



# Sunday of the Holy Cross

## GEORGET PHOTOS

Adapted from Chapter 9 of *Let Us Live Orthodoxy*, Volume 2

*The Lord said: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. (Mark 8:34)*

This is the greatest oasis of all, the midpoint of our Lenten Journey. By this point, we may be tired and our enthusiasm might be waning. Our struggle begins to lose its strength, but before us stands a sign of someone who struggled much more than any of us: Jesus. The cross shows us that our problems are miniscule in comparison with those of our Savior, who took on all of our sins and gave Himself as ransom.

This Sunday, we come to Church and are greeted with a cross that stands erect amidst spring flowers, commonly the bulb flowers or the first flowers of spring. Why are these flowers used? They are analogous to the Resurrection. The bulb breaks open and from this "tomb" a beautiful flower springs forth. The flower represents the beauty of the Resurrection. Other traditions in colder climates use other flowers or pussy willows. With the cross in the midst of the flowers, Jesus is telling us to draw courage from His sacrifice on the cross and proceed to the beauty of His Resurrection.

The weight of our crosses is nothing in comparison to the weight of the cross Jesus carried. Our cross contains our sins and fears,

while His cross carries the sins of humanity. We are stressed and we will be relieved, we are challenged and we will be comforted, and we are tired and He rejuvenates us by His death on the cross, which brought about His glorious Resurrection and the offer of eternal life. The Church provides us with the life-giving cross in the midst of Great Lent for comfort and spiritual strength. The cross is also a "traffic sign" giving us direction on our journey. Jesus wishes to motivate us. He is telling us that we are almost there! Keep up the journey; your destination approaches and it is grand.

## TIME OUT CROSS ACTIVITY

This activity and craft project is very simple but it drives home a point to children. When you do something wrong (a sin), you hurt Jesus. This is an important aspect for teaching primary grades: the knowledge of right and wrong. First, we want to call to the attention of the children what Jesus endured for us. This is accomplished by using visual aids and touch stimulus. A small spike or nail is wonderful. Pass it around and allow children to feel the point. Once all have experienced touching the spike or nail, ask them to describe how they



would feel if it poked them. In my experience, children from the ages of 2 to 9 showed a deep emotional response: it would hurt them! Once the stimulus of pain is understood, then insert Jesus's experience. Ask the students if they could imagine what Jesus felt when He was crucified on the Cross. Jesus had not one nail, but three, for both of his hands and one through his feet. If this information is properly conveyed, the children usually fall silent; they now understand what Jesus felt. Their faces will become sullen.

students understand the cross and the nails, so now tie that understanding into their lives. Explain that if they do something "bad," they are hurting Jesus. Jesus's pain is similar to the nails that were hammered into His hands and feet. This week, when they do something "bad" to their Church, mother, father, grandparents, relatives, siblings, pets, school, or friends, they have to place a nail into Jesus's cross. Then, they must go into a time out in a place designated by their parents. The nail will remain on the cross until they repent and ask forgiveness

You have their attention now, so introduce the idea of sin by using an analogy:

- When Jesus was crucified, the nails hurt Him.
- Jesus endured the pain of the nails for us, in order to save our souls.
- When we do something wrong, does that hurt Jesus the same way as the nail?



from the person(s) they have upset. "Repenting" means realizing what they have done wrong and deciding they must not do it again. It is only when the nails are removed from Jesus's cross that He will be happy once again. Do emphasize that Jesus always loves us, even when we sin or do something bad.

The children will agree that sin hurts Jesus. Next, the key is to tie the craft project to this conclusion. Show students a cross that three holes drilled in it, one at each arm and one at the feet. The holes represent the nails placed in Jesus's hands and feet.

These emotions hit children of all ages, from preschoolers to teenagers. Simply put, sin hurts Jesus. During this time of the year especially, we should be conscious, at any age, of the wrongs we do. Once the habit is developed of repenting after doing something wrong, you have in effect taught the children about confession and of asking for forgiveness. By telling the students that the Time Out Cross project is to be maintained during Great Lent initially, and then throughout the year, lets them know the importance of living a Christ-like life.

Then, give each child will a wood cross to decorate. The cross is decorated to reinforce the beauty of Jesus's sacrifice for the world. The



## TIME OUT CROSS CRAFT

### MATERIALS

- 4 short nails
- 1 unpainted wood cross from a craft store
- Drill
- Marker
- Seashells, glitter, paint, crystals (anything you have on hand for decoration)
- Strong glue
- Small plastic baggie
- Index card

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Before the session, drill or hammer four holes that are big enough for nails to be easily slipped into and removed: one at the head, each arm, and at the foot of the cross.
2. Write the child's name on the back of the cross.
3. Decorate the cross, keeping the decorations far from the nail holes. Allow it to dry overnight.
4. Prepare a small bag with four nails and a card with instructions to keep with the cross.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Every time you do something wrong, put a nail in one of the holes of the cross.</li><li>2. Then recite the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."</li><li>3. Go into a time out until you understand what you did wrong and realize that you must not do it again.</li><li>4. Apologize to the person you wronged. Then, with a parent's permission, you can remove the nail.</li></ol> |
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