



JOY

Y²AM

Ministry Plan

2019-20

Finding Christ
Through Worship (April 2020)



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LEARNING SESSION ONE

APRIL 2020

Finding Christ Through Worship

MONTH:

April 2020

GOAL:

To learn about worship

OBJECTIVE:

To identify who they worship

ESTIMATED DURATION:

45 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. blank paper for each participant
2. pen for each participant
3. scissors
4. glue
5. construction paper
6. magazines for collage

OPENING PRAYER

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

Lord, allow us “to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice,” one that is, “holy and acceptable to God for this is Your true and proper worship.” Allow us “not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of our minds.” So that we may be able to “test and prove what is God’s will, His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Amen.

(a passage from Romans 12:1-2)

LEARNING SESSION:
JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

ICEBREAKER:

10 minutes

Tell us your name, and your favorite idol.

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: COLLAGE

10 minutes

Pass out magazines, scissors, glue and construction paper to each participant. Ask participants to find pictures or words that describe themselves. Ask them to cut those out and glue them to the construction paper. Ask participants to share what they created (give each participant 30-60 seconds, depending on the size of the group) and ask the following questions:

Debrief:

- What is the most important part of this collage?
- What are the most important things in your life?
- What does this say about the person you are or who you want to be?
- What is the most important image or word on your collage?
- Is this how you want others to see you?
- Is this collage true to you?
- If you could only choose one image on the collage to represent you, what would it be?

LEARNING SESSION:
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ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSSION

10 minutes

Pass out a piece of paper and a pen to each participant. Read the following quote:

“A person will worship something, have no doubt about that...That which dominates our imaginations and thoughts will determine our lives, and our character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ask participants to write about what the quote means to them. After a few minutes of writing, ask the following questions and facilitate a discussion.

Debrief:

- What do you spend most of your time doing?
- What do you waste your time doing?
- What do you wish you could do more of?
- What is the connection between who you are and who or what we choose to worship?

Break up participants into small groups, depending on how many Youth Workers are present to facilitate the discussion. Read the following article to participants.

LEARNING SESSION: JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

***Worship in the Church* - <https://www.goarch.org/-/worship>**

Worship is an experience which involves the entire Church. When each of us comes together for Worship, we do so as members of a Church which transcends the boundaries of society, of time, and of space. Although we gather at a particular moment and at a particular place, our actions reach beyond the parish, into the very Kingdom of God. We worship in the company of both the living and the departed faithful.

There are two dimensions to Orthodox Worship which are reflected throughout the many Services of the Church. First, Worship is a manifestation of God's presence and action in the midst of His people. It is God who gathers His scattered people together, and it is He who reveals Himself as we enter into His presence. The Worship of the Orthodox Church very vividly expresses the truth that God dwells among His people and that we are created to share in His life. Second, Worship is our corporate response of thanksgiving to the presence of God and a remembrance of His saving actions - especially the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Orthodox Worship is centered upon God. He has acted in history, and He continues to act through the Holy Spirit. We are mindful of His actions and we respond to His love with praise and thanksgiving. In so doing we come closer to God.

Ask participants the following questions, **facilitating a discussion.**

- What is worship?
- What makes worship so important?
- What or who do you worship (inside or outside of Church)?

ACTIVITY 3: SCRIPTURE

10 minutes

Matthew 28: 1-10

“1 Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you.” 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Hail!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

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Debrief:

- Who are the characters in this passage and what are their roles?
- What did the women go to do on this Sunday morning?
- How do the women choose to worship?
- How did the women worship without being in Church for service?
- What could be some connections between going to worship and the call to not be afraid?
- When the women encountered Jesus they worshipped Him; why do you think that was their reaction?
- What was your thinking about worship before the session?
- Did that change? How or how not?

LEARNING SESSION:
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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

APRIL 2020

Finding Christ Through Worship

MONTH:

April 2020

GOAL:

To learn about worship

OBJECTIVE:

To identify ways to worship with awareness and

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
6. copies of the small Paraklesis

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:
JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

ICEBREAKER:

10 minutes

Tell us your name, your favorite place to worship and why.

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.

LEARNING SESSION:
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ACTIVITY 1: SAINT STORY

10 minutes

Break up the large group into three small groups based on their answer to the icebreaker question. Give each group a copy of the story of Saint Anthony and the debrief questions.

<https://oca.org/saints/lives/2015/01/17/100216-venerable-and-god-bearing-father-anthony-the-great>

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 Anthony

(story adapted below for JOY age readers:)

Saint Anthony the Great is known as the Father of monasticism. He was born in Egypt in the year 251 to pious Christian parents. Anthony was a serious child, respectful and obedient. He loved to attend church services, and he listened to the Holy Scripture so attentively that he remembered what he heard all his life.

When Saint Anthony was about twenty years old, he lost his parents; he was then responsible for the care of his younger sister. Going to church about six months after their death, he heard the Gospel passage where Christ speaks to the rich young man: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me” (Mt.19:21). Anthony felt that these words applied to him. Therefore, he sold the property that he received after the death of his parents, distributed the money to the poor, and left his sister in the care of pious virgins in a convent.

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Leaving his parental home, Saint Anthony began his ascetical life in a hut not far from his village. By working with his hands, he was able to earn his livelihood and also alms for the poor. Sometimes, the holy youth also visited other ascetics living in the area, and from each he sought direction and benefit.

In this period of his life Saint Anthony endured terrible temptations from the devil. The Enemy troubled the young ascetic with thoughts of his former life, doubts about his chosen path, concern for his sister, and tempted Anthony with lewd thoughts and carnal feelings. But the saint extinguished that fire by meditating on Christ and by thinking of eternal punishment, thereby overcoming the devil.

Realizing that the devil would undoubtedly attack him in another manner, Saint Anthony prayed and intensified his efforts. He prayed that the Lord would show him the path of salvation, and he was granted a vision. The ascetic beheld a man, who by turns alternately finished a prayer, and then began to work. This was an angel, which the Lord had sent to instruct His chosen one.

Saint Anthony tried to accustom himself to a stricter way of life. He partook of food only after sunset, he spent all night praying until dawn. Soon he slept only every third day. But the devil would not cease his tricks, and trying to scare the monk, he appeared under the guise of monstrous phantoms. The saint however protected himself with the Life-Creating Cross. Finally the Enemy appeared to him in the guise of a frightful-looking child, and hypocritically declaring himself beaten, thought he could tempt the saint into vanity and pride. The saint, however, vanquished the Enemy with prayer.

For even greater solitude, Saint Anthony moved farther away from the village, into a graveyard. He asked a friend to bring him a little bread on designated days, then shut himself in a tomb. There the devils pounced upon the saint intending to kill him, and inflicted terrible wounds upon him. By the providence of the Lord, Anthony's friend arrived the next day to bring him his food. Seeing him lying on the ground as if dead, he took him back to the village. They thought the saint was dead and prepared for his burial. At midnight, however, Saint Anthony regained consciousness and told his friend to carry him back to the tombs.

Saint Anthony's staunchness was greater than the wiles of the Enemy. Taking the form of ferocious beasts, the devils tried to force the saint to leave that place, but he defeated them by trusting in the Lord. Looking up, the saint saw the roof opening and a ray of light coming down toward him. The demons disappeared and he cried out, "Where have You been, O Merciful Jesus? Why didn't You appear from the very beginning to end my pain?"

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The Lord replied, “I was here, Anthony, but wanted to see your struggle. Now, since you have not yielded, I shall always help you and make your name known throughout all the world.” After this vision Saint Anthony was healed of his wounds and felt stronger than before. He was then thirty-five years of age.

Having gained spiritual experience in his struggle with the devil, Saint Anthony considered going away into the desert to serve the Lord. He asked an Elder, to whom he had turned for guidance at the beginning of his monastic journey, to go into the desert with him. The Elder, while blessing him in the as-yet-unheard-of exploit of being a hermit, decided not to accompany him because of his age.

So Saint Anthony went into the desert alone. The devil tried to hinder him, by placing a large silver disc in his path, then gold, but the saint ignored it and passed by. He found an abandoned fort on the other side of the river and settled there, barricading the entrance with stones. His faithful friend brought him bread twice a year, and there was water inside the fort.

Saint Anthony spent twenty years in complete isolation and constant struggle with the demons, and he finally achieved perfect calm. The saint’s friends removed the stones from the entrance, and they went to Saint Anthony and besought him to take them under his guidance. Soon Saint Anthony’s cell was surrounded by several monasteries, and the saint acted as a father and guide to their inhabitants, giving spiritual instruction to all who came into the desert seeking salvation. He increased the zeal of those who were already monks, and inspired others with a love for the ascetical life. He told them to strive to please the Lord, and not to become faint-hearted in their labors. He also urged them not to fear demonic assaults, but to repel the Enemy by the power of the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord.

Saint Anthony rarely left his desert hermitage, but there were a couple of times when he was called by God to return to the city and serve the faithful there. In the year 311, during a time of fierce persecution, Saint Anthony left the desert and went to Alexandria. He openly ministered to those in prison, was present at the trials and interrogations of the confessors, and accompanied the martyrs to the place of execution.

At the close of the persecution, the saint returned to the desert and continued his ministry. The Lord granted the saint the gift of wonderworking, casting out demons and healing the sick by the power of his prayer. The great crowds of people coming to him disrupted his solitude, however, so he went off still farther, into the inner desert where he settled atop a high elevation. But still the brethren of the monasteries sought him out and asked him to visit their communities.

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Another time Saint Anthony left the desert and arrived in Alexandria to defend the Orthodox Faith against the Manichaeian and Arian heresies. Knowing that the name of Saint Anthony was venerated by all the Church, the Arians had said that he adhered to their heretical teaching. But Saint Anthony publicly denounced Arianism in the presence of the bishop. During his brief stay in Alexandria, he converted a great multitude of pagans to Christ.

People from all walks of life loved the saint and sought his advice. Pagan philosophers once came to Abba Anthony intending to mock him for his lack of education, but by his words he reduced them to silence. Even Emperor Constantine the Great wrote to Saint Anthony. In his reply, he praised the emperor for his belief in Christ, and advised him to remember the future judgment, and to know that Christ is the true King.

Saint Anthony spent eighty-five years as a solitary in the desert. Shortly before his death, he told the brethren that soon he would be taken from them. He instructed them to preserve the Orthodox Faith in its purity, to avoid any association with heretics, and not to be negligent in their monastic struggles. “Strive to be united first with the Lord, and then with the saints, so that after death they may receive you as familiar friends into the everlasting dwellings.”

The saint instructed two of his disciples, who had attended him in the final fifteen years of his life, to bury him in the desert and not in Alexandria. He left one of his monastic mantles to Saint Athanasius of Alexandria, and the other to Saint Serapion of Thmuis. Saint Anthony died peacefully in the year 356, at age 105, and was buried in the desert by his disciples.

Debrief:

- How does this story relate to the theme of worship?
- How can we follow the example of St. Anthony to begin to worship in our busy daily lives?
- When we feel we are alone, what can the story help us remember?
- What is the lesson learned from this story?

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:

*“Again and countless times we fall down before You, and we implore You, O Good One, Who loves mankind: That You, having regarded our prayer, may cleanse our souls and bodies from every defilement of flesh and spirit, and grant to us to stand before Your holy Altar of sacrifice, free of guilt and condemnation. Grant also, O God, to those who pray with us, progress in life, faith, and spiritual understanding. **Grant that they always worship You with awe and love, partake of Your Holy Mysteries without guilt or condemnation, and be deemed worthy of Your celestial Kingdom.**”*

Debrief:

- When is this heard in the Liturgy?
- How can we begin to “worship with awe”?
- What is the connection between worship and awe?
- How could worshipping God with awe help us grow closer to Him?

ACTIVITY 3: PRACTICE WORSHIP

10 minutes

Go into the Church with participants. Pray the service of Paraklesis with the group.

<https://www.goarch.org/-/the-service-of-the-small-paraklesis-intercessory-prayer-to-the-most-holy-theotokos>

If possible, invite your parish priest to lead the worship service. If not, use a reader service. Before the service starts, ask participants to be aware of the presence of God and the Panagia during the service.

Debrief:

- What was that like for you?
- What was going on in your body and mind as you were trying to worship?
- Were you aware of the Panagia the entire time? Why or why not?
- What could you do differently next time to help yourself worship more fully?

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.