Lesson 5

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,
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.
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:

- 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.

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.