



JOY

Y²AM

Ministry Plan

2019-20

Finding Christ
Through Gratitude (January 2020)



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LEARNING SESSION ONE

JANUARY 2020

Finding Christ Through Gratitude

MONTH:

January 2020

GOAL:

To learn about gratitude

OBJECTIVE:

To identify moments when they feel God is working in their lives and show gratitude

ESTIMATED DURATION:

45 minutes

LEARNING SESSION:
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SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. blank paper for each participant
2. pen for each participant
3. copies of the Akathist of Thanksgiving:
[http://www.saintjonah.org/services/
thanksgiving.htm](http://www.saintjonah.org/services/thanksgiving.htm)

OPENING PRAYER

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

Lord, we want to help You make the world a place where everybody loves You, and we all love each other. Help us to keep our attention on You and Your will for us. Help us to avoid getting distracted by the things that lead us away from You. Have mercy on us, Lord, and keep us always close to You.

Amen.

LEARNING SESSION:
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ICEBREAKER:

10 minutes

Tell us your name, and what comes to your mind when you hear the name Lazarus.

Remember:

It's always helpful to start with an activity to help participants relax and allow community to build. Early in the session, focus primarily on getting participants to open their hearts and connect with what's happening in the group. This is an opportunity to encourage participants to share their honest opinions and thoughts, as well as listen to those of others. Take this time to connect with what's important to them, and to understand what they've connected with.

ACTIVITY 1: PRAY THE AKATHIST

10 minutes

Pray this Akathist together by having each participant read each verse, one-by-one, or break participants into small break-out groups, depending on how many Youth Workers are present to facilitate. Give each group a few verses of the akathist to read, and discuss with the following questions below.

Glory to Thee for the Feast Day of life

Glory to Thee for the perfume of lilies and roses

Glory to Thee for each different taste of berry and fruit

Glory to Thee for the sparkling silver of early morning dew

Glory to Thee for the joy of dawn's awakening

Glory to Thee for the new life each day brings

Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age

Debrief:

- What are some of the things Fr. Gregory is thankful for?
- How is Fr. Gregory showing his gratitude?
- Are you thankful for these small things in life?
- How can we sometimes take for granted the small things?

ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSSION

10 minutes

Pass out a piece of construction paper, a few pieces of lined/computer paper, and a pen to each participant. Ask each participant fold their papers in half to create a booklet with the construction paper forming the cover. Have them to write their name on the front. Tell participants that this is their gratitude journal. Encourage them to write or draw one thing they are grateful for each day before bed.

Note: If you have money in your budget, purchase gratitude journals and pass them out to participants.

ACTIVITY 3: SCRIPTURE

10 minutes

John 11:1-44

1 “Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.” 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” 8 “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?” 9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world’s light. 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.” 11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.” 12 His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. 14 So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

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16 Then Thomas said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” 17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles[b] from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” 23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” 27 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” 28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. 32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would

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not have died.” 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” 37 But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” 38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” 40 **Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”** 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

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Debrief:

- Who are the characters in this passage and what are their roles?
- What is this story about?
- What did Jesus experience in verse 35? Have you ever experienced that?
- What is the importance of verse 41?
- How could it be possible to be grateful at a very sad time like this?
- How can we show gratitude in sad times when we may be angry?

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CONCLUSION: WRAP-UP

5 minutes

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new idea they learned during the session.

CLOSING PRAYER

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

“Thank You, Lord, for Your strength and guidance in my work. You are the fulfillment of all good things. Fill also my soul with joy and gladness, that I may praise You always.”

Amen.

LEARNING SESSION TWO

JANUARY 2020

Finding Christ Through Gratitude

MONTH:

January 2020

GOAL:

To learn about gratitude

OBJECTIVE:

To identify moments of gratitude in their lives

ESTIMATED DURATION:

45 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. Divine Liturgy books
2. blank paper for each participant
3. pen for each participant
4. a few copies of the Saint story below
5. a few copies of the debrief questions for the facilitator

OPENING PRAYER

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

“Christ our Lord, You gave sight to the blind man and wisdom to simple fishermen. Give to our minds the grace of the Holy Spirit. We ask for understanding to learn and choose to do good works to glorify You.”

Amen.

LEARNING SESSION:
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ICEBREAKER:

10 minutes

Tell us your name, and a time when you had to be patient.

Remember:

It's always helpful to start with an activity to help participants relax and allow community to build. Early in the session, focus primarily on getting participants to open their hearts and connect with what's happening in the group. This is an opportunity to encourage participants to share their honest opinions and thoughts, as well as listen to those of others. Take this time to connect with what's important to them, and to understand what they've connected with.

ACTIVITY 1: SAINT STORY

10 minutes

Break up the large group into three small groups. Give each group a copy of the story of Saint Joachim and Anna and the debrief questions.

<http://www.pravmir.com/sts-joachim-anna-story-great-faithfulness-love/>

Instruct groups to read the story and work together to answer the questions. After a few minutes, have the groups come back together into one and have each group share their answers.

Saint Joachim and Anna

(story adapted below for JOY age readers)

Joachim and Anna were an ordinary couple, warm and loving, but their life together wasn't perfect. They had no children. In their culture and in that place and time, this was more than a heartache; it was shameful, a sign that they had done something to earn God's punishment. Family and children were thought to be part of God's divine blessing and plan; if you couldn't or didn't have children, something must be wrong with you.

The tradition of the Church tells the story of the great faithfulness and love of Joachim and Anna. In many ways, they were considered blessed: for by God's mercy, they had plenty of money. They offered one third of their wealth to the work of the Temple and its priests; one third to the needs of the poor; and they cared for themselves with the

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remaining third. One might say that they had everything – except the joy of children.

So it was not strange for Joachim to go to the Temple with gifts and offerings – he always gave to the work of God, and he always prayed for the blessing of a child. But on one of his visits he was turned away by someone who asked him: How can a childless man be worthy to come before God? Confused and ashamed, Joachim went off to be alone in the wilderness and pour out his heart to God.

His faithful wife Anna had no idea what had happened. All she knew was that she was completely alone, a childless widow. She went into mourning for her absent husband, and from her broken heart escaped a prayer that reached the heavens: “O God of our fathers, bless me.”

Just as Joachim and Anna had given up, God sent his angel to tell them of His mercy and love, and that after waiting with faith and hope, their prayers would be answered: they would have a child.

And so a wonderful thing happened for Joachim and Anna, a wonderful thing for all of us. A child was born, a little girl. Today we address her as Mary. And we call her blessed, because she gave birth to the Savior, to Jesus Christ – to God in the flesh.

When we look at an icon of the Virgin Mary—we see something that is hard to explain: When human prayers come together with God’s grace, miracles happen. We cannot make them happen. But when we live in cooperation with God, miracles happen, even though the eyes of the world see nothing special.

The infant Mary was a miracle. But she was not magical. She did not enter the world ready-made for her role as the Virgin Mother. The work of Joachim and Anna in God’s plan of salvation did not end when she was born. They were called to be her parents, to prepare her to become an adult—through instruction and patience, by word and example.

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This, too, is part of the greatest story ever told, that the mother of God had parents who were role models of love and self-sacrifice, of perseverance and prayer.

When we hear the story of the Angel Gabriel telling the Virgin Mary that she would give birth to Jesus, and hear her song of praise to God, we hear the voice of Saint Anna, singing psalms of God's praise to baby Mary. When we hear the story of the Cross and see the Virgin Mary standing watch as her Son gives his life—we recognize the strength of Saint Anna, saying goodbye to her only child at the end of every visit to the Temple, staying strong even while her heart breaks. Without the motherly example of Saint Anna, who would the angel Gabriel have to hail as the one full of grace? God has opened the gates of Heaven to us as a family, a community of faith. We cannot grow in our Christian faith without the love of others — and especially of our families. When we tell the story of Joachim and Anna, this is the point: disciples are not mass-produced; saints are handmade, one at a time. That was true for the Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, through the parenting of Joachim and Anna. And it is true for us today.

Debrief:

- What is this story about?
- What can we learn from the lives of Saints Joachim and Anna?
- How can you see patience and gratitude in the story?
- How do the Saints show gratitude and thanksgiving to God?
- How can we follow the example of St. Anna and practice faithfulness and gratitude in our lives even when we are not receiving exactly what we want?

ACTIVITY 2: DIVINE LITURGY

10 minutes

Read the following lines from the Divine Liturgy and then ask participants the questions below and facilitate a discussion:

“We give thanks to You, Master Who loves mankind, benefactor of our souls, that even on this very day You have made us worthy of Your heavenly and immortal Mysteries. Make straight our path, fortify us in Your fear, guard our life, make secure our steps, through the prayers and supplications of the glorious Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary and of all Your saints.”

Debrief:

- When do we hear this prayer in the Liturgy?
- Why are we giving thanks?
- Have we thought to be thankful after we receive Communion? Why or why not?
- Have we thought to be thankful to the Theotokos for always being near us and listening to our prayers?
- As we leave Church, how are we able to take this moment of gratitude for receiving Communion and transform that into living a life of giving thanks in all things?

ACTIVITY 3: PRACTICE

10 minutes

Pray with the group for a few minutes. Pray the Trisagion Prayer, followed by the Lord's Prayer, or any other prayer that you think would be helpful for your group.

Ask participants to sit quietly and practice stillness for two to four minutes.

Next, ask participants to think about their day and create a short list of times when they may not have felt happy or joyful, but times when they could have given thanks to God anyway.

Debrief:

- Can you think of times when you could have given thanks to God?
- What makes it hard to give thanks when you are angry or sad?
- How can we begin to give thanks to God in all things?

CONCLUSION: WRAP-UP & COMMITMENT

5 minutes

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new idea they learned during the session.

CLOSING PRAYER

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

“O Lord, You who steadied the hand of Peter as he began to sink on the stormy sea, if you are with me, no one is against me. Grant to me the shield of faith and the mighty armor of the Holy Spirit to protect me and guide me to do Your will. The future I put into Your hands, O Lord, and I follow You to a life in Christ.”

Amen.