

# HOLY SATURDAY AND EASTER (PASCHA)

Magazine pages 14–16

**Christ's resurrection should be a joyful resurrection in our own lives, and we are called to share this joy with others.**

## MATERIALS

- *Journey through Holy Week* zine for each student
- Paper/notebook and writing utensil for each student
- Questions from Step 4 for distribution to small groups

## OBJECTIVES

### Students will:

- **Identify with** emotions of uncertainty, sadness, and joy related to Christ's dwelling in the tomb and freeing humanity to life.
- **Reflect** on the mystery that Christ brought life to death and death to life.
- **Personalize** Christ's resurrection as their own life-giving, joyous miracle.
- **Commit** to ways that they can share this joy with others in their lives.

## INTRODUCTION

This lesson completes the week on the joyous note of Christ's entrance into Hades and freeing all of humanity to eternal life. It includes lessons on Holy Saturday morning, Holy Saturday evening, and into Pascha Sunday, the Agape service. The lesson draws students into the emotions of the people close to Jesus: sadness on the morning between His crucifixion and resurrection, and elation upon discovering that the tomb is empty and He has risen. Students are challenged to "personalize" the resurrection, considering how it can bring life to their own daily experiences. The conclusion then challenges students to share the joy of the resurrection with others through their example, actions, and words.

## Opening Prayer

Lord our God, the source of all wisdom and truth, send down upon us the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of discernment. Enlighten the eyes of our souls with the light of Your knowledge, that we may learn from Your wisdom and grow in virtue, to the glory of Your name. Amen.

\* If you conduct lesson after Easter, sing or say the "Christ is Risen" hymn instead.

## PROCEDURES

### 1. Focusing activity

Ask students:

- What was the best news you've ever heard?

Give them a few minutes to think about this, and to share if they want. Ask follow-up questions like:

- What made this news so exciting?
- Had you been waiting for this news?
- How did you feel when you heard this news, and what did you do when you found out?
- Did you want to keep the news to yourself, or rush out and tell people?

Students may respond that they felt shocked, excited, and joyful, and that they wanted to tell people they knew to share their excitement.

### 2. Name present praxis

Guide students to recognize that moments of joyful news like this are the kinds of things that **give our lives meaning and purpose**. Guide students to realize that these joyful times in our lives help to motivate us to keep going trying our best day after day.

### 3. Reflect on present praxis

Remind students:

- Our uncertainty and hopeful expectation is often an important part of life, leading up to our great joys (such as when parents anticipate the birth of a child, or when you hopefully anticipate results for an accomplishment like making a team, winning a game, getting into a college or program, getting a job, etc.).

Ask students:

- What was it like to wait for this wonderful news to come? How did it feel?

### 4. Access the Christian story and vision

Read pages 14–16.

Explain to the students:

- On Holy Saturday, we are experiencing this kind of anticipation and watchful expectation for the greatest joy of all, Christ's resurrection. We are waiting.
- This is why we have our service in the middle of the night; we go with Christ into the dark tomb in the dark night, and climb out of the tomb with Him in the morning.
- Christ spends three days in the most terrible place—Hades, the place of death—and fills it with life.

The following activity will help students to engage with our Church's experience of these 3 days.

Divide the class into three pairs or three groups of 3–4, and assign each group one of the following questions.

Give them about ten minutes, and have them record their responses on paper; they will share when they are done.

- A. Two Old Testament readings on that day that prophesy Christ's dwelling for three days in the tomb tell about two quite frightening and traumatic events: Jonah in the belly of the whale; and the three youths thrown into a fiery furnace. How is it that both Jonah and the three youths sing prayers of thanksgiving while they are in such scary situations? What do you think they must have been feeling? Why do we remember them in our Church on Holy Saturday, and what do we learn from them?
- B. Look at the icon on page 15. Why do you think this is the icon we often use to commemorate Christ's resurrection? What is important about all the people who are shown,

## HOLY SATURDAY MORNING



**The Empty Tomb**

- It was customary for people to go to a tomb to anoint the body of a loved one for many days after a death. They would anoint the body with fragrant spices and perfumes, then an incense, to hide any odors. The women in this icon are carrying small jars containing those perfumes.
- Imagine what the women felt when they found the tomb open and the grave empty. Read Mark 16:1-7 to find out what they were told.

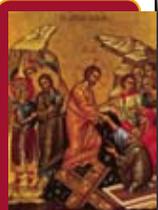
**We remember victory over death**

Christ has been crucified and buried. His eleven remaining disciples—remember that Judas, who betrayed Jesus, has killed himself—are scattered and feeling defeated. Their beloved teacher, Messiah, Lord, and friend has been taken from them. The women in mourning bring myrrh to Christ's tomb, wanting to care for His body by anointing it according to the Jewish custom. And then the most incomprehensible thing happens. What do they find in His tomb? Nothing! No body to anoint. He was dead—they saw Him die. Joseph took His dead body down and put it in a tomb sealed with a rock. How do those women feel? What do they do? They rush to announce this incredible news to anyone and everyone they can.

Now, in our church on Holy Saturday, we know that this is the day in between Christ's crucifixion and His resurrection. Just as on Holy Monday, we are again in a state inside Christ's tomb, a mourning of death is being of everlasting life that His venerate the icon of Christ holding the hands of Adam and Eve and freeing people from death. We remember victory over death when the priest scatters bay leaves or flower petals through the church. (Bay leaves used to be woven into wreaths for Olympic winners, so they symbolize victory.)

In the Old Testament, certain events point to the death, three days in the tomb, and resurrection of Christ. This is why we call them "prophecies"—they remind us that Christ's death and resurrection has always been God's plan of saving salvation. On Holy Saturday, we read these prophecies. One example is the story of Jonah, who was swallowed into the belly of a fish for three days and then spit out. Another is a story from the book of Daniel about three young men who were thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to worship the king. Even in the furnace, they continued praising God and singing, "Praise ye the Lord and exalt him forever." Because of their faithfulness, they were not burned. We sing this hymn on Holy Saturday to connect these young prophets to our Lord's three days in the tomb.

## HOLY SATURDAY EVENING



**The Resurrection**

- Another name for this icon is the Descent into Hades.
- Jesus is pulling Adam out of his tomb. One tradition says that Jesus told Adam, "Arise! Get up!"
- Some Resurrection icons show St. Peter and St. Paul in the tomb, representing death. The broken locks and chains remind us that death destroyed the power of death over human life.

**Come receive the light**

This is the Day of all Days, the Feast of Feasts. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, victorious over death and sin once and for all—for all of us. We come to the church late at night, but it is actually a morning service we will be celebrating. It is the Orthodox and Divine Liturgy celebrating our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead.

The church is darkened to remind us that at this time, Jesus is in the tomb and transforming death to life for all. The light will come with the morning, the day of new and eternal life.

Midnight signals morning, and at this moment, a single light comes forth from the sanctuary. As the priest carries this candle to us, he sings, "Come receive the light from the unwarrior light, and glorify Christ, who has risen from the dead." This is the most joyful moment of our day, week, and year as Orthodox Christians.

"Christ is risen!" the priest proclaims, and we respond, "Truly He is risen!" We sing the hymn of His resurrection many times, to stay in this moment of new life and new joy. The tomb of Christ is pushed to the side, and the cross is empty.

In the Gospel reading, Mary Magdalene and the other women are amazed when they find an empty tomb. Where is He? He was buried. He is alive! The angel tells them, "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" (Mark 16:1-7).

We continue by celebrating the rest of the Divine Liturgy. What we may think to ourselves, "Wow, this sounds just like any other Sunday liturgy." What we must learn here is that Pascha Sunday's liturgy, and every liturgy, is a celebration of the resurrection of Christ. On Pascha, His resurrection grants us eternal life. On this day, our hymns, traditions, and symbols help us glorify and worship Him. From here, we carry Pascha with us, in every liturgy and every moment of our lives. We live in the light of the resurrection and eternal life.

including Adam and Eve, and the onlookers? What is important about the locks and chains?

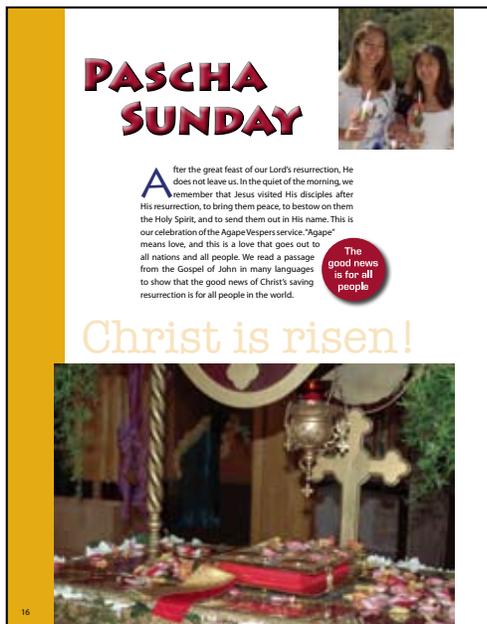
- C. Look at the icon of the empty tomb on page 14, which shows the women finding the tomb empty. Read Mark 16:4–8. How do you think the women felt when they found the tomb empty? When the young man in white told them to go tell the disciples what had happened, why do you think the women did not say anything? What would you have done if you had been there?

Bring students back to the whole group to share the questions they were given, and their responses. Look for answers such as:

- A. Even though the three youths and Jonah must have been frightened, their faith was stronger than their fear. They knew that whatever happened, God was great and they worshiped and trusted in Him. They knew that God would be with them. We remember them on Holy Saturday because the three youths symbolize and foretell Christ's descent into the place of death; even in this

place, their faith is strong. Jonah symbolizes that Christ remains in the place of death for three days; Jonah's faith also was strong. They remind us that in our uncertain and fearful moments, we also should trust and thank God.

- B. We use this icon because it shows an important part of Christ's resurrection—that He rescues and frees all people from death, starting with the very first people, Adam and Eve. The other people in the icon show how amazing this is, and also symbolize that this rescue is intended for all people, including us. The locks and chains are important because they remind us that Christ brings us the freedom that we are meant to have.
- C. The women must have been overwhelmed and shocked because they had expected to do a basic part of their tradition—anoint the dead body with oils. Their shock is probably why they kept the mystery as a secret to themselves. They may have been afraid to share the news—afraid that they wouldn't be believed.



- We are called to go out and share this joy and love of eternal life with the whole world.
- “Going out into the world” can mean reaching out to someone we see often.

Ask students:

- Think about a person you know who needs joy in his or her life.

Give a minute for this, and allow students to share about this person if they would like to.

Make the connection:

- What might you do to help bring joy to that person’s life?

Help students develop appropriate responses.

## 5. Appropriate the story and vision

Explain to the students:

- The resurrection is a continuing miracle, and each of us must make it a personal part of our lives on a daily basis; this is what it means for Christ to live eternally within us, and is going to help us live eternally in Him.

Remind students of the joyful moments they shared at the beginning of the lesson, and explain that we should have such joy when we remember Christ’s resurrection as our own spiritual resurrection.

Ask students:

- How can you let Christ’s resurrection live within you daily?

Give students a chance to share responses, which may include:

Set aside time for prayer; say thank-you to God in all things; exercise patience even when you don’t know what is around the corner.

## 6. Decision for lived response

Refer to page 16, the Agape service on Pascha Sunday. Explain to students:

### CLOSING PRAYER\*

#### Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian

O Lord and Master of my life, deliver me from the spirit of laziness, meddling, vain ambition, and idle talk.

Grant to me, Your servant, the spirit of prudence, humility, patience, and love.

Yes, Lord and King; grant me that I may see my own faults, and to not judge my brothers and sisters, for You are blessed to the ages of ages. Amen.

\* The Church stops using this prayer after Easter. If you conduct lesson after Easter, sing or say the “Christ is Risen” hymn instead.