

FAMILY FELLOWSHIP NIGHT: FAMILY HEIRLOOM ACTIVITY

OBJECTIVE

Participants will gather to learn more about their fellow parish family members while exploring our heritage as Orthodox Christians.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Camera
- Butcher Paper and Tape
- White Construction Paper and markers (for family stories)
- Crayons

TO PREPARE

Invite your parishioners to gather for a fellowship potluck dinner or meal. Then encourage everyone to bring a family heirloom (or a picture of or a story of the heirloom) that holds meaning for their family. This item could be something that has been passed down from generations or it could be something that is cherished by the family even if it is a relatively new keepsake. After dinner, families will share their heirloom.

Make arrangements to photograph each family with their heirloom (or just the family members if they didn't bring an item) and have the parents and children write out a description of why this item is important to them, along with the names of each family member. Make space to post the pictures and heirloom stories in your parish hall for a designated amount of time. Later, ask other parishioners who were not able attend the fellowship night to add their own picture and story.

Tape a couple of sheets of butcher paper to the wall with title "Heirlooms of our Orthodox Christian Faith." for the children to use during the activity.

OUTLINE

- Opening Prayer Service – Begin the evening with a short prayer service in the church. Make sure you have copies of the service so that everyone can focus. As much as possible, encourage active participation by involving adults and children in any readings or chanting.

- Potluck Dinner – Providing food can greatly increase your participation. A potluck dinner is a simple way to do this. Make sure to be clear about any fasting guidelines to help families prepare appropriate food. The parish should make arrangements for plates, silverware, napkins, and drinks. If this is not a good option for your parish, consider something simple like ordering pizza and charging a few dollars per family to offset the cost.

- Activity
 - Ask participants to define the word heirloom. If necessary, help lead them to the idea that it is something of special value handed on from one generation to another.
 - After a brief discussion, the facilitator of the evening should begin by sharing his/her own family heirloom story.
 - As families begin to share, direct the children (who now understand what an heirloom is) to the task of decorating the banners with pictures of the precious things that have been passed down throughout the years in the Orthodox Church. If you have older children/teenagers you could have them print the St. John Chrysostom quote on a piece of butcher paper and decorate it with icons or drawings.
 - Guide the sharing of heirloom stories by making sure to give everyone equal time in which to share. Encourage children to participate in the storytelling as well. If you have a large amount of families and individuals present, break them into small groups and have them share within their groups (try to create groups with people who don't know each other as well).
 - Wrap up by having children share their banner. Have a brief discussion about our Orthodox Christian heirlooms. Share the following quote to add to the discussion:
Parents who bring up their children in the proper way are builders of temples in which Christ dwells and are the guardians of heavenly athletes. If parents train their child correctly, and that child in turn trains his or her child correctly, and so on, the succession of good Christians will be like a golden chain. – **Adapted from St. John Chrysostom** (original translation uses the word Fathers instead of parents and sons instead of children)
 - Don't forget to take family or individual pictures and have their stories written out on the construction paper for presentation. .

- Closing prayer

O God, our heavenly Father, Who loves mankind and is merciful and compassionate, have mercy upon Your servants for whom I humbly pray and who I commend to Your gracious care and protection. O Lord, be their guide and guardian in all their endeavors. Lead them in the path of Your truth, and draw them nearer to You, that they may lead godly and righteous lives in Your love and fear, doing Your will in all things. Give them grace that they may be temperate, industrious, diligent, devout, and charitable. Defend them against the assaults of the enemy, and grant them wisdom and strength to resist all temptations and corruption of this life. Direct them in the way of salvation, through the mercy of Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the intercessions of His holy Mother and Your blessed saints. Amen.