

SESSION 2

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

OBJECTIVE

To have each family member understand that Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life, and to comprehend why we must partake of this Bread to live.

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. Make arrangements to deliver the prepared unbaked pizzas to a local homeless shelter, a home for disadvantaged children, a fire station, or another local agency. Contact the owners of local pizza restaurants for donations of boxes and other supplies for packaging.

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 6:22–59, Luke 22:19, and Ephesians 3:14–19. 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.

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. 31*)
 - Pre-made pizza dough and something to roll it out
 - A cardboard circle (*to place the dough on once it is formed*), a cardboard box (*to put the pizza in upon completion*), and plastic wrap
 - Construction paper and crayons/markers (*to make a card for the receiver*)
 - Napkins, spoons, a paper plate, and a small bowl
- Buffet table with pizza toppings (*tomato sauce, cheese, pepperoni, olives, etc.*)
- Paper icons of the Last Supper (*one per family*)
- Liturgy books
- Bibles with a concordance
- *Family Time: Closing Activity* handout (*see p. 32*)
- *Family Night: Taking It Home* handout (*see pp. 33–34*)

For Children's Break-out Session

- *The Prosforo Seal* handout (*see p. 22*)
- Prosforo stamp(s), votive candle(s), icon(s), prepared and risen dough (*see directions on p. 34*), flour, and toothpicks
- Pens/pencils and paper

For Teenagers' Break-out Session

- *Communion Prayers* handouts (*see pp. 25–26*)
- Pens/pencils and paper

For Adults' Break-out Session

- *Daily Schedule* and *Church Schedule* handouts (*see pp. 29–30*)
- Pens/pencils

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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 this prayer of preparation before Communion. It is important to take a few minutes as a group to review the meaning of this prayer so that all can be active participants when praying. Consult with your parish priest for guidance in this.

O Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, but relying on Your loving-kindness I draw near to Your altar—sick, to the Physician of life; blind, to the Light of eternal brightness; poor, to the Lord of heaven and earth; naked, to the King of glory; a sheep, to its Shepherd; a creature, to its Creator; desolate, to the loving Comforter; miserable, to the Merciful; a sinner, to the Giver of pardon; ungodly, to the Justifier.

Asking Your never-ending mercy that it may please You to heal my weakness, to enlighten my blindness, to enrich my poverty, to clothe my nakedness, to bring me back from wanderings, to console my desolation, to reconcile my guiltiness, to give pardon to the sinner, forgiveness to the miserable, life to the lost, justification to the dead; so that I may be enabled to receive You, the Bread of Life, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Amen. —**Prayer of Preparation to Receive Holy Communion**

OPENING ACTIVITY: PIZZA MAKING (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 to tell families where the pizzas will be delivered. Begin the discussion when most of the families have completed the task.

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

- What are the ingredients needed to make pizza? Can we make a pizza without cheese? (*Yes.*) Without sauce? (*Yes.*) Without all of the other toppings? (*Yes.*) Can we make a pizza without the crust? (*No.*)
- The crust provides the foundation for the pizza. The crust is what makes a pizza a pizza, no matter the toppings. What ingredients make up the crust? (*flour, water, salt, etc.*) Can you think of another food that uses these ingredients? (*bread*)
- In the Bible, Jesus says, “*I am the **bread** of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst*” (*John 6:35*). 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:

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Write John 6:35 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.

Food is an important part of our daily existence as living beings. At intervals throughout every day, we spend time thinking about, preparing, and then consuming food. Different foods are served for different meals according to the time of day and our level of activity. Bread has universal popularity, whether it is for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or just a snack. Like our physical being, our spiritual being needs to be fed and strengthened on a regular basis to stay healthy. We digest many things spiritually—sermons, lessons, worship services, personal prayers, love, discipline—but our Lord Jesus Christ is the bread that fills us all. The focus of this Scripture is to place within us a balanced spiritual diet that will create a strong and energized Christian—one that is energized with the basic staple, the **Bread of Life**, Jesus Christ. When our spiritual being is nourished, we have the strength to strive for the heavenly goal: everlasting life in the Kingdom of God. 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 bread of _____. He who comes to Me shall never _____, and he who believes in me shall never _____."

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—A Gift for God (*pp. 19–22*)
- Teenagers' Break-out Session—Food for Life (*pp. 23–26*)
- Adults' Break-out Session—Daily Bread (*pp. 27–30*)

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.

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CLOSING ACTIVITY (15–20 minutes)

Reassemble the participants back together as families. Give each family group a Family Time: Closing Activity handout. 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 that we learned earlier? (*Repeat as a group.*)

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

We have learned that Jesus is the bread that fills us daily, sustaining our spiritual lives and ultimately leading us to salvation. He is the ingredient that gives us spiritual stamina when we are tired and weak. He is the one food that we can all receive to be satisfied. We must remember not to push Jesus Christ away and starve ourselves spiritually, thinking our own “diet” will make us healthier. Instead, we must hunger for the Bread of Life—Holy Communion. In order to eat of this banquet, we need to prepare by prayer, fasting, and the repentance of our sins (Holy Confession). Through Holy Communion—the body and blood of our Lord, the Bread of Life—we will be forever satisfied. As we leave here, let us remember His words, “*I am the **bread** of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst*” (John 6:35).

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.

A GIFT FOR GOD

CHILDREN'S BREAK-OUT SESSION

OPENING ACTIVITY: GIFTS DISCUSSION

Allow all to share and reflect back.

- How many of you like to receive gifts?
- What was the best gift you ever received?
- Why do people give us gifts?

We receive gifts on special occasions from people who love us. Gifts are usually things people think we will like and enjoy.

- What is the best gift you have ever given someone?
- How did it make **them** feel?
- How did it make **you** feel?
- Why does it make you feel happy when you give a gift to someone you love?

It feels good to give gifts to people we love. Today we are going to make a gift for someone very important to all of us—our Lord, Jesus Christ. Jesus loves us so much and gave His life for us; it is nice for us to offer Him something.

- What do you think would be a good gift for Jesus?

Jesus has everything and needs nothing from us, so the greatest gift we can give is to love Him by following His commandments. To show our love, we are going to make something very special and holy. We are going to make Prosforo, or Holy Bread.

- What is Prosforo? *(It is the Holy Bread we offer to God during the Divine Liturgy.)*
- Why is it important? *(Prosforo is necessary for the Liturgy because part of it becomes the Body of Christ.)*
- How do we know it becomes the Body of Christ during the service? *(Allow all to share and proceed with the following reading.)*

BIBLE PASSAGE: LUKE 22:19

Let's see what we can find in the Bible. The Gospels tell us stories of Jesus' life on earth. Today we are going to read a short passage from the Gospel of St. Luke:

*And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This **is** My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*

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

- What does this passage tell us? *(Let the children answer in their own words.)*
- Does this sound familiar to you? Which part? Why? *("Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you." We hear this in the Divine Liturgy during the consecration, when we kneel.)*

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- Do you remember the passage we read with the big group? (*Allow children time to answer and then read the passage again: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."*)
- So, if Jesus is the Bread of Life, how do we receive Him? (*We receive Jesus through Holy Communion.*)

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Jesus is the **Bread of Life**. We receive Him every time we receive Holy Communion. Before every Divine Liturgy, someone makes Prosforo as an offering to God—a gift—for all that He does for us. Today, we will be the ones making this offering. This is a very important job, and we need to work hard, pay attention, and most importantly, pray. Before we begin we must all wash our hands.

ACTIVITY: MAKING PROSFORO

It is important that this activity is properly set up ahead of time so the children can begin working immediately. Clean the area and set up icons with votive candles in front of them to stress the prayerfulness needed for the task. Be ready to split the children into small groups and have an adult working with each group to prepare the bread. Because of time constraints, we recommend that the children only complete the second half of the preparation process. This will involve them in the kneading and shaping of risen dough as well as putting the stamp on it. Make sure all of the children get a chance to knead the dough. Those who are not kneading can assist by singing church hymns.

Please note there are many different ways to make Prosforo. We offer a recipe in the Family Night: Taking It Home handout (pp. 33–34), but feel free to use the recipe used in your community. Consider inviting people from your parish who make Prosforo to assist. After the children have all washed their hands and are separated into their groups, state the following in your own words:

Now that we are clean, let us begin by all saying the Lord's Prayer together.

We only have a short time together this evening, so we started making the bread before you arrived. To make the bread, we used only 4 simple ingredients. Can anyone guess what some of them were? (*Allow time for answers.*)

We used water, flour, salt, and yeast. Can anyone tell me what yeast does?

Yeast makes the dough rise. This dough has already risen, and we must knead it a bit more before we shape it and put on the seal. Everyone will get a chance to knead the dough. When you are not kneading, you will help the group by praying.

Allow time for the groups to knead and shape their bread.

We are ready for the final step: putting the stamp (or seal) on the bread. I want you to pay close attention to this stamp and what it looks like, as we will be talking about the symbols very soon. Everyone will get a chance to push down on the stamp. When you push, say "Lord, have mercy."

Have each group leader place the stamp on the bread and hold it straight as each child pushes down on the top. Make sure not to lift the stamp until all of the children have pushed down on it. Finally, have the

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group leaders give each child a toothpick, having them poke holes around the side of the bread and the corners of the seal. As you wrap up the session, have someone put the bread in the oven and set a timer.

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

Give the children the handout of the Prosforo seal (see p. 22), and pass around the seal so that they can look at it as you discuss. This discussion can be brought to life if your priest is able to demonstrate what he does with the Prosforo during the preparation of the Holy Gifts, the Proskomidi.

You all did a wonderful job making this special gift for God! Before we rejoin our families, let's look at the seal and talk about what the different symbols represent. Before the Divine Liturgy begins, the priest says special prayers as he prepares the bread for Holy Communion. The priest removes the center square, which is called the Lamb. This is the part that becomes the Body of Christ. Then he removes the large triangle, which represents the 'Theotokos—Jesus' mother—followed by the nine small triangles representing the angels, prophets, apostles, and saints of our Church. Finally, the priest removes pieces for living and dead members of the church whose names have been submitted by family and friends. As the priest prays for all our family and friends, both the living and the dead, we should remember to pray for them during the Liturgy as well. Now we are going to make a list of people we want the priest to pray for.

Pass out blank paper. Have the children write names of people they want the priest to pray for during the Proskomidi. Place the living and deceased in separate columns and mark accordingly. Provide support to younger children who cannot write. After sufficient time has passed, state the following in your own words:

Again, thank you all for making this wonderful gift for God. Remember that this Sunday that your gift will be offered to God. The priest will pray for your family and friends and the bread you helped make will become the Body of Christ—the Bread of Life. We can receive this bread during Holy Communion and join ourselves to Christ.

Close with the following prayer after baking the bread. Write it on a poster for all to see and recite together (if some cannot read, have them repeat it back line by line).

Dear Lord, this bread that we have baked represents each one of us in this family. Through this bread, which will be placed on the Holy altar, we are offering ourselves to You in love. Accept our gift that we humbly offer to You. Make us worthy to receive the greater gift that You will give to us when You consecrate this bread and return it to us as Your precious Body and gift of Eternal Life. Amen.

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THE PROSFORO SEAL



FOOD FOR LIFE

TEENAGERS' BREAK-OUT SESSION

OPENING ACTIVITY: JUNK FOOD JUNKIES

Break the young people into small groups of 4–5 people. Give each group a piece of flip chart paper. Have each person in the group share their top 5 favorite foods. After everyone has gone around, have each group write the foods on the chart in order of their estimated health value.

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

- What were some of your favorite foods? Were they healthy?
- What are the side effects of eating unhealthy food?
- What are the benefits of eating healthy food?
- What are the different parts of a meal?
- What do we eat first? Last?
- Why do we usually not eat dessert first?

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Most of us enjoy eating certain foods that have little health value: desserts, chips, and high fat foods. They have even become staples in some people's diets. When we make these junk foods our primary fuel, we don't give our body the nutrients it needs to function. We may not see the negative effects for years, but they can eventually lead to serious conditions. We need to fill ourselves with healthy food—food that will sustain our lives and give us the energy and nutrients we need to live a healthy life.

BIBLE PASSAGE: JOHN 6:26–27

The following passage is from the Gospel of St. John. Jesus is speaking shortly after He fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish.

... Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.

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

- What is being said in this passage?
- What is “food which perishes”? (*Things of this world that are temporary will perish.*)
- What is “food which endures to everlasting life”? (*Things that bring us closer to God endure.*)
- What does this mean for our lives? (*We must eat spiritual food to be healthy and live forever with God.*)

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Just as with food, we make choices every day about how to fill ourselves with spiritually. There are many things in this world that we can fill ourselves with, but we must work to make sure they are things that feed our souls. It is easy to ingest “spiritual junk food”—it

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may give us immediate gratification—but in the end, feeding our souls with true spiritual food leads us to the ultimate destination: everlasting life.

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

Take two pieces of flip chart paper and write “food which perishes” on one and “food which endures to everlasting life” on the other. Have the group brainstorm for the two categories. Remember under “food which perishes” to emphasize not only things that are harmful to us but also everyday things that might keep us away from God. Once this is completed, state the following in your own words:

We talked about two different kinds of food today: perishable food and spiritual food. Just as we must eat healthy food to be fulfilled physically, we must spiritually feed ourselves in order to be healthy servants of God. One of the spiritual foods we must partake of is the body and blood of Jesus Christ at the sacrament of Holy Communion given during the Divine Liturgy. This sacrament doesn’t begin and end during the Liturgy. Our preparation prior to receiving as well as thanksgiving after receiving are critical steps to this everlasting meal. We should be in a constant state of preparation to receive Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion. In doing this, we fill ourselves up with the “food which endures to everlasting life.” We would like you to take the next five minutes in silence to contemplate this. To help you begin, we are passing out prayers to be read before communion as well as thanksgiving prayers for after communion. Consider what are you filling your body and soul with and how you can allow more room for Christ. We have pens available if you would like to write down your thoughts for your own reflection. If you finish early, we ask that you remain silent until the end of the five minutes.

After five minutes have passed, bring the group back together and close with the following Psalm. Write it on a poster board for all to see and recite it together. Encourage the young people to keep the prayers (consider printing them back to back and laminating them) and use them for preparation for and thanksgiving after communion.

I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.

I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing. —

Psalms 34:1–10

PRAYERS BEFORE COMMUNION

I believe, O Lord, and I confess that You are truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first. I also believe that this is Your sacred Body and this Your precious Blood. Therefore, I pray to You, have mercy on me, and forgive my transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, in word and deed, both known and unknown, and make me worthy to partake of Your sacred Mysteries for the remission of sins and life eternal. Amen.

Behold, I approach for Holy Communion. O Creator, burn me not as I partake; for You are Fire that burns the unworthy; therefore, cleanse me from every stain.

Receive me today, O Son of God, as a partaker of Your Mystical Feast; for I will not speak of the Mystery to Your enemies; I will not kiss You as Judas did, but like the thief I will confess: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom."

Tremble, mortal, beholding the Divine Blood, for it is as a lighted coal burning the unworthy. It is God's Body and deifies and nourishes me. It deifies my soul and wondrously nourishes my mind.

You have smitten me with yearning, O Christ, and with Your Divine Love You have changed me; burn away with spiritual fire my sins, and make me worthy to be filled with the joy of You; that rejoicing in Your goodness, I may magnify Your two presences.

Into the glorious company of Your saints, how shall I, the unworthy, enter? For should I also dare to enter the festal chamber, my robe betrays me for it is not a festal garment, and I shall be bound and cast out by the angels. Cleanse my soul, O Lord, from pollution, and by Your compassion save me.

O merciful Master, Lord Jesus Christ my God, let not these holy Gifts be to me for judgment through my unworthiness, but rather for the purification and sanctification of my soul and body, and as an earnest of the life and kingdom to come. For it is good for me to cleave to God and to place in the Lord hope of my salvation.

Receive me today, O Son of God, as a partaker of Your Mystical Feast; for I will not speak of the Mystery to Your enemies; I will not kiss You as Judas did, but like the thief I will confess: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom."

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PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION

I thank You, O Lord, my God, that You have not rejected me a sinner but have made me worthy to be a partaker of Your holy Gifts. I thank You that You have made me, who am unworthy, worthy to participate in Your sacred and heavenly Gifts. O merciful Master, Who died for us and rose again and bestowed upon us these Your awesome and life-giving Mysteries for the well-being and sanctification of our souls and bodies, grant that these may be to me for the healing of my soul and body, for the averting of everything hostile, for the enlightenment of the eyes of my heart, for peace to my spiritual powers, for faith that makes me not ashamed, for love unfeigned, for the fullness of wisdom, for the fulfillment of Your commandments, for the aid of Your Divine Grace, and for the inheritance of Your Kingdom; that protected by them in Your Holiness I may ever keep Your Grace in my remembrance and never live for myself but for You our Master and Benefactor. That when I have departed from this existence, in the hope of eternal life, I may attain to everlasting rest, where the voices of Your saints that feast are unceasing, and their joy, beholding the ineffable beauty of Your Countenance, is infinite. For You, O Christ our God, are the true joy and the inexpressible gladness of those that love You; and all creation praises You forever. Amen.

O Christ our God and Master, King of all ages, and Creator of all things: I thank You for all the good things that You have bestowed upon me, and for this partaking of Your pure and life-giving Mysteries. Therefore, I beseech You, Who are good and love mankind, keep me under Your protection, and in the shadow of Your wings; and grant me a clear conscience even to my last breath to worthily receive Your holy Gifts, to remission of sins and to life everlasting. For You are the Bread of Life, the Fountain of Holiness, the Giver of all that is good, and to You we ascribe glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to ages of ages. Amen.

O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, may Your holy Body be to me for eternal life and Your precious Blood for the remission of sins. May this Eucharist be to me for joy, health, and gladness; and in Your awesome Second Coming, make me a sinner, worthy to stand at the right hand of Your glory, through the intercessions of Your pure Mother and of all Your saints. Amen.

O all-holy Lady, Theotokos, the light of my darkened soul, my hope, my shelter, my refuge, my consolation and my joy I thank you that you have made me, who am unworthy, worthy to receive the holy Body and precious Blood of your Son. You who gave birth to the true Light, enlighten the spiritual eyes of my heart; you who bore the Fountain of immortality, give life to me who lies dead in sin; you, the compassionate Mother of the merciful God, have mercy on me, and grant me humility and contrition of heart, meekness in my thoughts, and deliverance from the bondage of my vain imaginings. Make me worthy, even to my last breath, to receive without condemnation the sanctification of the Divine Mysteries, for the healing of both my soul and body, and grant to me tears of repentance and confession so that I may chant hymns to you and glorify you all the days of my life; for you are blessed and glorified to all ages. Amen.

***For additional preparatory and thanksgiving prayers for communion,
talk to your parish priest or order
My Daily Orthodox Prayer Book at www.light-n-life.com.***

DAILY BREAD

ADULTS' BREAK-OUT SESSION

OPENING ACTIVITY: DAILY DIETS

Allow five minutes for participants to fill out the Our Daily Schedules handout. State the following in your own words:

Our daily lives are overflowing with constant activity. Amid the craziness of our daily schedules, the church offers us her schedule to fill our lives with spiritual food. Gather into groups of 4–5 and take a look at what the Church gives us to keep our minds focused on God daily. Discuss how you can better integrate the Church's schedule into your everyday routine.

After 5–10 minutes, have the groups briefly summarize their discussions. State the following in your own words:

Filling ourselves with the proper spiritual nourishment is critical to our salvation as well as our family's. Let's take a look at St. Paul's prayer written in his letter to the Ephesians about being "filled with all the fullness of God."

BIBLE PASSAGE: EPHESIANS 3:14–19

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

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

- What is St. Paul praying for in this passage?
- How can we fill ourselves "with all the fullness of God"?
- What does this mean for our lives?

STATE *(Paraphrase in your own words.)*

How we choose to spend our time during the day is critical to both our physical and spiritual health.

In a lifetime, the average American will spend

- six months sitting at stoplights,
- eight months opening junk mail,
- one year looking for misplaced objects,
- two years unsuccessfully returning phone calls,
- four years doing housework,

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- five years waiting in line, and
- six years eating.

When your time in this world is through, how do you want your hours to add up? Take the next five minutes to silently reflect on your schedule. What can you do to make Christ and His Church an important part of your everyday life?

After five minutes have passed, state the following in your own words.

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

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we ask the Lord to fill us with His daily bread every moment of the day—the nourishment that will give us everlasting life. As we close this session, let us pray the Lord's Prayer that He Himself has given us—remembering always that He is truly the Bread of Life.

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

FAMILY NIGHT: TAKING IT HOME

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." —John 6:35

PRAYER BEFORE COMMUNION

O Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, but relying on Your loving-kindness I draw near to Your altar—sick, to the Physician of life; blind, to the Light of eternal brightness; poor, to the Lord of heaven and earth; naked, to the King of Glory; a sheep, to its Shepherd; a creature, to its Creator; desolate, to the loving Comforter; miserable, to the Merciful; a sinner, to the giver of pardon; ungodly, to the justifier;

Asking Your never-ending mercy that it may please You to heal my weakness, to enlighten my blindness, To enrich my poverty, to clothe my nakedness, to bring me back from wanderings, to console my desolation, to reconcile my guiltiness; to give pardon to the sinner, forgiveness to the miserable, life to the lost, justification to the dead; so that I may be enabled to receive You, the Bread of Life, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.
Amen.



MORE SCRIPTURE ON BREAD

... I will rain bread from heaven ...	Exodus 16:4
... satisfy her poor with bread.	Psalms 132:15
... Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it ...	Matthew 26:26

FEATURED ARTICLE: HOLY COMMUNION

'FILLED WITH THE SHEER DELIGHT OF YOU'

How often do you receive Holy Communion? Every week? Once or twice a month? How about once or twice a year?

To receive Holy Communion the usual two or three times per year is certainly good and helpful, but to receive on a more frequent basis is far better! Remember, the nearer one comes to the light, the better he or she sees. The closer one draws nearer to the fire, the warmer one becomes. The nearer one approaches sanctity and holy thoughts, the more saintly one becomes. In the same way, the more often one draws near to God in Holy Communion, the more one will receive enlightenment, comfort, satisfaction, and holiness. If you are worthy of receiving communion two or three times a year, you are certainly worthy of receiving more often!

What stops us from receiving more often? Sometimes it's our own laziness or carelessness by not preparing the correct way, such as fasting regularly from certain

foods or behaviors. Maybe we came in too late on Saturday night and just want to sleep in? Whatever the answer may be, we must all examine our personal lives and ask ourselves one question: "Are we preparing often enough?"

What happens to our bodies if we do not prepare to eat to sustain our physical well-being? We become tired, sluggish, and almost lifeless. Could we survive on eating food only two to three times per year? Of course not!! One must eat daily to maintain a healthy body. When we deprive ourselves of Holy Communion, the spiritual nourishment for maintaining a healthy soul, it has the same effect. We become tired and sluggish in going to church. We drift further and further from God. Our souls become lifeless!

The only clear conclusion is this: preparing to receive more often. Don't wait for special holidays

or occasions. Each Divine Liturgy celebrated is His grand banquet! Come and receive Him often, allowing your soul to feast on the banquet of Christ's precious Body and Blood, shed for all of us.

—Taken from the youth sermons from the Department of Outreach and Evangelism of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, www.outreachgoarch.org. Adapted by Rev. Fr. Nicholas Rafael from a sermon on Holy Communion by Macarius Notaras, 18th-century Archbishop of Corinth.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

I thank You, loving Master, Benefactor of my soul, that on this day You have again made me worthy of Your heavenly and immortal mysteries. Direct my way on the right path. Establish me firmly in Your fear. Guard my life. And make my endeavors safe, through the prayers of the glorious Theotokos and ever Virgin Mary and of all Your saints.
Amen.



FAMILY ACTIVITY: PROSFORO

A very meaningful project for the Orthodox Christian family is to bake a loaf of altar bread and bring it to church for the liturgy. The significance of the bread may be explained as follows:

Jesus is the Bread of Life Who offers Himself for our salvation. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood you have no life in you; he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:53-54).

The altar bread represents Jesus, Who is the Bread of Life. It is baked by someone in the congregation and brought to the priest for each liturgy. You may contact your priest and let him know that your family would like to bake a loaf of altar bread for a certain liturgy.

THE GIFT OF OURSELVES

The Greek word for altar bread is *prosforo*, which means an offering to God. Bread is used as an offering because it represents life. Once consumed it becomes part of us, our flesh and bones. Thus, in presenting the loaf of bread to God, we are, in effect, offering our life to Him. It is the gift of our love.

The priest accepts the gift and places it on the holy altar. This act represents God accepting our gift. It now passes into His possession. God is so pleased with the gift of our life that He transforms it through the Holy Spirit and gives it back to us as His precious Body. Thus, communion with God results. We give ourselves to God, and He in turn gives Himself to us.

STAMPED WITH A SEAL

A special seal is stamped on top of the loaf before it is baked. Your priest will know where you can borrow or purchase such a seal (see end of article). The middle part of the seal are the words ICXC and NIKA. This is a Greek abbreviation for "Jesus Christ con-

quers." Since this is the piece that will be changed into the Body of Christ, it is called the Lamb of God. A large triangular piece is removed from the left of the Lamb of God and placed on the paten. This represents the Virgin Mary, our Lord's mother. Then nine smaller triangular pieces are removed from the seal to commemorate the angels, prophets, apostles and saints of the Church. These are placed on the paten to the right of the Lamb of God. Following this, the priest prays for the living members of the congregation, especially for those whose names have been submitted. As he prays for each name, he cuts a small piece of bread, representing the person prayed for, and places it immediately below Jesus, the Lamb of God. Finally, he removes a piece of bread for each deceased person for whom we have requested prayers. Thus, around the Lamb of God on the paten is gathered the entire Church consisting of the angels, saints, and loved ones in heaven together with members of the local congregation. ALL are alive in God's presences and all constitute the one living Body of Christ.

RECIPE

Preparing Prosforo should be done in a prayerful manner. Have family members take turns reading from the book of Psalms, sing church hymns, or play chant music. Place an icon on the table, light a candle and begin with a prayer. You will need the following:

5 cups flour (sifted) • 1 ½ cups warm water • 1 tsp salt • 2 yeast cakes • 1 religious seal

Dissolve the yeast in warm water. Combine the Salt and Flour. Mix everything in a bowl and knead. Place it in a bowl, cover, and let it rise. When the dough approximately doubles in size, knead again. Divide the dough in half and shape into a smooth ball. Place on floured cake pan (not greased). Put flour on the seal (make sure to shake out any flour that gets stuck in), and stamp the dough by pressing firmly down on the seal. With a toothpick, poke a few holes around the seal. Bake for 30 minutes at 375°.

—Adapted from *Making God Real in the Orthodox Christian Home* by Anthony Coniaris



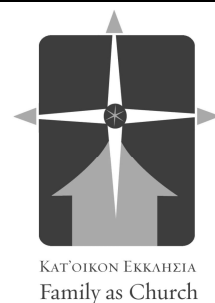
FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Light & Life Publishing
952-925-3888 • www.light-n-life.com
To order the following:

A religious seal for the Prosforo
Making God Real in the Orthodox Christian Home
My Daily Orthodox Prayer Book
(with prayers for Holy Communion)

FAMILY CHALLENGE

Our challenge this month is to learn how to prepare ourselves to receive the Bread of Life—Christ. We challenge you to spend time as a family preparing to receive communion each Sunday. Discuss this challenge as a family and come up with a plan to meet it. Consider the following: How will you seek forgiveness? What will you do if the person isn't ready to forgive you? How will you confess? How will you fast? What will you fast from? How will you pray? How will you forgive others? How will you read the Bible? What further information or resources do you need to carry out this plan? Begin with small steps and build from there. If there are any additional questions, speak with your parish priest to further guide your family. If you're already taking time to prepare for communion as a family, consider what you can do to build on your preparation both as a family and individuals. Also, don't forget to give thanks after receiving the Bread of Life!



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