

# JOY SESSION: FAMILY OF FAITH

## OBJECTIVE

For children to explore how their family is a part of the Family of Faith, the Church, which has been passed down through the ages and grown through the grace of God, and is theirs to grow and cultivate.

## PREPARATION

This session begins with talking about who and what makes up their own, individual families. As the children share their personal situations, keep an open mind about the various family structures that may exist. Be sensitive to family structures that may not include biological father, mother and siblings all living under one roof, as well as blended families or families that have suffered the loss of a parent. Be sure not to use the phrase “broken home.” Rather use terms such as biological, traditional, non-traditional, divorced, and blended families.

The estimated time for this session is 1.5 hours. If your JOY meeting is scheduled for a longer period of time, look to the *Expanded Ideas* at the back of this session to fill in the extra time.

Read the following passages ahead of time:

- John 15:1-17 (focus on verses 1-5: *I am the vine, you are the branches*)
- Romans 8:14-17 (*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*)
- Luke 3:23-38 or Matt. 1-17 (Genealogy of Christ)
- Ephesians 3:14-19 (Christ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth)

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bibles for every child (same version/translation)
- Pens or pencils and fine point permanent markers ( enough for each child)
- Scissors and Glue (1 for each child)
- Whiteboard and markers
- Large poster board
- Large index cards (for word bank vocabulary)
- “Family of Faith BINGO” Icebreaker Template (1 copy for each child)
- Family Tree Print Template copied on medium brown cardstock (1 sheet per child)
- Sky blue cardstock (1 sheet per child)
- Leaf stickers or pre-cut leaves, no more than 1 ½ in. (30 or more leaves per child)
- Copy of the Opening and Closing Prayers found at the end of this session (1 per child or a poster)
- Copy of “Christ the True Vine” or “I am the Vine” Icon (see [www.orthodoxphotos.com](http://www.orthodoxphotos.com))
- Copy of the *Family Notes* for each child

**OPENING PRAYER** *Trisagion (Thrice Holy)*

*In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Glory to You our God, glory to You!*

*Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, present in all places and filling all things, treasury of blessings and Giver of life, come and abide in us. Cleanse us from all impurities and save our souls, gracious Lord.*

*Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3)*

*Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever to the ages of ages. Amen.*

*All Holy Trinity have mercy on us. Lord, forgive our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for the glory of Your name.*

*Lord, have mercy. (3)*

*Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, to the ages of ages. Amen.*

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

*For Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.*

**STATE** *(paraphrase in your own words)*

This year in JOY, we will explore the theme **People of Faith**, those shown by God to be examples among His faithful people. As an introduction this month, we will focus on the **Family of Faith**, the Church.

**ICE BREAKER (“Family of Faith BINGO”)** *(10-15 minutes)*

*(See supplement at end of this session for bingo sheet.)*

**STATE** *(paraphrase in your own words)*

We will begin our exploration of the **Family of Faith** by playing “Family of Faith BINGO.”<sup>1</sup> I will distribute to each person a sheet of paper and a pen. It is important that you listen to directions first. Your objective is to learn each others names and more about each other by walking around the room asking members of this JOY group to sign their name in the blocks which apply to them. Try to get someone new for each block. If you can’t, you may circle the room again to fill in the BINGO card. When the first person fills in all of their blocks they will call out "BINGO!" and the game is finished. On the card are words which are bolded so that we may familiarize ourselves with them during this session.

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<sup>1</sup> *Growing Close*, Group Publishing, Inc., Loveland, CO, 1996, p. 28

*(At the end of the game ask the kids to sit down and go over the blocks. Make sure you emphasize the bolded vocabulary found in the glossary at the end of the session and ask for and give definitions. You may also write them on a board or index cards to display in the room).*

### **STATE** (15-20 minutes)

Let's begin sharing by reviewing the blocks on our BINGO cards. Please listen for interesting parts of our JOY members families that are alike or different from your own. We will make lists on the whiteboard for everyone to see what seems to be the same and what seems to be different.

*(Ask everyone to share at least one thing. Select the order of sharing based on the answers of kids who share similar blocks, ex. "has cats").*

Let's look over the list of things that are alike and things that are different in our families.

*(Review answers in appropriate columns for all to see.)*

### **DISCUSS** (accept all answers and reflect back)

As we have just learned each of us lives in a family with similar and different qualities. It will help us to hear a definition of family from everyone. *(Allow time to hear answers to the following questions from all, writing some key thoughts on a whiteboard. **The goal of this activity is to lead the group into saying how we are related in Christ's Holy Church as the "Family of Faith."**)*

- What do you think makes a family? *(accept all reasonable answers; look for biological relations, adoption, marriage, etc...)*
- How is a family different from any other group of people? *(Commitment to and love for one another; common goals and values; similar beliefs; common dwelling; a place of nurture; etc...)*
- What are the roles in a family? *(father, mother, sister, brother etc...)*
- Within a family there are certain things members do; please describe them. *(Household chores, responsibilities, honoring the rest of the family with your actions and talents, etc...)*
- How do families grow? *(Having more children, adoption, good health, taking care of each other)*
- Looking at the lists we created, what things can we find that connect us all? *(We love God, we believe in God, we are Christians, etc.)*

### **ARTS AND CRAFTS: FAMILY TREE** (30 minutes)

In order to get to know more about each other and our families, we will create historical maps of our families, called a **genealogy**, using a family tree. Each of you will organize the growth of your family using the idea of how a tree grows. You will begin your family tree with yourself, so write your name on the trunk. Then, keep track of generations before you, your **lineage**, as far back as you can remember, by filling out the branches with the family names. You will then cut out the tree and glue it onto the blue background. Next you will place leaf stickers on branches next to the appropriate last name or maiden name to represent family member's first names. Finally, you will write "My Family Tree" on the top of the page above the tree.

*(Mingle around to be certain everyone understands the activity, answer questions, and offer positive feedback to model the progress of those whose work can inspire others).*

**DISCUSS** *(accept all answers and reflect back) (15-20 minutes for next 4 sections)*

- In the Lord's Prayer, we say, "Our Father who art in heaven." If we all call God "Father," then what does that make us? *(Brothers and Sisters in our Christ created by God in His image and likeness)*
- We know that God created us all, but what then is our spiritual **lineage**? *(allow children time to answer and then supplement with the following)*

**STATE** *(Paraphrase in your own words.)*

God gave us His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus gave His life for us that we may have life in Him. We live in Him by Faith. Our **Faith** is our **lineage** to Christ. It makes us a "**Family of Faith**" in which we are welcomed when we are baptized. Through this, we become adopted sons and daughters of God by His grace.<sup>2</sup> As our Father, He gives us all that we need to live, like our food. The Eucharist is the ultimate meal of His **Family**. We come together in faith to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. By taking Holy Communion, we are joined to Christ and to each other. We become "rooted and grounded (His) love." Common faith and holiness connects us with those who have gone before us, or the **Church Triumphant**, "our whole family in heaven". These are saints and martyrs who teach us to live in Christ by faith. Their examples show us, the **Church Militant**, "our family on earth", how to live holy lives.<sup>3</sup> We grow together in faith, and make up the Church. We can show this **lineage** in a Family of Faith tree.

**BIBLE READING:** *(Write the text of John 15:1-5 on the board)*

*(Distribute bibles. Use this time to help each child learn how to reference Scripture. Assist them in locating these sections of the Bible without giving the page numbers.)*

Let's open our bibles and read more about our roots in the church. We will turn to John 15:3-5. Please locate John in the New Testament. Please look up when you have found John. Now look for the chapter which is a large 15. Once you have found that, you will look for the verses which are the smaller numbers, 1-5. Would someone like to volunteer to read?

**John 15:1-5** *"I am the vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."* (NKJV)

This is the icon of Christ the True Vine which represents this passage. Icons tell the story of scripture or the life of a saint in picture. Let's discuss this passage using the icon to help us understand the meaning.

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<sup>2</sup> (See Romans 8:14-17)

<sup>3</sup> (See Eph. 3:14-19)

**DISCUSS:** (*Accept all answers and reflect back*)

- Who is the true vine and who is the vinedresser (gardener)? (*Christ, God*)<sup>4</sup>
- How can the branch bear fruit? (*By being connected to the vine and by being faithful to God*)
- Explain how Christ as a vine and we as branches represents the Family of Faith, the Church?
- How can we grow in Christ and bear fruit? (*good works and mission*)<sup>5</sup>
- What does the fruit represent? (*Christ's love shown through our actions*)<sup>6</sup>
- Who are the people shown in this icon? If Christ is the vine in this icon, then what are Christ's roots?

**ACTIVITY: FAMILY TREE OF THE FAMILY OF FAITH** (*15 minutes for next three sections*)

*(In order to get to know more about the Family of Faith, lead the children through a process of making a large family tree together. Use a poster board so that you can save to refer to for a later session. Fill in the information as each child shares an idea while answering the following questions:)*

- We will follow Christ's **lineage**, or family history by creating a Family of Faith Tree or **Genealogy**. Who is the source of the Family of Faith? Who follows the Source? [*Place God the Father as the source, then Adam and Eve, Moses ,Noah...etc. (refer to Matthew 1-17 and Luke 3:23-38 for Christ's genealogy.)*]
- Now, think back to when we spoke of roles people have in a family. We talked about what people do. As a **Family of Faith**, how can we extend the branches of our tree showing what people do in the Church to help it grow? (*metropolitans, bishops, priests, deacons, monastics, chanters, choir, parishioners, altar boys, Church School teachers, those who visit the sick, feed the poor, etc...,God-families, families and finally themselves. Be sure to extend the branches from them so that they can see that the tree will always grow through the generations.*)
- Why is it important that each of us has these different roles? (*God blessed us all with individual gifts. Everyone has a special job to do for Christ and for His Church to go forth and bear fruit. Remind them of the way that they are all connected to each other through similar qualities. In the Church, Christ and His calling us to do different things connect us. Each of us has an important and necessary job to do in the Family of Faith.*)
- How does our **Family of Faith** grow beyond what we have drawn? (*Through Baptism, Chrismation, and the other Sacraments, we are connected to the entire Church, **Militant and Triumphant**. This is our Spiritual Family. We are also connected to our Godparents and their children as well as their other God Children.*)

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<sup>4</sup> Orthodox Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers, St. Athanasius Orthodox Academy, 1993, Pg.253 (see footnote 15:1)

<sup>5</sup> Orthodox Study Bible, Pg. 253 (see footnote15:4)

<sup>6</sup> (See John 15:12)

**STATE** (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

We are all one **Family of Faith**. As we grow each day, we will understand who we become with **Faith** in Christ. This will connect our families more to other families in the Church, through the Sacraments, service to the Church and the activities we participate in, like JOY. You and your family are not just a couple of branches, but part of an amazing connection of biological, adopted and spiritual family which is the Church, the Family of Faith. The Family Trees which we created today really represent another branch on the Family of Faith Tree. The Church Triumphant represents the roots and trunk of our Family of Faith (God, the prophets, the saints and our loved ones who are no longer with us), while the Church Militant, all of us, represents the growth of our tree with strong branches that grow towards Heaven. As one of those younger branches, what will you do to bear fruit for Christ? The first step is to truly be the Family of Faith by being People of Faith, and from there, anything is possible.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

*Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.*

**- Prayer of St. Paul for the Church at Ephesus (Ephesians 3:14-21)**

## EXPANDED IDEAS

- Collect individual family trees, color copy them, and bind them together to create a *Family of Faith* book for the parish library. Make the book with the possibility for expansion as new families join the Church. Formally present this book, so that the rest of the parish may appreciate it and add to it. Be sure to begin with the *Family of Faith in Christ* page that you created with all participants.
- Discuss further how many families have traditions that help them become more faithful. Share ideas, create a collection, and distribute these ideas so that other families may become more faithful through simple things that they can do together at home.
- Have the children brainstorm activities for a *Family of Faith* Fun Event, such as a picnic. Host it on church grounds and invite all stewards of the church; ask families to share baskets of prepared foods.
- Create or add a *Family of Faith* page to your church's website. Provide family prayers, ideas, resources, and links, as well as a calendar of events in order to strengthen families. Perhaps families can be profiled in action (as the Church Militant) as well.
- Ask your priest to host family retreats/seminars/gatherings to help people in the church define their role in the *Family of Faith*, or for families that are inquiring about the Faith.

## GLOSSARY

- **Church Militant** – Members of the church who are fighting spiritual combat or warfare in life
- **Church Triumphant** – Members of the church who have gained spiritual triumph in death
- **Faith** – belief and trust in and loyalty to God
- **Family** – a group of persons living under one roof or with common ancestry
- **Genealogy** – an account or map of decent of a person, family, or group from an ancestor or from older member of a species
- **Lineage** – a group of individuals tracing descent from a common ancestor

## SPECIAL NOTES

It may be best for your group to complete the family tree at the end of the session. Feel free to move it before the closing remarks.

## “Family of Faith BINGO”

**Instructions:** Fill in the blocks by finding **someone else** who the statement matches. Have them sign their name in the block. Walk around the room until you have completed the block. Try to not to repeat any names, if possible. When the first person finishes they can call out BINGO and the game is finished.

My <b>family</b> has more than 4 children	My eyes are a color other than brown	I have an older brother	I am named after one of my grandparents	My <b>lineage</b> is from Greece
I share a room with a sibling	My <b>faith</b> is Eastern Orthodox	There is a priest in my family	My Godparents attend this parish	My parent(s) speak more than one language
I am an only child	I have blond hair	I am member of the <b>Church Militant</b>	I am related to someone else in JOY	I was not born in this state
We have a dog	I call my grandfather something other than Papou	I was baptized at this parish	I have a younger sister	One of my parents was born in another country
I have studied my family <b>genealogy</b>	There are twins in my family	We have a cat	I call my grandmother Yia Yia	You know someone who is part of the <b>Church Triumphant</b>

## ARTS AND CRAFTS

**Family of Faith Tree** (see attached Publisher File for family tree template)

### Supplies Needed

- 8 ½ x 11 Medium Blue cardstock for background
- 8 ½ x 11 brown cardstock or scrapbook paper photocopied onto “Family Tree Template” (1 per person)
- Leaf stickers or pre-cut leaves (30 to 50 leaves per child). Choose leaves that are no more than 1 ½ inches long.
- Scissors (1 per person)
- Glue Stick (1 per person)
- Thin markers or sharpies (Enough for each person)

### Directions

- Each child will begin by writing their name on the trunk of the tree. They will then fill in the appropriate last and maiden names in their family tree template. Once they have filled in as many names as they know, they will cut out the tree template and glue it onto the blue background with the paper laying horizontally.
- For children with non-traditional family trees, help the children adjust their branches to represent step-parents and siblings.
- Each child will receive at least 30-50 stickers. Next to each last name on the tree they will place one sticker, starting with Mom, Dad, and so on. They should place a leaf over the last branch to cover the end. Children may use additional stickers to represent siblings and aunts and uncles, etc.. Paternal branches are on the left and maternal branches are on the right.
- Once the stickers have been placed in the right locations they will write the first names in beginning with their parents and then grandparents and so on.
- Have the children finish their project by writing “My Family of Faith Tree” in an open space on the blue background.

**FAMILY NOTES:** *To be copied and distributed to JOY parents.*

## **Family of Faith**

Today your child(ren) was introduced to our theme for the year, **People of Faith**. We learned about their **Family of Faith**, the Church. Through baptism and chrismation, we are connected to Christ and to each other. We have sent each child home with a Family Tree Project. Please help them complete the tree with any relatives which they may not remember. To find out a little about what they learned, ask them the following questions:

- How do we become members of the Family of Faith, the Church?
- What is the Genealogy of Christ?
- Who are the Church Militant and Triumphant?

## **Models of Faith**

The following are Family Models of Faith for September. Share their stories as a family. They may be found on the [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org) website on the Orthodox Calendar or [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org) website under Feasts and Saints.

- Zacharias and Elizabeth (5)
- Synaxis of the Holy Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna (9)
- Demetrios, his wife Evanthia and their son Demetrian (11)
- Sophia and daughters Faith, Hope and Love (17)
- Eusthathius, his wife Theopiste and two children, Agapius and Theopistus (20)

## **Activity**

Sit down with your children and create a God-Family tree mapping out their godparents, god-siblings, and your god-children. Have them contact their godparents to find out who their godparents are and so on. Discuss with them how our Orthodox Christian Faith is passed down through families and god-families as well.

Have a family night where you watch your children's baptismal videos and or go through their baptismal photo album. If it is possible, have their Godparents over for dinner.

## **For Further Information**

The book *Making God Real in the Orthodox Christian Home* is a wonderful reference for creating a home for a family of faith. There are a myriad traditional Orthodox practices for everyday and holidays which Fr. Anthony M. Coniaris describes in a user-friendly manner. It may be purchased at [www.light-n-life.com](http://www.light-n-life.com). You may also like to visit the Archdiocese Center for Family care at [www.familiaschurch.org](http://www.familiaschurch.org) for more resource on families. They have a variety of materials from table top prayer guides, to books to "Orthodox Observer" articles.

## **SESSION 1 PRAYERS**

### **OPENING PRAYER** *Trisagion (Thrice Holy)*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to You our God, glory to You!

Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, present in all places and filling all things, treasury of blessings and Giver of life, come and abide in us. Cleanse us from all impurities and save our souls, gracious Lord.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3X)

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever to the ages of ages. Amen.

All Holy Trinity have mercy on us. Lord, forgive our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Your name's sake. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, to the ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Your is the kingdom, the power and the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

*- Prayer of St. Paul for the Church at Ephesus (Ephesians 3:14-21)*