

SESSION 1

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

OBJECTIVE

To have each family member understand that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world and to comprehend how His Light needs to shine in their lives daily.

PREPARATION

The committee leading this activity should review and use the *Preparing for the Family Night* checklist in *Appendix B* to plan for the event. When publicizing this event, take care not to reveal the theme of “light.”

Session leaders should allocate sufficient time to prepare, familiarizing themselves not only with the session but also with each of the following Bible passages: John 8:12, Genesis 1:1–3, Ephesians 5:8–14, and Matthew 5:14–16. In addition, look over any prayers that will be used so that you are comfortable with them as well. If theological questions arise during preparation, the leader(s) should schedule a meeting with the parish priest so that the lesson is fully understood before the session.

On the day of the session, allow time to organize the materials. Mod Podge can be messy—consider covering the tables to protect them.

MATERIALS NEEDED

For the Whole Group

- Copies of prayers and/or prayer services (*for all participants*)
- Flip chart, masking tape, and markers
- Bags filled with the following items (*one per family*):
 - *Family Time: Opening Activity* handout (*see p. 11*)
 - 1 glass mason jar
 - Several sheets of different colored tissue paper
 - Pair of scissors
 - Mod Podge (*each family should have a small jar*)
 - Small paint brushes (*several per bag*)
 - Small piece of masking tape (*affixed to the bottom of the jar*)
 - Paper towels
- Votive candles (*one per family*)
- Small paper icon of Christ (*one per family*)
- *Family Time: Closing Activity* handout (*see p. 12*)
- Pens/pencils and paper
- *Family Night: Taking It Home* handouts (*see pp. 13–14*)

For the Children’s Break-out Session

- Matches
- Large icon of Christ (*if possible, Christ the Light Giver*) and something to place it on
- Large votive candles

For the Teenagers’ Break-out Session

- Several icons with something to place them on (*one per group*)
- Bibles with a concordance
- Paper bags
- Matches
- Large votive candles
- Taper candles (*1 per person*)

For the Adults’ Break-out Session

- Matches
- Taper candles (*1 per person*)

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OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS

We recommend that as a parish family you begin and end your evening with a worship service or prayer. We have included a Small Compline service in Appendix A to reproduce and distribute for all to participate. If you choose a different service, make every effort to have the text available for everyone. For alternative prayer time, teach the families O Joyful Light, the beautiful hymn, from the Vespers service. It is important to take a few minutes as a group to review the meaning of this hymn so that all can be active participants when praying. Consult with your parish priest for guidance in this.

O joyful Light of the holy glory of the immortal Father, the heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ. Now that we have reached the setting of the sun and behold the evening light, we sing to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is fitting at all times to praise You with cheerful voices, O Son of God, the Giver of life. Behold, the world sings Your glory.

—O Joyful Light, from the service of Vespers

OPENING ACTIVITY: THE FAMILY CANDLE (15–20 minutes)

After the opening prayers, give each family a bag with materials and have them follow the instructions on the Family Time: Opening Activity handout. Make sure not to tell them what the jars will be used for until you begin the discussion. Begin the discussion when most of the families have completed the task.

DISCUSS (Look first to the children for answers and reflect back.)

- What do you think this jar is for? (*Allow guesses until someone comes up with “candle holder.”*)
- What do candles do? (*Candles provide light in darkness.*)
- At the beginning of the evening, you were told this jar was very important for your family. What do you think it will be used for? (*Allow several people to answer before moving to the next question.*)
- In the Bible, Jesus says, “I am the **light** of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12). What do you think He meant by this? (*Allow several people to answer before beginning the opening remarks.*)

OPENING REMARKS (Paraphrase in your own words.)

Very good answers! Before we move on, I want to make sure you remember what Jesus said. Let’s all read it together:

Write John 8:12 on a flip chart or project on the wall for all to see. Have everyone recite the passage in unison. If you like, have a quick contest to see who can recite it the loudest—the adults or the children.

Light reveals the world around us. We work, play, and live out most of our lives by the light of day. It guides our lives. The same is true of the spiritual life—light is an important factor in its development. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. Through Him, we are guided to paradise. In darkness we can stumble, fall, and even become completely turned around. With Christ’s illumination, we see the path to salvation before us. Like a flower grows stronger by the light of the sun, we too grow stronger when we live in the light of our Son—Christ. We mature in His divine light, and without Him we wither and die.

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Many things in our faith symbolize the light of Christ. When we enter the Church through Holy Baptism, we become newly illumined and are handed a candle to symbolize that illumination. At the beginning of the midnight Paschal Resurrection service, the priest brings a lit candle into the total darkness of the Church chanting, “Come receive the light.” Every time we enter our church, we light a candle to remind us that Christ is the Light of the world. Our Orthodox Faith surrounds us with light. This light doesn’t just exist symbolically; each of us has this light within us. How is our light burning? Strong and warm? Weak and cool? Has it been extinguished by our sins? How can we illuminate the right path in our journey of life? We can illuminate it with the **light of Christ**. This is what we will be exploring today. Before we move on, let’s see who remembers what Jesus said. *(Say the following and allow participants to fill in the blanks.)*

“I am the light of the _____. He who follows Me shall not walk in _____, but have the _____ of life.”

BREAK-OUT SESSIONS (45–60 minutes)

Three age-appropriate break-out sessions are offered on the following pages. These may or may not work for your parish, depending on the number of families that participate. If you are not able to break into three groups, keep participants together and adapt one of the sessions to best meet your needs.

- Children’s Break-out Session—Turning on the Light (*pp. 5–6*)
- Teenagers’ Break-out Session—Following the Light (*pp. 7–8*)
- Adults’ Break-out Session—Being the Light (*pp. 9–10*)

Transitioning smoothly from one activity to the next is critical when leading a session, especially for young children. For this reason, make sure to know exactly where each group is going for the break-out sessions and who is leading them. Give clear instructions and proper support so the lessons can begin promptly.

Please note that the children’s and teenagers’ groups will vary greatly in age, as well as in developmental and spiritual levels. If there are many children, it would be best to split the preschoolers through 2nd graders into one group and the 3rd through 6th graders into another. Likewise with the teenagers, split the junior high and high school students into two groups when appropriate. However the groups are arranged, make sure that all the young people are fully engaged in the lesson. For more specific information about the developmental needs of children and teenagers, see the *Guidelines* published by the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (www.youth.goarch.org). Above all, always be certain there is enough adult supervision to ensure that the young people will be safe and supported in their learning.

CLOSING ACTIVITY (15–20 minutes)

Reassemble the participants back together as families. Give each family group a Family Time: Closing Activity handout, icon of Christ, and votive candle (they should still have the materials used at the

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beginning, specifically the Mod Podge and brushes). Have them follow the instructions on the handout, and when most families are done (they can continue at home if necessary) begin the wrap-up discussion.

DISCUSS (*Look first to the children for answers and reflect back.*)

- What did you learn today?
- What are you going to do as a family when you get home?
- Does anyone remember the passage about Jesus we learned earlier? (*Repeat as a group.*)

WRAP-UP (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

As we have learned, light is very important to us. It provides nourishment to our bodies, minds, and souls. Nothing can help us grow and mature as completely as the Light of the world—Jesus Christ. We are all called to follow this Light—the Light that was given to us on the day of our baptism. The more we seek the Light, the brighter it becomes, and the closer we are to reaching our spiritual goal: salvation and eternal life.

Let us leave tonight remembering that each time we pray, the Light of the world, Jesus Christ, is there. He is the guide that will brighten our path, exposing all obstacles. He also reveals our faults and deeds so that we can amend our lives and begin to walk in a way that is God-pleasing. We must receive the unwaning light of Jesus Christ and use it as a torch, a guide for all to see. With it, we must strive to brighten the lives of others with the Light of Christ. As we leave here, let us remember the Scripture: *“I am the **light** of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).*

AS FAMILIES PREPARE TO LEAVE

- Remember to close with a short worship service or closing prayer.
- Don’t forget to give families the *Family Night: Taking It Home* handout.
- Let them know when the next Family Night is scheduled.
- Enlist families to help you clean up (*rotate monthly*).
- Thank them sincerely for their attendance and participation.

TURNING ON THE LIGHT

CHILDREN'S BREAK-OUT SESSION

OPENING ACTIVITY: LIGHTS ON/LIGHTS OFF

If many of the children are young, do not actually turn the lights off but rather have the children close their eyes when you say "Lights off" and open them at "Lights on." We recommended that you lead this activity in an open room so the children can move freely. When they arrive, have them sit down and state the following in your own words:

We are going to play a game! But before we start, we need to learn the rules. This game is called Lights On/Lights Off. Now, we aren't going to actually turn the lights off, but instead, you will all close your eyes when I say "Lights off." Let's try that now: "Lights off." Very good! Now you will keep your eyes closed until I say "Lights on." Okay, let's try that one: "Lights on." You did that very well. Let's practice.

Take them through a series of "Lights on" and "Lights off," mixing up the order so they pay close attention. State the following in your own words:

You did an excellent job, but that is only part of the game! I am going to ask all of you to move from one end of the room to the other while I call out "Lights on" and "Lights off." But there's a catch: I may tell you to hop, dance, crawl, etc., so listen closely to my directions.

Now, we do need to be very careful during this activity so no one gets hurt. During the game, it is really important that you listen closely to what I say. If you are not listening, you will be removed from the game. Not only do you need to listen to me but also to everyone around you so that you won't bump into them. You must **never** run. There is one other important thing you need to listen for: the word "freeze." When I say "freeze," everyone must immediately stop moving, be very quiet, and listen for the next directions. So, are we ready? Let's check and see. Can you all tell me what the rules are and how we play this game?

Let the children retell the instructions. Repeat back what they are saying and make clarifications as needed. Next, have the children line up along the wall (this might be a good opportunity to practice your first "freeze"). Once you start playing, give them different movements to do either with "Lights on" or "Lights off." Some of the different commands can be to walk in slow motion, hop like a bunny on two feet, dance, crawl like a dog, slither like a snake, crabwalk, etc. (don't do any running or spinning). Use "freeze" if things start to get a little out of hand. Use the faster movements when you have "lights on." Continue until everyone gets across the room, then have the children sit down in a circle.

DISCUSS (Allow all to share and reflect back.)

- Was it easier to do the activity with your eyes open or closed?
- Why was it easier to do it when the lights were on?
- How did you feel when the lights were off?
- What are some of the different things we use light for?
- What were the first things God made when He created the universe? (*First God created heavens, earth, and light.*)

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BIBLE PASSAGE: GENESIS 1:1–3

Let's see what the Bible says. Let's look at the very first book of the Bible. Does anyone know what that book is called? (*Allow children a moment to guess.*) Genesis is the very first book, and it tells the story of God creating the universe. Let's find out exactly what it says:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.

Does anyone know what it means to be without form and void? (*Allow children a moment to answer then proceed.*) It means that the earth was empty and had no shape. Let's continue reading:

And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light;" and there was light.

DISCUSS (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

- What does this passage tell us? (*Let the children tell you in their own words.*)
- Light was so important that God created it before anything else. Why is light important to us? (*Light helps us see clearly.*)
- Does anyone remember the passage we talked about when you arrived with your family? (*Allow children time to answer and then read the passage again. "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*)
- If light is important to us because it helps us see clearly, and Jesus is the "Light of the world," then what does Jesus help us do? (*He helps us to see what is right and what is wrong in our lives. He enlightens the path that leads us to living with Him in Heaven.*)

WRAP-UP (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Put an icon of Christ on a stand where all the children can see. Let them know you are going to turn off the lights just for a moment. Turn off the lights and ask the following:

- What do you see? (*nothing*) Why do you see nothing? (*because there is no light*)

Take a large candle. place it in front of Christ, and ask the following:

- What do you see? (*an icon of Christ*) Why do you see it? (*because there is light*)

We know we need light to see, and we have learned today that Christ is the Light of the world. Christ is the Light that guides our lives. Where can we find this Light? (*Allow children to answer then proceed.*) You can find it in the Church, our priest, parents, siblings, and friends. God has given us these things and many more to help us find the Light, His Light. But guess what? This light isn't only found in Church or people we encounter—it is in each of us. How can we let the light of Christ shine in each of us? (*Allow young people to answer then proceed.*) By living our lives as Christ taught us to live, we can let the light of Christ shine through us onto those around us. What are some ways we can live as Christ taught us? (*Allow young people to answer then proceed.*) As we leave here, we should keep the words of God in our minds. Remember, when He created the world, He said, "Let there be light," and we should let this light shine in our hearts each and every day.

Depending on the age and maturity of the children you may want to give them candles when you start talking about how the light is in all of us. This will help illustrate your point. They can continue to hold the candles during the closing prayer. Close by inviting all to pray the Lord's Prayer together slowly and with reverent attention.

FOLLOWING THE LIGHT

TEENAGERS' BREAK-OUT SESSION

OPENING ACTIVITY: CANDLE SEARCH

This activity works best in a room with furniture (desks, tables, etc.). It is important that the room becomes completely dark when the lights are turned off. Around the room, scatter obstacles that are difficult but not dangerous to maneuver (chairs, tables, etc.). Position several icons around the room with candles next to them (have the matches in your pocket ready). Place a bag for every group near each icon. The bag should contain a Bible and enough candles for each person in the group. Tape a piece of paper to the front of the Bible that reads, "Find a place to sit as a group, then read and discuss Ephesians 5:8–14." Before you allow the teenagers into the room, break them into groups of 4–5 and state the following in your own words:

Today's challenge involves teamwork. Your task as a group will be to find one of the paper bags positioned around the room, open it, and follow the directions inside. There will be obstacles when you enter the room. Here are the ground rules: you must stay linked together as a group during the search, move slowly, and speak quietly and only when necessary. Once you find the bag you can break the link, but stay close, as the task is not yet complete. Let's get started.

Lead the groups into the dark room, not allowing them to see anything. Allow them to struggle through the dark for a minute, then ask if they want help. When they answer "yes," light the candles around the room and let the teenagers continue their search. After all of the groups find their bags and have 5–10 minutes of discussion, bring the whole group together to discuss the activity. Continue this session in the dark, but have all of the teenagers (if they haven't already) light their individual candles.

DISCUSS *(Allow all to share and reflect back.)*

- What made the task difficult?
- What made the task easier?
- What was your focus as a team to complete the task?

BIBLE PASSAGE: EPHESIANS 5:8–14

Your groups were assigned a task to carry out in complete darkness. This once-difficult task became more manageable once light was introduced. You were also asked to read a Bible passage from Ephesians. Let's review it as a group:

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He

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*says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light."*

DISCUSS (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

- What does this passage tell us?
- How can we walk as “children of the light”?
- How can exposing “unfruitful works” to light be a good thing?
- What does this mean for our lives?

WRAP-UP (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Your groups today were challenged to find something, despite many obstacles, in complete darkness. While the goal was made visible with candlelight, the path was still dark and difficult. This is often the case in our lives; the goals are known but we have nothing to illumine our path.

There is a story about a man who was visiting a farm. One dark night he needed to go to the railroad station. The farmer gave the man a lantern to light his path, as well as the following important instructions: “See that glimmer of light in the distance? That’s the station. Head for that!” These two things gave the man just what he needed. The lamp lit the way for his feet and the light in the distance assured him he was headed in the right direction. —Adapted from **Daily Vitamins for Spiritual Growth Vol. 2** by Anthony Coniaris

In our spiritual lives, we often look to the Church, her sacraments, services, Scriptures, saints, and especially our Savior Jesus Christ to illuminate our goal—everlasting life in the Kingdom of God. We must not leave these things in Church on Sunday, but we must take their light with us to guide our path every day.

Let’s draw our attention to one final point. Look around at all of our candles. We are illuminating each other. We are surrounded by a strong and glowing light. Together our light is bright and strong. We must remember on our path of life to surround ourselves with people who keep our lights bright—people who help us when our lights are dim. In turn, we can be beacons of light by sharing our light with others who find themselves in darkness. Though one’s mind and body may dwell in darkness, the soul hungers, searches, and yearns for the Light that will lighten its way—enlightening all. What is important is not what we are, but what we can become, what our potential is—what God wants us to be. Whether our eyes are open or closed, the Light is always there.

I would like you to take the next two minutes to sit in silence. Consider your light and how you are taking care of it. *Give them time to silently contemplate and then ask:* What are some ways we can tend to the flame in our everyday lives? (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

Close by inviting all to pray the Lord’s Prayer together slowly and with reverent attention.

BEING THE LIGHT

ADULTS' BREAK-OUT SESSION

OPENING ACTIVITY: CANDLE PASS

With the permission of the parish priest, conduct this activity in the Church. The church should be dark except for any votive or vigil candles already lit. Pass out taper candles to each adult, but do not light them. State the following in your own words:

We are sitting in Church surrounded by darkness. I want us to take a minute in silence to consider how we experience the **light of God** in Church.

After a minute has passed:

Now, I want us to take a minute in silence and consider how we experience the **light of God** in our daily lives.

DISCUSS (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

- How do we experience the **light of God** in Church?
- How does this feel?
- How do we experience the **light of God** in our daily lives?
- How does this feel?

Now look closely at the icons and consider how they reflect light.

Allow a minute for quiet contemplation, then proceed:

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

The concept of “inner light” has been incorporated into Byzantine iconography. In icons, the light of God resides in the inner person and emerges from within. Shadows are never depicted in Byzantine icons, as shadows are only cast when there is outer light. The Source of this inner light is the Holy Spirit, and it is usually expressed through a glow on the face of the one depicted on the icon, which is usually contemplative as one who is looking within. —**Adapted from Daily Vitamin for Spiritual Growth Vol. 2 by Anthony Coniaris**

I want us to consider how we reflect this inner light to others in our lives.

After a minute has passed, read the following:

BIBLE PASSAGE: MATTHEW 5:14–16

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let

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your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

DISCUSS (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

- How do we share this light with our loved ones?
- How do we share this light with our enemies?
- How do we share this light with complete strangers?
- How do we teach others to reflect this light?

WRAP-UP (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

We are going to light our candles one person at a time. While we do this, I want you to silently observe what is happening to the light.

Light one of the participant's candles and have them pass the flame to the person next to them, and so on. Once all the candles are lit, state the following in your own words:

We must let our light shine for all to see, not to showcase our good works or to gain praise, but for others to see God in and through us. Jesus urges us not to hide our light “under a bushel” but to place it on a stand where we can give light to all. There are many kinds of bushels in this world that hide our light: the bushel of shyness, bushel of pride, the bushel of indifference, the bushel of a cold heart, the bushel of a love that has died, the bushel of false humility. All of these bushels are condemned by Jesus as they not only hide the light but extinguish it also. —Adapted from **Daily Vitamins for Spiritual Growth Vol. 2** by Anthony Coniaris

Remember to always place your light on top of the bushel, to share your flame with your neighbors—friends and enemies alike—and to reflect the light of Christ at all times so that others may see God in and through you.

Close by inviting all to chant the following hymn:

O joyful Light of the holy glory of the immortal Father, the heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ. Now that we have reached the setting of the sun and behold the evening light, we sing to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is fitting at all times to praise You with cheerful voices, O Son of God, the Giver of life. Behold, the world sings Your glory.
—O Joyful Light, from the service of Vespers

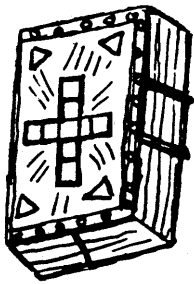
FAMILY NIGHT: TAKING IT HOME

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” —John 8:12

PRAY TOGETHER

O joyful Light of the holy glory of the immortal Father, the heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ. Now that we have reached the setting of the sun and behold the evening light, we sing to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is fitting at all times to praise you with cheerful voices, O Son of God, the Giver of life. Behold, the world sings your glory.

—from the service of Vespers



MORE SCRIPTURE ON LIGHT

<i>...pillar of fire to give them light ...</i>	<i>Exodus 13:21</i>
<i>...You will light my lamp ...</i>	<i>Psalms 18:28</i>
<i>...have seen a great light ...</i>	<i>Matthew 4:16</i>

WANT TO FIND MORE?

Grab your Bible and concordance and look up the word “light” or anything else you are interested in researching.

FEATURED ARTICLE: LIVING AS APOSTLES TO AMERICA

BY REV. FR. CONSTANTINE L. SITARAS

A few years ago a very meaningful and pertinent article was written with the title “The Best Kept Secret in America: The Greek Orthodox Church.” The author was a fine priest of excellence and stature, the late Fr. Constantine Monios of blessed memory, who was the Dean of the Annunciation Cathedral in Baltimore, Maryland. Fr. Monios explained how the Orthodox Church was an unknown entity in this land and how it offered so much to the American milieu. In the many years that have passed, the premise of the article remains a constant. We need to ask ourselves “Why?”

Why is this 2000-year-old Christian faith the “best kept secret in America”? How do we live as apostles to America now? What needs to happen if we are to be the apostles to America? Not only do we need to emulate those who established Orthodox Christianity in this land but also by example we must bring the faith to all.

DISCIPLESHIP

Our models are the apostles of Jesus Christ. In the original Greek of the New Testament, the word *mathitIS* is used, which literally means “student.” The twelve followers of Jesus were His students. They were selected by Him to be educated and trained to go into the world to spread His message of salvation. As students and trainees, the Disciples spent three years with the Lord. They heard His words, they experienced His miracles, and they witnessed all of His teachings.

Like the disciples, each Orthodox Christian is called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and like the disciples, each Orthodox

Christian is called to be an apostle. Each Orthodox Christian must come to understand that, like the disciples, we need to learn and grow in the faith. Practice makes perfect. For a Christian, practice means living a Christ-like life, including prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and learning more and more about Orthodoxy. Being a disciple is a life-long process of learning and living the faith.

As we learn about the faith, it becomes a natural consequence to live and practice it. An amazing thing happens. We become witnesses for the faith—witnesses to our neighbors, our co-workers, and our friends.

APOSTLESHIP

Knowledge of the faith translates into living the faith. Learning more and more about Orthodoxy by reading the Bible and participating in the Divine Liturgy and other services of the Church as disciples translates into being witnesses and models of Orthodoxy and apostles to America. Discipleship is the process of living as apostles. The word apostle comes from the Greek verb *apoSTELno*, which means “I send” or “I dispatch.” *Apostolos* means “the one who is the dispatcher or the carrier of the Good News.” As disciples of the teachings of Jesus Christ, we must become apostles of the great message of salvation. We are told that by being Orthodox Christians we witness to the world. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came with power upon the disciples as promised by the Master. They received that power and were empowered to go out into the world with the most powerful message of all time: death is vanquished—



eternal life is a reality—the ultimate reality of the essential message of LOVE.

From the time of one’s baptism and chrismation, a Christian is on a life-long spiritual journey. That path can be one of passivity, being on the sideline, a passerby with no inclination toward exploring the value and meaning of an Orthodox Christian lifestyle.

The road can also be one of searching for greater meaning in life by experiencing the glory of the Resurrection, the depth of Orthodox teaching, and, yes, the fellowship of being in communion with the Church and her members. We can live as stewards of the faith and share ourselves and our time, talent, and treasures with others. The calling comes to each and every one of us. The Holy Spirit consistently knocks at the door of our heart. It is up to each individual to unlock those doors and to allow the Holy Spirit to work within us so that as we learn more, we may live more fully as witnesses and models and apostles to America.

We need to let the “best kept secret in America” out of the box by living as apostles to America.

Article adapted from www.goarch.org.

FAMILY ACTIVITY: FAMILY WORSHIP

Your *Family*, a blessed gift from our Heavenly Father, is called by God to provide love and security, to nurture faith and hope. To do this, He has provided your *Family* with the Church, a place where true relationships with God and one another are fostered and sustained. In fact, the attributes of the Church that guide the community to life and salvation are essential to the well-being of your *Family*.

As the Church gathers to worship God as a community of believers, your *Family* needs to gather for worship in the home. As the church offers a witness of the presence of Christ in our world, your *Family* is called to reveal His love in your relationships. As the Church reaches out to serve those in need, your *Family* is led by our Lord



to offer service in your community. As the Church teaches the true Faith, your *Family* needs to be a place where each member grows in spiritual knowledge and understanding. As the Church is a place of fellowship in Christ, your *Family* can and should be characterized by friendship, trust and respect.

Thus, *Family as Church* affirms that the attributes of the Church, which have been revealed to us by God in Holy Scripture and through the local parish, can help you to know what it means to be a *Family*, a healthy *Family* that lives in faith and love.

Creating and using a place in the home for *Family* worship will assist your *Family* in worship, learning, and fellowship. Most importantly, a place for worship connects your *Family* to the Church by bringing the worship of God into the home and affirming the value of worship in the life of the *Family*. Through worship in the home, faith in God is nurtured, and your children learn the Orthodox faith through prayer, hymns, and the commemoration of the saints and feast days of our Church. The fellowship your *Family* experiences as they worship together will strengthen the bonds you have with each other.

—Adapted from “Family Worship: Creating and Using a Place in your Home” published by the Center for Family Care.

FAMILY CHALLENGE

Your challenge this month is to take the light of Christ with you each and every day. We would like you to use the family candle you made to come together as a family in prayer daily (in the morning and/or evening). Discuss this task as a family and come up with a plan to meet it.

Consider these questions:

How you will pray?

When you will pray?

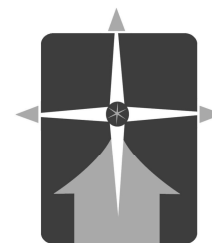
Who will lead which prayers?

What further information or resources do you need to carry out this plan?

If you can't come together daily at first, start off slowly and build from there. Speak with your parish priest to further guide your family. If you're already praying regularly as a family, great! Consider what you can do to enhance your family prayer life. Also, don't forget to make time for each family member's personal prayer time!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- *Light Through Darkness: The Orthodox Tradition* by John Chryssavgis, published by Orbis Books.
- *Keeper of the Light: Saint Macrina the Elder* by Bev Cooke, published by Conciliar Press (www.conciliarpress.com).
- *Come Receive the Light* An Orthodox Christian Radio Program (www.receive.org).



KAT'OIKON EKKHHEIA
Family as Church

Center for
Family Care

PUBLISHED BY

CENTER FOR FAMILY CARE

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