
OBJECTIVE

To have each family member understand that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and through living in the light of His resurrection we can obtain eternal life.

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.

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 11:1–45, John 20:19–25, and Mark 16:1–8. 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, markers, and tape
- Index cards (*10 per family*)
- Bibles with a concordance (*one per family*)
- Paper icons of the Resurrection (*one per person*)
- Medium sized round rocks (*one per person*)
- Mod Podge in paper cups and paint brushes (*enough for each person*)
- Paint pens
- Items to decorate and affix to the rocks
- *Family Time: Closing Activity* handout (*see p. 127*)
- Pens/pencils and paper
- *Family Night: Taking It Home* handouts (*see pp. 129–130*)

For Children's Break-out Session

- Butcher paper and markers
- *Who Is So Great a God?* handout (*see p. 117*)

For Teenagers' Break-out Session

- *Personal Reflection* handouts (*see pp. 121–122*)
- Bibles with concordance (*one per person*)
- Pens/pencils and paper

For Adults' Break-out Session

- *Adult Small Group* handout (*see p. 125*)
- *Personal Reflection* handout (*see p. 126*)
- Pens/pencils

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 beautiful hymn from the Matins of the Resurrection. It is

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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.

What shall we give in return to the Lord for His gifts? For us He became human and on account of our corrupted nature the Word became flesh and dwelt in our midst. He was the benefactor to those who were ungrateful, the liberator to those in bondage and the sun of righteousness to those who dwell in darkness. He who was incorrupt ascended on the cross, the light descended into Hades, the life suffered death, and He was the resurrection for those who had fallen. Let us sing to Him: Our God, glory to You! —**Resurrection Matins Hymn**

OPENING ACTIVITY: WHAT IS IMPORTANT? (15–20 minutes)

Distribute 10 index cards and several pens or pencils to each family group and proceed by paraphrasing the following in your own words:

Each family has been given 10 blank index cards. On each, we want you to write one of your family's most treasured possessions. It could be anything from something your great grandmother gave you to a football that you play with each night before dinner.

Give families five minutes to fill out their cards before proceeding.

Now let's pretend there are two people who have come to visit you who are in great need. In order to help, you must give each of them one of your most valuable possessions. Discuss as a family which two items you will give. Remove them from the pile and place them in the middle of the table.

After families have finished, proceed.

Now, I want you to shuffle your remaining cards so that you do not know what order they are in. Imagine that someone came and forced you to give up the top three in your stack.

After shuffling their cards, the families should pull the top three in their stack, look at them, and place them in the middle of the table.

I know it is hard living without these things. But you're not going to believe what happens now! A good friend comes by and needs to borrow two of your items. Give your friend the two items that are first in alphabetical order. Just set these to the side because your friend is only borrowing them.

Of the three remaining cards, the most fragile one breaks and is not able to be repaired. Decide which one this is, and place it in the pile. Oh, and also place the borrowed items in the middle pile because your friend just called and said they were lost!

After families have finished, proceed.

You started with the 10 possessions that are most important to your family and now you are left with only two. But you must get rid of one more, so choose the one you will give up.

You have one item left. There are nine cards in the middle of the table representing some of your most valuable possessions which are now gone.

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

- What were some of your valuable possessions?
- How did it feel to lose them?
- Would anyone like to share what was on your final card?
- Given a choice, what would have been your final card?

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Losing something we care about—whether a material possession or a loved one—can make us feel sad and sometimes overwhelmed. We all experience loss in our lives—even heroic people in the Bible and the saints of the Church have experienced loss.

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

- What are some examples of people from the Bible or Saints that experienced loss?
- How did these people overcome their losses?
- In the Bible, Jesus says, “I am the **resurrection** and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25). What do you think He means 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 11:25 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.

“I am the resurrection.” We hear Jesus proclaim this on the Saturday of Lazarus, which begins our journey into Holy Week, the Passion of our Lord. Lazarus had been dead for days when Jesus Christ and His disciples found his sister, Martha, who openly wondered why the Lord hadn’t arrived earlier to save her brother. He tells her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me though He may die, he shall live.” With that, He raised Lazarus from the dead.

We all experience loss to varying degrees throughout life, but Jesus Christ remains the perpetual “life preserver.” There are certainly disappointments, pains, and periods of distress that affect us from time to time, but Jesus Christ reminds us that our belief in Him will lead to an eternal life free of loss. Through His death and resurrection, sin, pain, sorrow, and death are all conquered. Although we still experience these conditions and emotions in this present life, as believers we anticipate Christ’s return. The losses we endure now, in faith, will no longer remain. His resurrection allows our resurrection—not a physical resurrection as with Lazarus, but to a new life restored to perfection as God intended. This is what we will be exploring today—living the resurrection each and every

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day. 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 _____ and the _____. He who _____ in Me, though he may _____, he shall _____."

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—Who Is So Great a God? (pp. 115–117)
- Teenagers' Break-out Session—Roll Away the Rock (pp. 119–122)
- Adults' Break-out Session—Living the Resurrection (pp. 123–126)

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. 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.*)

The significance of Jesus Christ's empty tomb some 2000 years ago still resonates loudly today—and will forever. It is the central event in human history. Our faith as Christians

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absolutely hinges on our belief that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. We view the current life, with all of its joys and heartaches, as temporary. We know physical death awaits us all, but through God's love, what is far more important is our hope to be in Paradise with Him. As we know, Jesus Christ will "come again to judge the living and the dead whose kingdom shall have no end." As we leave here, let us take with us the message of Christ: "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*" (John 10:9).

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.

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WHO IS SO GREAT A GOD?

CHILDREN'S BREAK-OUT SESSION

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

We just learned that Christ is the Resurrection and through Him we gain life. How many of you have been to the midnight Resurrection service? It is quite an exciting service—the darkness, the candles, and then everyone sings, “Christ is risen!” The day after this service we continue to celebrate the Resurrection with another service called the Agape service.

Who can tell me what “agape” mean? *Allow young people to share their answers and then state the following in your own words.*

“Agape” means love. This service is about celebrating the Resurrection of Christ and His great love for all of us. Who does God love? *Allow young people to share their answers and then state the following in your own words.*

God loves everyone in this room, everyone that goes to our church, everyone that lives in our city, in our state, in our country, and the whole world. Does He only love people who are good and believe in Him? *Allow young people to share their answers and then state the following in your own words.*

God loves everyone even if He doesn't like what they do. He created each and every one of us out of love. How can we return this love to Him? *Allow young people to share their answers and then state the following in your own words.*

We return God's love by loving everyone and living the way Jesus taught us to live in the Bible. Remember Jesus died for our sins so that we can live forever with Him in Heaven. The Agape service celebrates the Resurrection and God's love for everyone. During this service there is something very different about the Gospel lesson. Does anyone know what it is? *Allow young people to share their answers and then state the following in your own words.*

The lesson is read in many different languages to show how God loves people of all different parts of the world. Today we are going to learn to chant a hymn from this service. I am going to teach it to you first, then we will discuss it, and then we will make banners about the hymn.

HYMN (*see handout on page 117 for music; consider passing out sheet or writing hymn for all to see*)

Who is so great a God as our God; Thou art the God who workest wonders.

Read: Thou hast made thy power known among the peoples; with thine arm hast thou redeemed thy people.

Who is so great a God as our God; Thou art the God who workest wonders.

Read: And I said: Now have I made a beginning; this change hath been wrought by the right hand of the most High.

Who is so great a God as our God; Thou art the God who workest wonders.

Read: I remembered the works of the Lord; for I will remember thy wonders from the beginning.

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

- What does this hymn mean? *Allow young people to share their answers and then summarize with your own reflection.*
- What are some of the wondrous works that God does? *Allow young people to share their answers and then summarize with your own reflection.*

SMALL GROUP MURALS

Break the young people into groups of 4–5 and give each group crayons and a banner. Ask them to make a banner of how great God is. Give them about 10 minutes to work. When they are done, have them share with the whole group.

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Thank you for sharing your wonderful murals. They all really show how great God is. Before we leave I would like to read you one more thing that shows us how great God is. It is from the Gospel of John, and it is the reading you will hear when you attend the Agape service.

BIBLE READING: JOHN 20:19–25

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

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

How does this story show how great God is?

Allow time for children to share answers and then proceed with the following.

God is so great that He gave us His only Son Jesus who died and was resurrected. He did all of this for us so that we can live forever with Him in heaven if we follow Him. He is so great because He loves us so much! This is how great God is!

Close by singing the hymn one more time.

WHO IS SO GREAT A GOD?

Byzantine Chant, Tone 7 Traditional

Who is so great a God as our God;

6
Thou art the God who work - est won - - - ders.

- VERSE 1: Thou hast made thy power known among the peoples;
with thine arm hast thou redeemed thy people.
- VERSE 2: And I said: Now have I made a beginning;
this change hath been wrought by the right hand of the Most High.
- VERSE 3: I remembered the works of the Lord;
for I will remember thy wonders from the beginning.

11 *Last time*

Who is so great a God as our God;

16
Thou art the God who work - est won - ders.

From the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese (www.antiochian.org).

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ROLL AWAY THE ROCK

TEENAGERS' BREAK-OUT SESSION

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

We just learned that Christ is the Resurrection and through Him we can live forever. We live forever with Christ by living our lives as Christ lived. Right now, we are going to talk about things that keep us from living as such. We want to begin by reading a short part of the passage that is read at the Resurrection Matins. It is from the Gospel of Mark.

BIBLE READING: MARK 16:1–4

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large.

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

- What is happening in this passage?
- Is there anything in this passage that can help you live as Christ lived?

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

At first glance this passage may seem simple—a group of women going to a tomb to anoint the body of the deceased. This was a common practice at that time. When we take a closer look, we see that what they did was anything but ordinary. These women, who we know as the Holy Myrrhbearers, are commemorated as saints in our church in part for how they begin to live their faith on this very day. They boldly set out that morning to do something that most people would have considered both dangerous and useless. Being a follower of Jesus was not something that people were exactly jumping up and proclaiming at that time. His disciples were locked in a room for fear as it says in the twentieth chapter of John—fear that they, too, would be arrested and treated as Jesus was treated. But these women went forth to tend to their Lord. They knew guards were keeping watch at the tomb. Perhaps they wondered if they would be arrested. But these women went forth to tend to their Lord. It probably seemed like a futile task to many; after all, there was a big rock in front of the tomb. They did wonder who would remove it. But these women went forth to tend to their Lord.

How many of us would have gone forth under these circumstances? How many of us would have had the faith to know that the Lord would have rolled away the rock keeping us from Him? How many of us have the faith to turn to Christ to help us roll away the rocks in our lives that our keeping us from Him?

PERSONAL REFLECTION TIME

Pass out the Personal Reflection handout found on pages 121–122.

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Take the next five minutes to reflect on this occurrence and use the following sheet to guide you. Feel free to write answers, but you will not be turning this in—it will only be for your eyes. We encourage you to stay silent even if you finish early.

When the time has passed proceed with the following discussion.

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

- What things prevent us from approaching Christ?
- What qualities did the Myrrhbearers have that allowed them to go to the tomb? (*Write these qualities in a place for all to see.*)
- How can we use their example to draw closer to Christ?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Break young people into groups of 4–5 and give out an Orthodox Study Bible to each. Have each group take one or two words generated from your list of qualities describing the Myrrhbearers and look them up in the concordance to find passages that inspire them. When sufficient time has passed, have each group share their passages and discussion.

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

We need to have the faith of the Myrrhbearers and know that our Father will provide us what we need when we need it. We need to boldly go forth and not let the rocks in our life block us from our Lord. Let me share with you a very short but powerful story.

A Father stood watching as his son tried in vain to move a rock. He tried and tried but was unable to budge it. “Son, are you sure you’re using all your strength?” asked the father. “Of course I am,” said the boy. “But, you haven’t asked me to help,” said the father. —**Unknown Author**

As we go forth, let us remember that our Heavenly Father is there with the strength to help us move the rocks in our lives if only we ask Him. Let us close with the following psalm, which we chant during the Vespers service.

Close with the following prayer:

Lord, I cry out to You; Make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. —
Psalms 141:1–2

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. —Mark 16:1–4

What things are preventing me from approaching Christ?

What qualities did the Myrrhbearers have that allowed them to go to the tomb?

How can I use their example to draw closer to Christ?

LIVING THE RESURRECTION

ADULTS' BREAK-OUT SESSION

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

We have just learned that Christ is the Resurrection and through Him we find life. How do we live in the light of the Resurrection? Let's examine part of a passage that is read at the Resurrection Matins. It is from the Gospel of Mark.

BIBLE PASSAGE: MARK 16:5–8

And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (*Allow all to share and reflect back.*)

Break into small groups of 4–5 people and give them the Small Group Discussion handout found on page 125.

Take the next 5–10 minutes to discuss the following handout as a group. When we gather back together, we would like to hear a summary of your group's discussion.

When sufficient time has passed, have each group report back on their discussion.

STATE (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

The angel tells the women to "not be alarmed." He tells them to "see" where Christ laid but is no longer. Finally, He commands them to "Go, tell." The angel speaks to us today—we should "not be alarmed." This fear will keep us from seeking and serving Christ. We should "see" Christ in everyone we encounter and at every moment of our lives. We should "go, tell" others about His life, not by our words but by our actions.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Pass out the Personal Reflection handout found on page 126 and give everyone five minutes to silently reflect.

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

- What are the fears in life that keep us from the Lord?
- How can we heed the angel's directive to "not be afraid"?
- How can we heed the angel's directive and "see" the Lord in our lives?
- How can we heed the angel's directive and "go, tell" others about the glory of the Resurrection?

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

As we prepare for the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, let us pray to God that we may have the strength, wisdom, and courage to receive the message of the Resurrection in our hearts so that we may proclaim it to the world.

Close with the following prayer:

For this one who was led away as a lamb and who was sacrificed as a sheep, by Himself delivered us from servitude to the world, as from the land of Egypt, and released us from bondage to the devil as from the hand of Pharaoh, and sealed our souls by His own spirit and the members of our bodies by His own blood. This is the one who delivered us from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light, from death into life, from tyranny into an eternal kingdom, and who made us a new priesthood, and a special people forever. Glory to Your holy resurrection, O Lord. —**Melito of Sardis**

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. —Mark 16:5–8

What commission is the angel giving to the Myrrhbearing women?

How should we apply this to our life so that we can live in the Resurrection?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

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CHRIST IS RISEN

BY REV. ANDREW DEMOTSES

The ceremonies of Holy Week are the commemoration of the greatest events of human history; they direct our attention to Christ's cross and death, and finally to his empty tomb and resurrection. The joyful and hope-filled end of Holy Week is remembered in one of the Gospel readings taken from the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew.

There, we see the myrrhbearing women approach the tomb and hear an angel who spoke not only to them but to us as well. The first words spoken by the angel are, "You must not be afraid." With these words we are all reminded that the resurrection destroys our fear of death and replaces it with hope and with God's promise of eternal life. We no longer have reason to fear; Christ, by his own death, has broken the chains by which death and the grave held us as prisoners.

Second, he said, "Come here and see the place where He was lying." We are all invited to examine the empty tomb and see for ourselves the triumph of Christ over our enemy. How do we know that Christ lives? We know because He continues to change lives, and to dwell as a living presence in the hearts of those who accept Him.

Finally, the angel said, "Go quickly now and tell the disciples." The command is to go and tell others what the resurrection means. It means that we who have experienced its joy and who trust in the promise of Christ must share that joy and trust and hope with those who have not yet experienced it. If we want to make Easter truly meaningful, therefore, we cannot merely enjoy it; we must experience it for ourselves, and share it with others as well

—*excerpt from www.goarch.org*

What are the fears in life that keep us from the Lord?

How can we heed the angel's directive to "not be afraid?"

How can we heed the angel's directive and "see" the Lord in our lives?

How can we heed the angel's directive and "go, tell" others about the glory of the Resurrection?

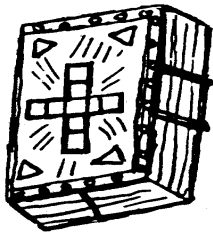
FAMILY NIGHT: TAKING IT HOME

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” —John 11:25

PRAY TOGETHER

What shall we give in return to the Lord for his gifts? For us he became human and on account of our corrupted nature the Word became flesh and dwelt in our midst. He was the benefactor to those who were ungrateful, the liberator to those in bondage, and the sun of righteousness to those who dwell in darkness. He who was incorrupt ascended on the cross, the light descended into Hades, the life suffered death, and he was the resurrection for those who had fallen. Let us sing to him: our God, glory to you!

—Resurrection Matins hymn



MORE ON THE RESURRECTION

<i>According to the Gospel of Matthew</i>	<i>Chapter 28</i>
<i>According to the Gospel of Mark</i>	<i>Chapter 16</i>
<i>According to the Gospel of Luke</i>	<i>Chapter 24</i>
<i>According to the Gospel of John</i>	<i>Chapter 20</i>

PASCHAL HOMILY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

If any man be devout and loveth God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast! If any man be a wise servant, let him rejoicing enter into the joy of his Lord. If any have labored long in fasting, let him now receive his recompense. If any have wrought from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward. If any have come at the third hour, let him with thankfulness keep the feast. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings because he shall in nowise be deprived therefore. If any have delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near, fearing nothing. And if any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, let him, also, be not alarmed at his tardiness.

For the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first. He giveth rest unto him who cometh at the eleventh hour, even as unto him who hath wrought from the first hour. And He showeth mercy upon the last, and careth for the first; and to the one He giveth, and upon the other He bestoweth gifts. And He both accepteth the deeds, and welcometh the intention, and honoreth the acts, and praises the offering.

Wherefore, enter ye all into

the joy of your Lord; receive your reward, both the first, and likewise the second. You rich and poor together, hold high festival! You sober and you heedless, honor the day! Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast. The table is full-laden; feast ye all sumptuously. The calf is fattened; let no one go hungry away. Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness.

Let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal Kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shown forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it.

By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was embittered when it encountered Thee in the lower regions.

It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was



embittered, for it was fettered in chains.

It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is thy sting?
O Hell, where is thy victory?

Christ is risen, and thou art overthrown! Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen! Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice! Christ is risen, and life reigns! Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages.

Amen.

FAMILY ACTIVITY: DIANA'S PASCHA STORY COOKIES

To Be Made the Evening Before Pascha

Items Needed

1 cup whole pecans • 1 tsp vinegar
3 egg whites • pinch of salt
1 cup sugar • mixing bowl
plastic zipper bag • wooden spoon
wax paper • cookie sheet
tape • Bible

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 300° F.
2. Place pecans in zipper bag and let children beat them with the wooden spoon to break into small pieces. Explain that after Jesus was arrested the Roman soldiers beat Him. Read John 19:1-3.
3. Let each child smell the vinegar. Put 1 teaspoon of vinegar into mixing bowl. Explain that when Jesus was on the Cross, He became thirsty. He was given vinegar to drink. Read John 19:28-30.
4. Add egg whites to the vinegar. Eggs represent life. Explain that Jesus gave His life to give us life. Read John 10:10-11.
5. Sprinkle a little salt into each child's hand. Let them taste it and brush the rest into the bowl. Explain that this represents the salty tears shed by Jesus's followers and the bitterness of our own sin. Read Luke 23:27.
6. So far the ingredients are not very appetizing. Add 1 cup sugar. Explain that the sweetest part of the story is that Jesus died because He loves us. He wants us to know Him and to belong to Him. Read Psalm 34:8 and John 3:16.
7. Beat with a mixer on high speed for 12 to 15 minutes until stiff peaks form. Explain that the color white represents the purity in God's eyes of those who sins have been cleansed by Jesus. Read Isaiah 1:16 and John 3:16. Fold in the broken nuts. Drop the mixture by teaspoons onto the cookie sheet covered with wax paper. Explain that each mound represents the rocky tomb where Jesus' body was laid. Read Matthew 27:57-60.
8. Put the cookie sheet in the oven. Close the door and turn the oven off. Give each child a piece of tape, and seal the oven door. Explain that Jesus's tomb was sealed. Read Matthew 27:65-66.
9. Go to bed! Explain that they may feel sad to leave the cookies in the oven overnight. Jesus' followers were in despair when the tomb was sealed. Read John 16:20 and John 16:22.
10. On Pascha/Easter morning, or when you return from the midnight service, open the oven and give everyone a cookie. Notice the cracked surface and take a bite. The cookies are hollow! One the first Pascha/Easter, Jesus's followers were amazed to find the tomb open and empty. Read Matthew 28:1-9.

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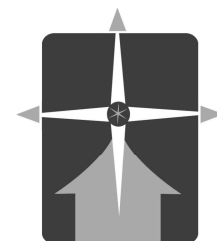
Director of Religious Education, Metropolis of Pittsburgh

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- *The Passion of Christ* by Veselin Kesich, published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press (www.svspress.com).
- *God Speaks from the Cross* by Fr. Anthony Coniaris, published by Light and Life Publishing (www.light-n-life.com).
- *Living in the Light of the Resurrection* by Philip Mamalakis, published in the March/April 2007 edition of the Orthodox Observer (www.observer.goarch.org).

FAMILY CHALLENGE

As we approach Pascha, take some time to look ahead to Holy Week and all of the rich services the Church offers. If you don't have a Holy Week service book, speak with your parish priest about purchasing books for family members to follow along in prayer. Next, look at the schedule for services (if it isn't in your bulletin or your parish Web site yet, check with your church office) and decide as a family which services you will attend. Make a commitment to take some time to prepare for each service. To do this, visit www.goarch.org. In the "Our Faith" section, click on the "Great Lent and Holy Pascha" link. There are several wonderful articles that explain the days of Holy Week.



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