound eyes and three tiny simple eyes.
- Honeybees' wings flap 200 times every second. Their wings have tiny teeth so they can lock together when flying.
- Bees have two stomachs: one for eating and one for storing nectar to carry back to the hive.
- Bees have straw-like tongues (proboscis) for sucking liquids, and mandibles for chewing.
- Bees carry pollen on their hind legs in a pollen basket, which feeds the baby bees.

NECTAR & HONEY

- Bees are the ONLY insects that produce food humans can eat – honey!
- Bees regurgitate collected nectar into honeycomb cells and fan it with their wings to remove moisture. The result is honey.
- Bacteria cannot grow in honey. Honey has no shelf life and can remain edible indefinitely.
- A bee must visit about 2 million flowers to make 1 pound of honey.
- The average worker bee makes about 1/12th of a teaspoon of honey in her lifetime.
- A summer beehive can contain 50,000 to 80,000 bees.

THE HONEYCOMB



- Worker bees secrete beeswax from glands in their bodies, chew it, and shape it into hexagonal cells.
- The hexagon shape is strong and space-efficient. Bees use the cells to raise their young and to store honey, pollen, nectar, and water.



POLLINATION

- When a bee lands on a flower to collect nectar, pollen clings to its body. When the bee visits the next flower, the pollen brushes off and fertilizes it.
- Some plants have bright petals or produce scents to attract bees, encouraging many visits and increasing fertilization.

BEE PRODUCTS

- The five products of the hive: honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis, and royal jelly.
- Beeswax is secreted from glands in the bee's stomach, then chewed and shaped into honeycomb.
- Propolis is a sticky substance collected from tree buds, used to weatherproof the hive.
- Royal Jelly is produced in a gland in the worker bee's head. The queen is fed Royal Jelly by workers throughout her entire life.

DANGERS TO THE HONEYBEE

- Modern agricultural chemicals — insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides — are highly toxic to honeybees. Most poisonings occur when insecticides are applied during bloom periods.

Information courtesy of ontariohoney.ca.

APPENDIX D. — 5 STEPS TO SUPPORT BEES AT HOME

1. Provide water. Set out a shallow dish of water with pebbles so bees can drink safely without drowning. You can add a small amount of sugar to make it especially attractive.
2. Plant near your garden. Place flowers near your vegetable garden to encourage cross-pollination and support local bee populations.
3. Minimize pesticides. Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides and insecticides on your property. When pest control is necessary, choose bee-safe alternatives.
4. Use native plant. Fill your garden beds with plants native to your region, and consider planting a tree. Find plants at: nwf.org/NativePlantFinder
5. Don't cut stems too short. Leave plant stems at least 18–24 inches tall. About 30% of bee species nest in hollow stems during winter months.



APPENDIX E. — ACTIVITIES & RESOURCE TEMPLATES

GOD IS GREAT | THANK YOU, GOD CARDS

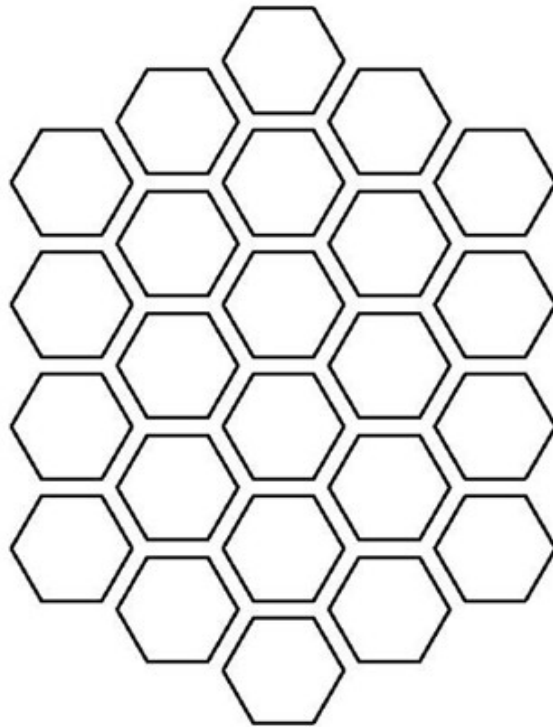
Print and distribute these cards during Activity 3a. Younger participants draw; older participants write statements of gratitude.





HONEYCOMB SCRIPTURE CHART

Optional extension for Activity 3b: paste scripture messages onto this honeycomb sheet after the Nectar Hunting activity.



1  Love	2  Care	3  Hug	4  Greet	5  Help
6  Pray	7  Encourage	8  Listen	9  Give	10  Forgive
11  Share	12  Learn	13  Clean	14  Comfort	15  Thank



PENTACOST ICON

Use during Activity 3c – The Hive. Invite participants to observe the Apostles and how each, though different, was united by the Holy Spirit.

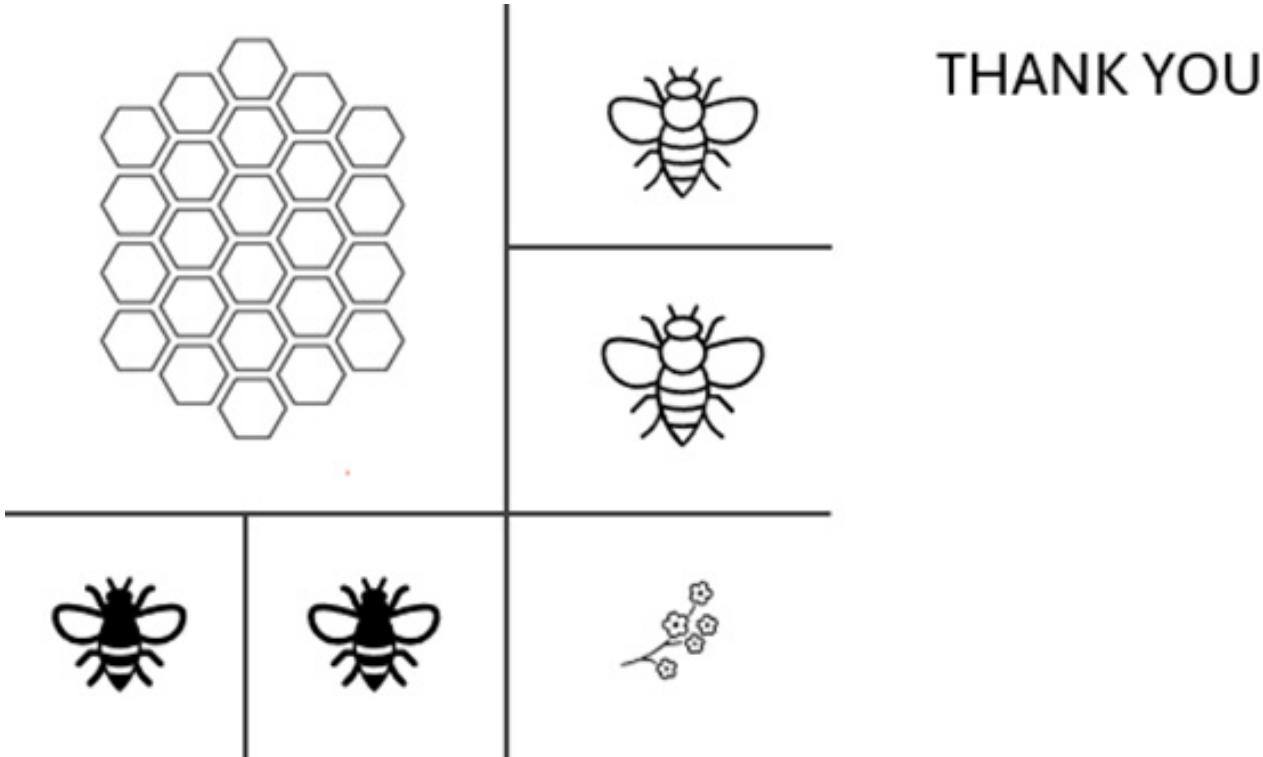


Descent of the Holy Spirit



THANK YOU CARDS — HIVE ACTIVITY

Use during Activity 3c for participants to write their virtue or talent, or repurpose as “Thank You God” cards for Activity 3a. Three design options:





THANK YOU

THANK YOU CARD — VIRGIN MARY OF THE BEES

A more formal thank you card option, featuring the Virgin Mary of the Bees icon coloring design:





BEES CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Present to each participant during the Closing Activity. One per child.

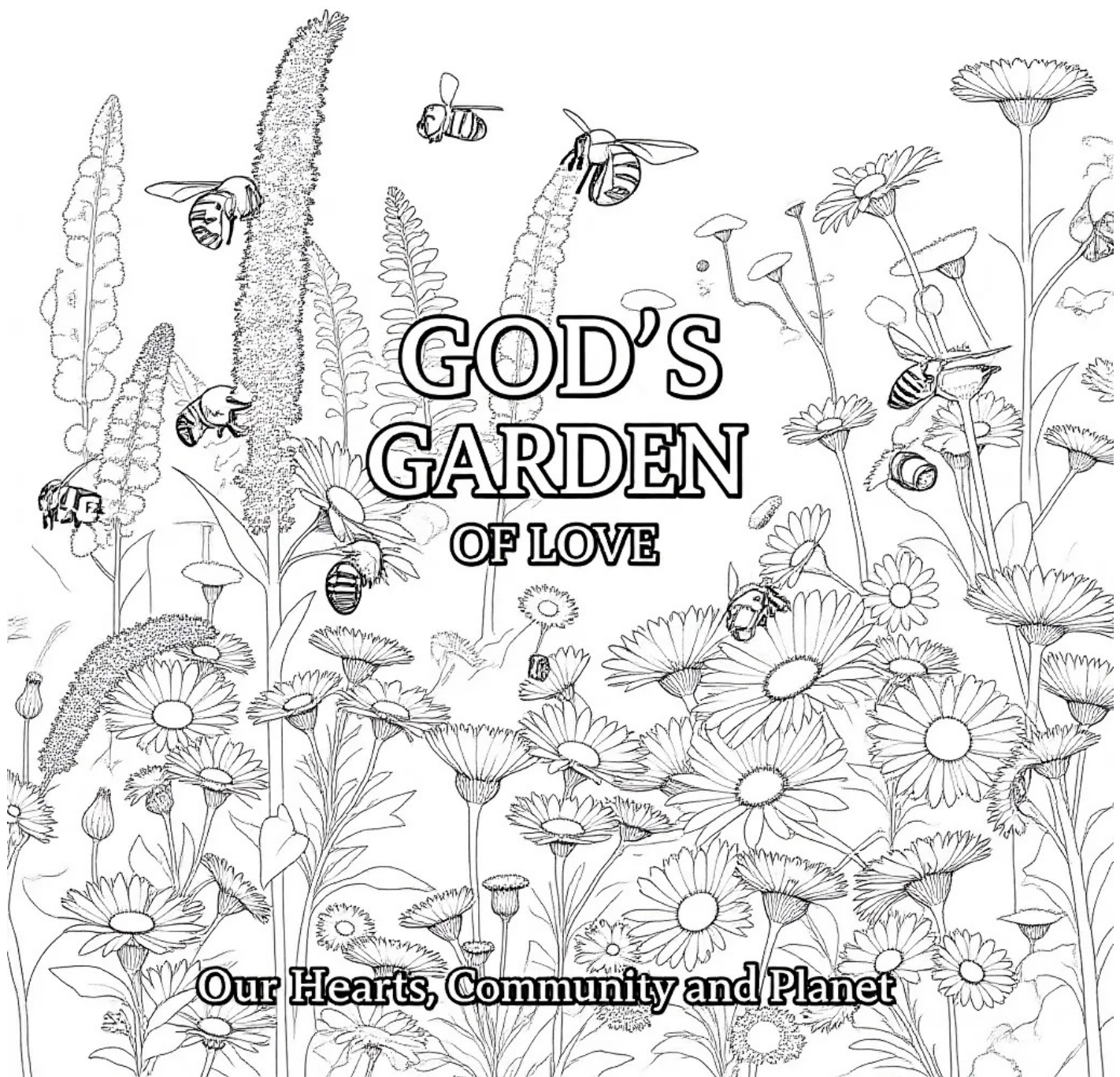


Certificate of Achievement - printed on cardstock



COLORING PAGES

Send home with participants as a take-home extension. Encourage them to color and share with someone new.



God's Garden of Love – Our Hearts, Community and Planet



Virgin Mary of the Bees – coloring icon



HONEYPIE RECIPE (MELOPITES)

Ingredients

- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup honey
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 espresso cup crumbled frigania (breadcrumbs)
- 500 g flour
- 1 can (330 ml) Fanta or Sprite
- 200 g walnuts, toasted and finely chopped
- 1 espresso cup raisins, lightly floured
- 3 carrots, shredded
- Cinnamon, to taste
- Sesame seeds, for topping

Directions

- In a large bowl, combine the honey, water, and oil, mixing well. Add the baking soda.
- Add the frigania (breadcrumbs) and flour and stir to combine.
- Toast the walnuts, let cool, then dice finely.
- Lightly flour the raisins to keep them from clumping. Shred the carrots.
- Add the carrots, walnuts, and cinnamon to the bowl and mix well.
- The dough should be relatively firm. Add Fanta or Sprite a little at a time and mix slowly.
- Fold in the raisins at the end.
- Pour into a greased baking dish and sprinkle sesame seeds on top.
- Bake at 180°C (360°F) for 40–60 minutes, until golden brown. Makes 12–20 pieces.



PRAYER FOR THE BLESSING OF HONEYPIES

In Honor of the Most Holy Theotokos, Called "Melissou | Virgin Mary of the Bees"

"O Most Merciful Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, who changed the bitter waters for Moses into sweetness for the people, who by your life-giving economy abolished the bitterness of the sin of our forefather, you are our Redeemer, whose words are like honey and candle to the mouths of those who believe in you, look upon us, offering these honey-flavored and honey-based delicacies in honor of your Most Holy Mother, our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, called "Melissou, Virgin Mary of the Bees," and blessing them, sweeten the senses of the soul of those who partake of them, granting them the requests that are beneficial and the enjoyment of your saving goods; through the intercessions of your All-Holy Mother, our holy and God-bearing father Saint Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia and all your Saints. For you are the One who blesses and has mercy on us and nourishes us, Christ our God, and to you we send up glory, together with your eternal Father and your All-Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen."

Blessing written by Metropolitan Kyrillos of Rhodes



Here we are demonstrating that, similar to bees, our lives as Orthodox Christians transcend time and space. Regardless of where you find yourself in the world, our call to become "of one mind" exists. This image reflects the beautiful partnership between a US-based and a Greece-based nonprofit, united by a shared calling. If you desire a cultural adaptation of this image, please contact ambelliorg@gmail.com