
GOYA

Holy Friday

Retreat

A **Y²A^M** Project

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
Youth & Young Adult Ministries

Identifying the Self-Emptying Love of Christ

Lesson plans for Holy Friday Retreat 2019

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SESSION ONE

GOAL:

To learn about self-offering (kenosis).

OBJECTIVE:

To identify how Christ emptied Himself out of love for us.

ESTIMATED DURATION:

50 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. blank paper for each participant
2. pen for each participant
3. one water pitcher

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Your cross, O Lord, is life and resurrection to your people, and putting our trust in it, we praise you, our crucified God. Have Mercy on us.

Amen.

ICEBREAKER:

5 minutes

Tell us your name and your favorite thing to empty or find empty and why?

ACTIVITY 1: PITCHER ACTIVITY

10 minutes

Pass out a piece of paper and a pen to each participant. Ask participants to think about something in their life that is distracting them or worrying them in this moment and write that down on the paper. Next, ask participants to them to fold these papers and place them into the pitcher.

Note to Youth Worker: We would like a clean and empty mind and heart for Christ to dwell in. Sometimes our distractions or worries can obstruct that goal. When our minds and hearts are full of fear and worry, there is no room for God. The pitcher represents us in this activity. Through silence we can empty our minds to allow God to dwell in us.

ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSSION

10 minutes

Ask participants to the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

- Right now, where is your attention and what is keeping Christ out of the situation?
- Christ is knocking at the door of your heart, what can you do to let Him in?
- What is self-emptying? What does it sound like it could mean?
- How can you begin to be a servant to God and turn your worry and pain over to Him?
- How can God help us to empty the pitcher (our hearts and minds) so that we make room for Him?

ACTIVITY 3: SCRIPTURE

15 minutes

Have 2 volunteers read the following passage and then ask participants the discussion questions below, facilitating a discussion.

Philippians 2:1-11

1 “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,

2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

3 Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves.

4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

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Debrief:

- Reading this scripture line by line, what is this passage explaining to us?
- What verse or line is kenosis or emptying found?
- What is kenosis or self-emptying?
- How did Christ empty Himself and why did He do that?
- How can we begin to follow His example?
- Do you want to become a servant like Christ did? How could you begin to do that?

Conclusion: wrap-up & commitment

10 minutes

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new idea they learned during the session. The session leader should go first.

CLOSING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

O Christ our God who at all times and at every hour are worshiped and glorified both in heaven and on earth, who are long in patience, great in mercy and compassion, who love the righteous and show mercy to sinners, who call all to salvation through the promise of good things to come; receive our prayers at the present time. Direct our lives according to your commandments. Sanctify our souls. Purify our bodies. Set our minds aright. Cleanse our thoughts and deliver us from all sorrow, evil and distress.

Surround us with your holy angels, that guarded and guided by them, we may arrive at the oneness of the faith and the comprehension of your ineffable glory. For you are blessed to the ages of ages.

Amen.

SESSION TWO

GOAL:

To learn about self-offering of the Theotokos.

OBJECTIVE:

To identify ways that the Theotokos emptied herself.

ESTIMATED DURATION:

50 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. blank paper for each participant
2. pen for each participant
3. copies of the Lamentations printed on paper
(enough for each participant)

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“Come, let us all extol Him who was crucified for us. Mary beheld Him on the Cross and she said, ‘Though You endure the Cross, You are my Son and my God.’”

Amen.

Kontakion from the Hours of Holy Friday morning

ICEBREAKER:

5 minutes

Tell us your name and a Holy Week tradition you and your family have. If you don't have one what is your favorite Holy Week service and why?

ACTIVITY 1: LAMENTATIONS OF HOLY FRIDAY NIGHT

15 minutes

Pass out a copy of the lamentation stanzas to each participant. Ask participants to work in groups of 2 or 3 and read through the verses, answering the following question below.

ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSSION

10 minutes

Ask participants the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

- What are the lamentations?
- Who is lamenting and why?
- What types of themes or connections did you find while reading the verses?
- Where was joy found? Sorrow found?
- What stood out to you while reading these?
- How empty must the Theotokos have felt at this moment?
- Have you felt sad and empty like this? Could you share that moment?

The Lamentations of Holy Friday Night

In the grave they laid You,
O My Life and My Christ
And the armies of the Angels was so amazed,
As they sang the praise of Your love!

O my sweet Lord Jesus
My salvation, my light
How are You now by a grave and its darkness hid?
How unspeakable the mystery of Your Love!

Gone the Light the world knew.
Gone the Light that was mine.
O my Jesus, You are all of my heart's desire;
So the Virgin spoke lamenting at Your grave.

Who will give me water,
For the tears I must weep?
So the maiden wed to God cried with loud lament;
That for my sweet Jesus I may rightly mourn.

All we call You blessed,
Theotokos, most pure.
And with faithful hearts we honor the burial
Suffered three days by Your Son who is our God.

How O life can You die?
In a grave how can You dwell?
For the proud domain of death You destroy now
And the dead of hades makes You to rise.

Now we magnify You,
O Lord Jesus our King.
And we venerate Your passion and burial,
For therewith has You delivered us from death.

ACTIVITY 3: SCRIPTURE

15 minutes

Have 2 volunteers read the following passage and then ask participants the discussion questions below, facilitating a discussion.

Luke 1:26-38

26 “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, “Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

34 And Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be, since I have no husband?” 35 And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

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36 And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.” 38 And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

Debrief:

- Who are the characters in this passage and what are their roles?
- The Theotokos was afraid, but what did she choose to do?
- How could we be like the Theotokos when we are afraid?
- How does the Theotokos empty herself to do the will of God?
- How did the Theotokos remain a servant of God, even at this very painful time?
- How can we imitate the Theotokos in our own lives?

Conclusion: wrap-up & commitment

10 minutes

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new idea they learned during the session. The session leader should go first.

CLOSING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“Come, let us all extol Him who was crucified for us. Mary beheld Him on the Cross and she said, “Though You endure the Cross, You are my Son and my God.”

Amen.

Kontakion from the Hours of Holy Friday morning

SESSION THREE

GOAL:

To learn about the prayer of Saint Ephraim.

OBJECTIVE:

To identify a way to self-empty in order to serve our neighbor.

ESTIMATED DURATION:

50 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. blank paper for each participant
2. pen for each participant
3. copies of the prayer of St. Ephraim printed on paper
(enough for each participant)

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Your cross, O Lord, is life and resurrection to your people, and putting our trust in it, we praise you, our crucified God. Have Mercy on us.

Amen.

ICEBREAKER:

5 minutes

Tell us your name and your favorite quality or virtue that you possess.

ACTIVITY 1: PRAYER OF SAINT EPHRAIM

10 minutes

Pass out a copy of the prayer of Saint Ephraim to each participant. Ask for 3 volunteers to read the prayer one at a time. Next, pass out blank paper and pens to each participant. Ask each participant to write about each of the vices and virtues listed in the prayer and how they interact with each of them in their daily lives.

Prayer of Saint Ephraim:

O Lord and Master of my life!

*Take from me the spirit of sloth,
faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk.*

*But give rather the spirit of self-control,
humility, patience, and love to Your servant.*

*Yea, Lord and King! Grant me to see my own errors
and not to judge my brother,
for You are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.*

ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSSION

10 minutes

Ask participants the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

- What is this prayer about?
- When have you heard this prayer?
- What are the 4 vices listed and what do they mean?
- What are the 4 virtues and what do they mean to you?
- How could we begin to empty ourselves of the vices in our life?
- How can we practice and grow these virtues to keep them in our hearts?

ACTIVITY 3: EMPTYING BEFORE THE CROSS

20 minutes

Bring participants into the church and ask them to sit in the pew closest to Christ Crucified on the Cross.

Pass out paper and pens to each participant. Ask participants to reflect back to the pitcher activity and write down fears, worries, pains, failures, misfortunes, mistakes, something negative that was done to them or trespasses they may have committed against their neighbor.

Ask them leave these notes by the foot of the Cross, to be given up to God. (Assure that they will not be read, and discard them after the activity.) Pray the following prayer with participants:

CLOSING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“Almighty God, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, come to my help and deliver me from this difficulty that besets me. I believe Lord, that all trials of life are under Your care and that all things work for the good of those who love You. Take away from me fear, anxiety and distress. Help me to face and endure my difficulty with faith, courage and wisdom. Grant that this trial may bring me closer to You for You are my rock and refuge, my comfort and hope, my delight and joy. I trust in Your love and compassion. Blessed is Your name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever.”

Amen.

Orthodox prayer in times of need

RETREAT SCHEDULE

HOLY FRIDAY

9:00am	Royal Hours
10:30am	Snack and Intro
11:00am	Session 1
11:50am	Break
12:00pm	Session 2
1:00pm	Lenten Lunch
1:45pm	Activity
3:00pm	Vespers Service