

Don't be Stinky Cheese

DON'T BE STINKY CHEESE	1
TEACHER'S SUMMARY.....	1
MATERIALS NEEDED.....	1
STINKY CHEESE CLASS ACTIVITIES.....	2
<i>Getting Started</i>	2
Dog Poop Brownies	2
<i>The Three Enclosures</i>	3
Stinky Cheese Enclosure	3
References for Stinkiness	3
The Empty Enclosure	4
References for Emptiness	5
Sweet Smelling Enclosure	5
Repentance	6
References for "Sweet Smelling"	6
CLOSING SUMMARY – TYING IT ALL TOGETHER.....	7
OTHER RELEVANT BIBLE VERSES & TEACHINGS OF CHURCH FATHERS.....	7

Teacher's Summary

The objective of this lesson is to teach the students that its not always what we see of people, or others see of us, that is important; its what is within. The overall goal is to communicate in some measure that holiness before God is not the same as it appears to the eyes of men. The secondary goal is to communicate the importance of the sacraments, prayer and how seeing or partaking in "bad things" taints us in the eyes of God.

To do this we will use a simple cardboard enclosure, some "smelly cheese", and some incense. The class will be placing limburger (or similarly smelly cheese) under the aerated box, nothing then leaving it empty, and finally an incense burner. The gist of the lesson is that although all the box appears the same each time, only once is it truly pleasant. Christ teaches us this lesson in His comparison of the Pharisees to "painted sepulchers".

The incense should be added individually by the class and used for discussion by doing it in different sized pieces. The discussion will relate the different sized pieces to the sacraments, prayers, good works, etc.

The end result will be to ask the class in the end if they want to be the box with stinky cheese, empty or the pleasant one.

Materials needed

- Limburger cheese (a relatively small piece will do!)
 - Incense of different sized pieces, 4-6 pieces should be just fine
 - Incense burner (small one that will fit under an enclosure)
 - An esthetically pleasing enclosure. For economy you can use something simple like a shoe box, painted gold (or white). Feel free to use three at once just for dramatic flair.
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Stinky Cheese Class Activities

Getting Started

Read the story "dog poop brownies" to help open up the kids to discussing what is bad, being "luke warm" and what is pleasing to God. Don't spend too long on this portion, perhaps 5 minutes so there is time for deeper discussion on each of the aroma enclosures.

Dog Poop Brownies

A father listened to all the reasons his children gave for wanting to see a particular PG-13 movie: it had their favorite actors, everyone else was seeing it, even some church members said it was great, it was only rated PG-13 because of the suggestion of sex-they never really showed it, the language was pretty good-they only used the Lord's name in vain three times in the whole movie, the video effects were fabulous and the plot was action packed. Yes, there was the scene where a building and a bunch of people got blown up, but the violence was just the normal stuff, it wasn't very bad. Even with all these explanations for the rating, the father wouldn't give in. He didn't even give them an explanation for saying, "No." He just said "No."

Later that evening, the father asked his kids if they would like some brownies he had prepared. He explained that he had taken the family's favorite recipe and added something new. They asked what it was. He calmly replied that he had added dog poop. He stated that it was only a tiny bit and that all the other ingredients were gourmet quality. He had taken great care to bake it at the precise temperature for the exact time. He was sure the brownies would be superb.

Even with all the explanations of the perfect attributes of the brownies, the kids would not take one. The father acted surprised. There was only a small amount of poop, so what could the problem be? He assured them that they would hardly notice it at all. But they all held firm and would not try the brownies.

He then explained that the movie they wanted to see was just like the brownies. Satan tries to enter our minds and our homes by deceiving us into believing that just a little bit of evil doesn't matter. With the brownies, just a little bit makes all the difference between a great brownie something really gross. He explained that even though the smallest amount of dog poop makes the brownie totally unacceptable, they seemed to having no problem watching a movie of similar ingredients. The people who make movies and TV shows would have us believe their entertainment is acceptable for adults and youths; but they are no more so than dog poop brownies are good to eat!

Now when this father's children want to do something or see something they should not, the father merely asks them if they would like some of his special dog poop brownies and they never ask about it again.

The Three Enclosures

Stinky Cheese Enclosure

This enclosure is filled with limburger cheese (or something equally smelly). The symbolism is all the things we do, see or think that are not pleasing to God. All these things taint us in the eyes of God, but all is not lost! We have the sacraments, our life in the Church and the ability to correct our ways.

Without this guidance we can very easily become dog poop brownies!

Ask the class if they can name examples of things that we might contain that God would not like. Use the references for the class as you feel they might benefit, but keep the discussion loose and flowing around getting the kids themselves to consider the ideas of purity and spiritual pollution.

Read for have the class look up the following Scriptural passages:

Matthew 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

John 7:24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

Ezekiel 20:8 But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes

Explanation: Briefly tell the class what Jesus was referring to with the whitewashed tombs; that things can look very pleasant on the outside but be filled with junk, just like the brownies and the stinky cheese enclosure. Similar yin John 7:24, we can not judge by appearances, just like all the enclosures "look" alike but have very different smells. In Ezekiel God delivered the message that not looking away from bad things is to disobey Him.

Ask them to consider how TV shows, movies, magazines might contain "poop" that we take in and which makes us become "stinky cheese" containers. Ask them to say what things make us full of stinky cheese, and list them on the chalkboard.

References for Stinkiness

Matthew 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For **you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.**

Matthew 12:34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. **35A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.**

Titus 1:15 To the pure all things are pure, but to **those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.** 16 **They profess to**

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St. Chrysostom "...he who does not cut off the wickedness of his heart is the unclean person. He who worketh on the Sabbath is to be stoned, that is, he who is not at all times devoted to God, shall perish... sin is the unclean thing. From that let us flee, from that let us abstain."

know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

Matthew 15:17 "Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 **But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man.**

Colossians 3:8 But now you yourselves are to **put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.**

Ezekiel 20:8 But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all **cast away the abominations which were before their eyes**

Proverbs 20:17 **Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.**

Colossians 2:23 **These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.**

John 7:24 **Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."**

The Empty Enclosure

The empty enclosure symbolizes one that has neither good nor terrible things in it. That would make it pretty harmless right? Wrong, it can also be the emptiness of deceit, lack of warmth for the things of God and general self-centeredness. To be worldly, yet obey the laws of "the world" doesn't make us holy in the eyes of God. Being what the world calls a good person doesn't necessarily make us good to God.

Ignoring God can have the same outcome as being evil, either way we are not obeying Him. We were created as humans to worship God and to be holy.

Revelation 3:16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and **empty** deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with **empty words**, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.

[Saint Chrysostom] ... we say that "the covetous man is an idolater," in this too again they make abatements(excuses), and say the expression is hyperbolic (hollow, pompous or demanding). And in this manner they underrate and explain away all the Commandments. It was in allusion then to these that the blessed Paul, at this time when he wrote to the Ephesians... "**empty words**" are those which for a while are gratifying, but are in nowise borne out in facts; because the whole case is a deception. - HOMILIES OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE EPHESIANS, Homily 17.

Scripture discussion: Ask the class what they think "lukewarm" means. Similarly ask them what they think empty means. Then move the discussion toward the fact that the second enclosure is empty.

Ask the class to name any examples of things that may try to draw them away from their faith, or make it seem unimportant. Relate this to Saint John's lesson on empty words, which though they seem pleasing really have no truth in them when measured against God's.

References for Emptiness

Matthew 24:12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."

Revelation 3:16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Luke 1:53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and **empty** deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

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HOMILIES OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE EPHESIANS, Homily 17.

1 John 5:10 He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

Sweet Smelling Enclosure

Trying to remain pure in the world we live in is not easy, and it never has been. God however gives us the things we need to do that however:

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my bretheren be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil

Place a few pieces of incense in the burner. Now light the charcoal or incense, but take a few minutes to talk about the strong symbol of the fire's heat and how it relates to the Holy Spirit (during Liturgy the Priest adds hot water to the Eucharist for example).

For discussion and example, read the following Scripture to the class (or have them look the readings up and read them as a class):

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Psalm 141:2 Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice

Now ask the class the name things they think are “sweet smelling” to God. As they name good examples, add some smaller pieces to the incense burner, saving some large pieces for later when we discuss the sacraments. (Note: This can also act as a way to talk about grace).

Repentance

No discussion about being God's people would be complete without talking about repentance. The class needs to understand that we will all make mistakes, but that God will not turn His back on us if we repent. This is a good bridge to talk about confession and how we can use it to cleanse us. Read or have the class look up the following:

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

2 Timothy 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 **Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.**

The reference in 1 John 1:8 to cleansing can be compared to the action of the Holy Spirit on us. It is important to stress that this is not a one time event in their lives, that they will walk in a struggle to keep God's Will their whole lives (see Hebrews 12:1 “running the race with endurance”.)

References for “Sweet Smelling”

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Psalm 141:2 Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Malachi 1:11 For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place **incense shall be offered to My name**, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts.

Revelation 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of **incense, which are the prayers of the saints.**

Revelation 8:3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. **He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Isaiah 1:16 "Wash yourselves, **make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.** Cease to do evil,

John 1:10 Beloved, **do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.**

Psalms 101:3 **I will set nothing wicked before my eyes;** I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me.

Psalms 146:2 While I live I will praise the Lord; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Proverbs 5:21 For **the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD,** And He ponders all his paths.

Repentance

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

2 Timothy 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. **21** **Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.**

Closing Summary – Tying it All Together

Ask the class to consider each day in the coming week which enclosure the things they see, hear and do would fit under. As they think about this, ask them to think about how all these things stay with them, and that we don't ever really get rid of them until we go to confession to repent and be "cleansed". After all, burning incense under the same enclosure as the cheese still wouldn't smell all that good!

Other Relevant Bible Verses & Teachings of Church Fathers

Proverbs 12:26 The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Psalms 112:1b Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who delights greatly in His commandments.

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

Ezekiel 18:21 "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Romans 6:11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Psalms 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

James 1:26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

2 Timothy 3:1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God

Philippians 4:18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a **sweet-smelling** aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

Saint Chrysostom on Phillipians 4:18

whither he hath raised their gift; not I, he saith, received, but God through me. Wherefore though I be not in need, regard it not, for God had no need, and He received at their hands in such sort, that the Holy Scriptures shrunk not from saying, "God smelled a sweet savor" (Gen. viii. 21), which denotes one who was pleased. For ye know, indeed ye know, how our soul is affected by sweet savors, how it is pleased, how it is delighted. The Scriptures therefore shrunk not from applying to God a word so human, and so lowly, that it might show to men that their gifts are become acceptable. For not the fat, not the smoke, made them acceptable, but the purpose of mind which offered them. Had it been otherwise, Cain's offering too had been received. It saith then, that He is even pleased, and how He is pleased. For men could not without this have learned. He then, who hath no need, saith that He is thus pleased, that they may not become remiss by the absence of need. And afterward, when they had no care for other virtues, and trusted to their offerings alone

Saint John Chrysostom Homily on Ephesians 3:14

Although the love of Christ lies above the reach of all human knowledge, yet shall you know it, if you shall have Christ dwelling in you, yea, not only shall know from Him this, but shall even "be filled unto all the fullness of God;" meaning by the "fullness of God," either the knowledge how God is worshipped in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, or else urging them thus to use every effort, in order to be filled with all virtue, of which God is full.