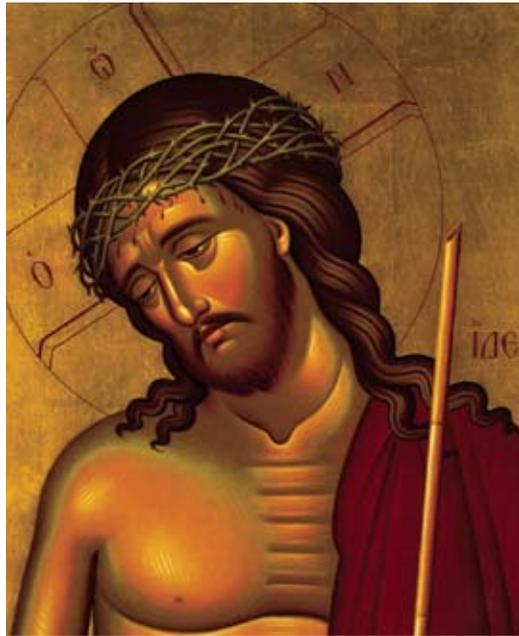


JOURNEY

THROUGH HOLY WEEK



TEACHER GUIDE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide contains five lessons that accompany the *Journey through Holy Week* zine (short for “magazine”). Each lesson revolves around a theme that corresponds to two or three days over the course of Holy Week. Given the time constraints in many parishes and classrooms, the lessons are designed to enable you to teach about the most important parts of Holy Week. However, Holy Week is a rich topic and each lesson encompasses enough content that it can easily be extended over more than one session. But if time is limited, you may want to use some of the parts of the lessons and not others. Read the entire Teacher Guide and then decide how to best use its different elements in your situation.

How can my students and I use *Journey through Holy Week*?

The thematic lessons are closely aligned with the sequence of *Journey through Holy Week* and the progression of the days and services of Holy Week. Each student should have a copy of the zine in class, or one zine for every two students. Ideally, students should read the pages before a class session. However, you will probably need to allot class time to read the material. The passages in *Journey through Holy Week* are short enough so that a student should be able to read 1–2 pages in ten minutes or less. As a last resort, have one or two students read aloud to the class. This should be done to begin step 4 of each lesson, “Access the Christian story and vision.”

What else can I do with the Teacher Guide and the zine?

In addition to the thematic lessons, at the end of the guide you will find suggestions and ideas for using other features in the zine, such as the icons, hymns, and Scripture references in the margins. There are also some supplementary classroom activities at the end of the guide. You can determine whether, when, and how to incorporate them into your class sessions.

Let the questions “hang”

Holy Week is a spiritually challenging time for Orthodox Christians, and it can be a time to ask tough questions. These lessons contain questions and ideas that challenge our children to take ownership of their faith journey and to share with Christ in the story of His last days on earth. The job of teaching and guiding students through these questions is also a challenge. We encourage you to ask them boldly and then allow the questions to “hang” if they need to, for a minute or so, even in silence, until students begin to respond and open up to them. Silence is uncomfortable for teachers. Resist the urge to answer the questions for the students.

You know your students best. We pray that this resource will help you to reach them and inspire their growth in Christ, in whatever ways you find most helpful in this important work.

Shared Christian Praxis

Each lesson follows the five-step “shared Christian praxis” approach. This way of teaching engages students personally with the “Christian story or vision”: the message of Christ and His Church that are at the heart of any religious education lesson we offer. As a method, shared praxis has been



at the fore of religious education training and planning for many years, and we share it with you because you are in the most important position: in the communities, with the children. Each lesson in the Teacher Guide follows this format.

1. Focusing activity

The focusing activity draws the students' attention to the theme of the class session, using a story, allegory, or symbol. It is an introduction, and is not the heart of the lesson itself. Spend no more than 5 or 10 minutes on it.

2. Naming present praxis

Help students to identify a part of the Orthodox Tradition or their current way of life, which was alluded to in the focusing activity.

3. Reflect on present praxis

Help students to inquire about and consider the implications of this part of their life and the Orthodox Tradition.

4. Access the Christian story and vision

Segue into the content of the lesson. If the students have not read the passages in *Journey through Holy Week*, this would be the time. This can be done a couple of ways. First, just give the students five to ten minutes to read silently on their own. Second, ask a few students to read a paragraph or two aloud to the class.

5. Appropriate the story and vision

Help students to make the story of the life of Christ *their* story. Allow students to retell the story in their own words, and to respond and to interact with it in an authentic way.

6. Decision for lived response

Students take what they have learned and consciously decide how this lesson can be put into practice and bear fruit in their lives from this point forward.

Additional Resources

- Alkiviadis Calivas. *Great Week and Pascha in the Greek Orthodox Church*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992.
- Lev Gillet (A Monk of the Eastern Church). *The Year of Grace of the Lord*. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.
- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, "Great Lent and Holy Pascha" collection of articles and essays:
www.goarch.org/ourfaith/pascha
- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Center for Family Care: Holy Week resources for home use:
www.family.goarch.org
- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Holy Week retreats:
www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/youth/youthworkers/sessions
- Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, The Way of Shared Praxis*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.
- Holy Week service book
- National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians. *A Holy Friday Retreat: A Parish Handbook*. Indianapolis, 1993.

Journey through Holy Week Teacher Guide

© 2009

Published by:

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
Department of Religious Education
50 Goddard Avenue
Brookline, MA 02445
(800) 566-1088
religioused@goarch.org

All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-0-86687-124-2

Text: Stephania Gianulis
Design: Dionne Katinas

SATURDAY OF LAZARUS AND PALM SUNDAY

Magazine pages 1–3

MATERIALS

- *Journey through Holy Week* zine for each student
- Questions from Step 4 for distribution to small groups
- Bible for each student or small group

God can surprise us and fulfill our hopes.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- **Identify** the joy that Jesus brought people when He answered their greatest hopes.
- **Connect** with this joy and bring it into their present life.

INTRODUCTION

On each of these days, Jesus does something that surprises the people around Him. On Saturday, He restores the people's faith and hope by raising Lazarus from the dead, teaching that all people can hope in their own resurrection from the dead. On Palm Sunday, the surprise is simple (and it foreshadows the greater surprise that is to come): when Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem riding on a humble donkey. This delights them, because it fulfills the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9: that the "king would come humble and mounted on . . . the **foal** of a donkey."

The people excitedly welcomed Jesus as a king, but would their excitement fade or give way to anger or betrayal? Over the course of Holy Week, when Jesus fulfilled God's will and not the people's will, they became angry with Him.

The first lesson teaches that **when we are surprised and excited about a blessing from God, this is only the beginning of faith**. Christian faith requires that we strive to remain faithful to God no matter what happens.

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.

PROCEDURES

1. Focusing activity

To get the students thinking about the element of surprise, ask the following questions:

- Can you name something that you wished for really hard, something really wanted, that came true?
- What happened after that?
- If you were excited about it, how long did that excitement last?
- Did things get boring? Did you ever start to complain about it?
- Was there ever anything that didn't turn out how you wanted it to, even though you were really excited at first?
- Ask the students to give examples and explain their reasoning.

Alternative: Use the "Hopes Up!" activity (found at the end of this guide). You will need to redirect the questions below to focus on hope instead of surprise.

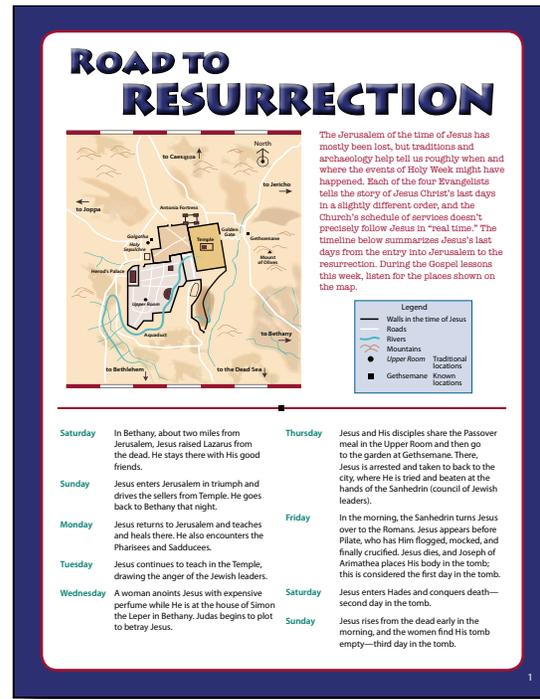
2. Name present praxis

Ask students:

- Has there been a time in your life when God surprised you with a joyous blessing?

This may be difficult for students, so you may need to guide this process to make it easier. You might share a personal example, tell about recent news item, or offer categories such as: at school, with family, with friends. An especially appropriate example could be it involved a time of sadness that ended with a joyous surprise.

Allow students to share examples and discuss.



3. Reflect on present praxis

Ask students:

- What do these kinds of surprises do for our faith?
- How do they help us?
- How do we feel when God blesses us with a joyful surprise?

You may want to record students' responses on a board or chart paper. Responses may include: faith becomes stronger; know that God cares for us; feel certain and secure in God; feel able to trust and rely on God.

4. Access the Christian story and vision

Be sure that the students have read pages 2–3.

Tell students:

Lazarus's family and friends felt extreme joy, and their most desperate hopes were fulfilled when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This was a shock that they never could have expected. They were still celebrating in this joy, and as the news of the miracle spread,

SATURDAY OF LAZARUS

Jesus wept (John 11:35).

Why did He weep? He was sad for a reason that would sadden many of us, too. His friend Lazarus had died. On what we call the "Saturday of Lazarus," we find Jesus at a very human, emotional place. This story takes us from sadness to joy and leads us into the hope for an even greater joy. Lazarus was the brother of Jesus's close friends Mary and Martha. When Lazarus dies of sickness, Jesus Christ feels and expresses the real human emotion of sadness. When Martha asks Jesus why He did not keep her brother alive, He reminds her to believe so she may "see the glory of God" (John 11:40). Even though His sadness is real, Jesus knows that something greater is coming. Jesus's tears show that He is human, but His next move shows that He is God. It says much more about all other human beings, too. He calls Lazarus to "come forth" and rise from the dead. Lazarus's sisters are overjoyed, of course. When someone we love dies, who doesn't wish that God would bring that person back to us?

When Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, He gives Mary and Martha what their hearts desired more than anything else at that moment—another chance at life, a new life for their brother. For Lazarus, Jesus undoes the highest pain that we all must face: death.

We remember the raising of Lazarus on the weekend between Great Lent, which ended the night before, and Holy Week, which begins the evening of Palm Sunday. But at a practical level for us, Holy Week begins here, with a real human family and the resurrection of a real human being, a person like any of us. Holy Week will end with Pascha Sunday, with the resurrection of our Lord. Putting the two together brings hope to the rest of the human family.

If Jesus can raise His friend Lazarus, He can do the same for all of us. And we believe that He will. After a week of persecution and suffering, He accomplishes His own resurrection, but only after raising His friend. Together, the raising of Lazarus and the holy resurrection of Christ show us that we will all be raised.

This is why we begin our journey through Holy Week with the raising of Lazarus. It reminds us of our hope for the completion of our journey. Jesus Christ brings the miracle to one man, and then He lives through it Himself, making the resurrection and eternal life possible for every one of us.

Raising of Lazarus

- The shortest passage in the Bible is John 11:35.
- Icons are not afraid to remind us of reality. In this icon, one of the people closest to the tomb of Lazarus holds a cloth over his nose and mouth to protect himself from any foul smells coming from the tomb. Even the story in the Bible mentions this—read John 11:39.

In many churches, after the Divine Liturgy on the Saturday of Lazarus, children are invited to make crosses out of palm branches. These crosses will be distributed the following day, Palm Sunday. It is a chance for children to make a special contribution by giving a gift to the whole church.

PALM SUNDAY

Picture your favorite professional athlete, actor, or singer cruising down the main street of your town in a stretch limousine. Can you see the adoring fans cheering, waving banners, jostling to get closer? This is what we hear as we enter the town of Jerusalem with Jesus on Palm Sunday. Think of the movie stars on the red carpet in Hollywood; the Jewish people of Jerusalem lay down palm branches as a carpet. They have high hopes for their "star," wishing that Jesus would become a powerful king who would free them from their harsh suffering under the Romans. They hope that Jesus will be the promised king who will restore the nation of Israel to its former glory, as it was during the time of Kings David and Solomon.

Now picture your celebrity driving an old, dented car instead of waving from a limo. Christ doesn't have an old car, but He does ride into town the common person's way: on a donkey. His fans in Jerusalem expected to see their king riding high on a proud stallion. But Jesus chooses to ride a donkey—a humble beast of burden, an animal of peace—to show that the people should not expect an earthly kingdom. His kingdom is, and will be like nothing on earth.

When we enter the church on Palm Sunday, we enter Jerusalem with Christ. And because we enter with Him, we also will "suffer" with Him, and this service begins His suffering and betrayal. To suffer with Him does not mean that we should feel pain. Instead of pain, we suffer with hope for and joy in the coming resurrection, which gives this suffering a purpose and meaning.

If you look around the church, you may notice that it is decorated with palm branches. Each person receives a palm cross at the end of the service. There are many customs, too: some churches will also distribute branches of bay leaves, flowers, or pussy willows. All of these remind us of the people who waved palm branches to welcome Jesus and laid them at His feet as He entered Jerusalem.

Entry into Jerusalem

- Icons frequently use "shortbread" to describe places, events, and ideas. The small group of buildings in background represents the whole city of Jerusalem.
- What are the children in the icon doing? How might they describe Jesus's entry into the city to their friends?

A hymn we sing on both Saturday of Lazarus and Palm Sunday reminds us why we carry palm branches and what the raising of Lazarus means for all of us:

"To confirm the general resurrection before your passion, you resurrected Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God. Therefore imitating the children, carrying the symbols of victory, we cry out to you the Victor over death: Hosanna in the highest; blessed are you, the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

people in Jerusalem welcomed Him by laying down palm branches as a carpet when Jesus entered Jerusalem.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey for two reasons: He was showing humility, but also He was fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. The Jewish people, who knew the Scriptures and were looking forward to the one who would fulfill the prophecies and their hopes, were even more excited to see the prophecy being fulfilled in this way, which added to their joy.

Turn students' attention to the icons and hymns on the sides of pages 2 and 3.

Depending on the size of your class, divide the class into groups of 2 or 3. Have each group or pair respond to one of the following prompts. Let students know that they will share when they are done:

A. The shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35, "Jesus wept." What is important about this verse in the story about Lazarus? What does this tell us about Jesus? What is He crying about? Why is this passage important for our faith as Christians?

B. In the icon on page 2, one person holds a cloth over his nose and mouth to protect himself from foul smells coming from Lazarus's tomb. Read John 11:39, which mentions this. Why do you think St. John included this when he wrote about Lazarus's death and being raised?

C. On page 3, in the icon of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, what are the children doing? How might children who witnessed Jesus' entry describe this if they are telling their friends about it the next day? Contrast the children with the adults in the icon.

5. Appropriate the story and vision

Have each group or pair share their responses with the whole group. Look for answers such as:

A. To say that "Jesus wept" shows that Jesus, God himself, in His son, was grieving for His dead friend. For our Christian faith, this emphasizes His humanity. It also shows that His love for us is real and genuine, and He really and genuinely wants us to live forever. Another point is that this sadness from God himself makes the raising of Lazarus that

much more joyful. Because Jesus was truly sad about Lazarus's death, then He was genuinely overjoyed to bring Lazarus back to life. (You may need to remind the students that Lazarus would eventually face his own death again, many years later. The Church believes that Lazarus was a bishop in the early days of Christianity.)

- B. St. John included the detail about a smell coming from Lazarus's tomb, to emphasize that Lazarus had really died, and that it was truly a tremendous miracle that Jesus brought him back to life. In Hebrew thought, the spirit was believed to leave a deceased body after three days; because Lazarus had been dead for four days, this showed that he really was dead.
- C. The children are laying down their shirts and jackets to add to the "carpet" of palm branches for Jesus to walk on. They might describe the excitement that the whole city felt when they saw Jesus coming in on a donkey. The adults are doing very little. It is the children who recognize the importance of Jesus.

6. Decision for lived response

The most important message and part of these two days is expressed in the hymn on the bottom of page 3, that Jesus "confirmed the general resurrection" when He raised Lazarus from the dead.

Review and emphasize the message for students:

- Jesus showed the world that all people will rise from the dead in Christ.
- This means that people do not need to be afraid of death.
- Death is not the end, and there is hope for something beyond this life.

Students must make a decision about how this knowledge will change them and change their lives. Ask students these simple questions:

- What should your life be like if you have faith, hope, and joy that God will raise you from the dead to live eternally?
- What do we do with this great faith, hope, and joy?
- How can we better deal with the unexpected tragedies, challenges, and sadness in our lives? We have to keep our eyes on Christ and His plans for us.

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 BRIDEGROOM SERVICES

Magazine pages 4–5, 7–8

Christian faith means preparing ourselves to meet Christ. We meet Christ in the way we live our lives. In the Bridegroom services, we hear examples of people who both meet Christ and fail to meet Him.

MATERIALS

- *Journey through Holy Week* zine for each student
- Bible for each student or pair of students
- Questions from Step 5 for distribution to small groups
- Chart paper and markers, or chalkboard and chalk

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- **Interpret** the meaning of the actions of characters and stories from Scripture, as symbolic of living a life in preparation for encountering Christ.
- **Connect** forgiveness, mercy, and love for others to love for Christ.
- **Decide** on specific ways to live in a preparation for Christ, based on the examples from Scripture.

INTRODUCTION

To be faithful Christians, we prepare ourselves to meet Christ Jesus. This has to do with the way we live our lives. The people in the Bible stories we read on these days are lessons about how each of us can live the kind of life that will prepare us to encounter Him.

Note: The Bridegroom services are the Orthros services of Holy Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday, and they are celebrated on the evenings of Palm Sunday, Holy Monday, and Holy Tuesday. In some parishes the Orthros for Holy Thursday is chanted on Holy Wednesday evening.

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.

PROCEDURES

1. Focusing activity

Ask students to name one thing they like doing more than anything else:

- Is there one thing in your life that you could wake up early in the morning to do, even if you're not a morning person, and spend all your time doing, from the moment you wake up, all day long, every day?
- Is there one thing that really grabs and holds your attention, no matter what is going on?
- Think about why this particular activity holds your attention so well, and why you can spend so much time with it. Why do they enjoy that activity so much?

Guide the conversation, helping them to express that they derive joy from certain activities that they can spend hours doing.

2. Name their present praxis

Ask the students:

- How is this kind of excitement and energy for faith in Christ possible for people? Is it possible for you?

- Remember that Christians are called to be faithful and dedicated to Christ and their faith at all times, even while they are doing other things and not just when they are at church.
- Our dedication comes in many different forms—how we treat others, how we spend our time, how disciplined we are at using our talents, etc.
- This “work” we do to bring us closer to Christ prepares us for Christ.

3. Reflect on present praxis

Have students think about this challenge:

- How do you feel about the idea that the harder we work, the greater the benefits will be?
- Think about physical training, such as in an athletic competition. Athletes train for competition; musicians practice before a performance; and students study for tests.

4. Access the Christian story and vision

Give students time to read pages 4–5 and 7–8.

What are the Bridegroom Services?

WATCH. GET READY. BE READY.

Christ the Bridegroom

• Read Isaiah 53:3–6. How does this passage describe what you see in the icon?

• Some Bridegroom icons have the words “Behold the man” next to Joseph. Read John 10:1–5 to find out why.

It should sound to you like something big, something important, is happening, and we had better not miss it. Getting ready for the coming of Jesus Christ is what we should be doing our whole lives. On the first three evenings of Holy Week, we get ready for Christ, who is our Bridegroom. We are reminded of our responsibility to keep our eyes open and on Christ.

When we hear the word “bride,” we imagine a pretty, smiling woman in white. But “bride” has a greater meaning in the Church. We don’t come to the Church to be individual brides. In the Church, no person is alone; each of us is an important part of the whole body. When we come together like this, this body is the “bride of Christ.” The Church, the bride, is preparing for the wedding feast that unites her to Christ and makes her complete. So, uniting to Christ makes all of us complete.

But why do we call Jesus a bridegroom? The answer is simple: Jesus, like a bridegroom in a wedding, is willing to give everything for His bride, the people of God, the Church. By the end of Holy Week, we will see that Jesus gives up His life for His followers.

Because the Church is the bride, we each play a part in getting ready, if you have ever seen a bride preparing for her wedding day, you may notice that she is very busy. Her upcoming wedding probably seems to be the only thing on her mind. It may seem like the only thing she talks about. Almost everything she does involves her wedding and her groom.

Like the busy bride, we must keep our Bridegroom, Christ, on our minds as much as we can. If we are busy, we must be busy living a life that brings us closer to Him. We show Jesus our love by preparing for Him. The stories we hear in each of the Bridegroom Services remind us of what this preparation means.

We show Jesus our love by preparing for Him

Palm Sunday Evening: The First Bridegroom Service

When we enter the church on the evening of Palm Sunday, we greet the icon of Christ the Bridegroom, which will remain at the front of the church for the three days of Bridegroom Services. It shows us who the Bridegroom is and who we are preparing to meet. How does He look? This is a somber icon, reminding us that we are entering into the harshest days of Jesus Christ’s earthly life. The challenges and betrayals will lead to His arrest, trial, and death on a cross.

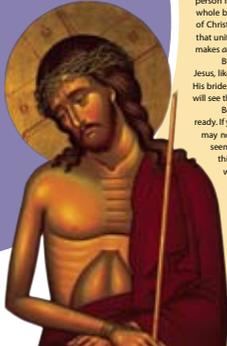
On Sunday evening, we focus on two stories that connect us to the past (the Old Testament) and the future (our own lives). We remember Joseph the Patriarch, whose story is in the Book of Genesis. We see Joseph as a “prototype” of Jesus Christ, showing the same steadfast love that Jesus Christ offers in His last earthly days. Joseph was innocent and righteous, but his brothers betrayed and mistreated him. He had enough faith that God loved him, that he “reassured and comforted” his brothers (Genesis 50:19–21). We all know how difficult it is to reassure and comfort someone who mistreats us. Joseph offers his brothers the same type of forgiving love that Jesus Christ shows when He asks His Father to forgive those who crucify Him. In the end, God rewards Joseph because forgiving love is the Way. Joseph’s story reminds us that our Bridegroom is the one who forgives, loves, and rewards us if we do the same.

During this service, we also hear Christ curse the fig tree. According to the Gospel of Matthew, Christ walked past a fig tree that didn’t have any fruit, and He cursed it to never bear figs again. This story is not just about a tree. When the fig tree stands before Christ and gives Him nothing, it symbolizes any person or group of people who does not receive Christ and His teachings. The tree fails to give fruit. Often we as people fail to “bear fruit”; we don’t live as we should. Each of us needs to care for our soul as if it is a garden, so our faith is *living, breathing, and doing*.

When Christ curses the tree, it withers and dies, showing His divine power over life. Therefore, our Bridegroom is not just a savior, as He may appear in His icon; He is triumphant and powerful, as well as loving and forgiving.

Bridegroom Hymn

Behold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night. Blessed is the servant whom he shall find watching. Unworthy is the one whom he shall find heedless. Beware, then, O my soul, not to be borne down with sleep, lest you be given up to death and to shut out from the Kingdom. Wherefore, rouse yourself, crying out: “Holy, holy, holy are you, our God.”



Holy Monday Evening: The Second Bridegroom Service

The service of Monday evening helps us to understand the imagery of the bride and bridegroom. We hear about the ten virgins waiting for the coming of their bridegroom. This warns us to be ready for an important moment, and to have what we need prepared and waiting. Five of the women bring oil to light their lamps, but the other five forget to bring their oil. When the forgetful five leave to go buy more oil, the bridegroom arrives. The forgetful ones miss the wedding feast because "the door was shut" (Matthew 25:10). How many of us have gone somewhere, realized that we have forgotten something important, and been disappointed that we miss out on some fun because of it?

We must remember Jesus Christ every day and keep our "oil" nearby. Our oil is our good works and prayerful attitude. So within us are the miracle and the mystery: as we get ready and show love for others, we actually get closer to the very one we are preparing to meet. If we think of Christ and watch for Him, we will find Him in our lives. Christ tells us that He visits us through other people. "I was hungry and you fed me... Even as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me." This is because every human being is created "in the image and likeness of God." Every time another person crosses our path, we have an opportunity to serve Christ by serving one of His children. We are waiting and watching for Him, but if we really pay attention to Him, we will realize that we are not waiting and watching for something that will happen; it happens all the time, all around us. We can become closer to Christ every day if we look for Him every day.

On Holy Monday evening, we also hear one of the most powerful stories in the New Testament. Certain Jewish leaders, who were enemies of Jesus, confront Him and try to trap Him with His ideas. But Jesus outsmarts them, skillfully answering their questions and making them look foolish, which only enrages them more. Then Jesus turns the tables on the Jewish leaders, calling them hypocrites because they tell people to observe traditions without following them themselves. These events set the stage for the Jewish leaders' plot to have Jesus arrested for trying to overthrow the Roman rulers in Jerusalem.

Placed at the beginning of Holy Week, this story teaches us two things. First, it teaches us that Jesus had enemies who were willing to have Him falsely accused of crimes, even using His own words against Him. Second, it teaches us that we must be careful about behaving like the enemies of Jesus, saying one thing and doing another.



The door was shut

Turn toward Christ

Holy Tuesday Evening: The Third Bridegroom Service

When we face something bad, we want to turn away from it and turn toward the good. Turning away from harmful activities and thoughts—and then turning toward Jesus Christ—is the focus of Holy Tuesday's Bridegroom Service. This service reminds us that we must make a decision to turn our lives toward Christ and live in His way instead of living sinfully. Many of us probably say, "I'm really not that bad." That's correct. In fact, we are very good, but our lives don't always reflect our true goodness.

None of us is alone in either sinfulness or goodness. On Holy Tuesday, we hear about the sinful woman in the Gospel of Luke, which helps us learn what we must do to choose a life of goodness over one of sin. This woman sits at Jesus's feet, weeps for her sins, and anoints Him with oil. When she needs Jesus, she sees a better way to live, and wants to change. This change is her repentance, and when she turns toward Christ with all her heart, He accepts and forgives her. We don't call this woman "sinful" because she is more sinful than anyone else is. We call her sinful because she realizes and confesses her sins, and then she chooses to turn to Christ. She has the courage to decide that she must change. We should call her the "repentant woman," emphasizing the change that she makes for good. She is meaningful for us not because she sinned, but because she repents for her sins.

Sitting nearby, a Pharisee (a Jewish religious leader) complains that Jesus accepts the woman. When he looks at her, he sees only her sins, instead of seeing a whole person with a desire for good; this is his sin. Do we ever look at others and decide they are not acceptable to God? When we judge someone, we see only his or her unattractive actions, instead of a reflection of God. Often, the sin in our hearts distorts our vision of others.

So when we judge and separate ourselves from others, we separate ourselves from Christ.

Christ forgives the repentant woman because she looks at her sins. The Pharisee is not forgiven because he does not think he needs it; he is too busy judging someone else to see his own sins. When others judge us, it can hurt. But remember the example of the woman: she keeps her focus on Jesus and does not argue with the Pharisee. She ignores his judgment because Christ's presence and forgiveness is more important.

When the Pharisee judges the woman, Jesus silences him and forgives the woman. Jesus's loving forgiveness silences the judgments of others.

So how do we repent? We examine our words and actions, and we ask ourselves how we may be turning away from Christ. Are we trying to live a life like His? He lifts people up and shows them light. We can do this for the people in our lives. But if we push others down or fall into despair ourselves, we bring darkness. And in the dark, we cannot see what is beautiful in ourselves or in other people. Do we gossip or judge? Do we remember Christ daily? Do we treat ourselves with care and respect? Do we notice the needs of others? When we realize that we don't always live like Christ, we know we must turn toward Christ, to repent and change our ways for the better.

When we examine ourselves, we must see that we have the potential to turn to the better way. The repentant woman weeps for her sins when the Source of the better way is sitting in front of her. She knows she can change to a better and fuller life. Holy Tuesday's service should bring us the joy and hope of knowing that we can change our lives to reflect our true goodness.

Explain to students:

During the Bridegroom services, we hear stories and examples about faithful preparation, and also examples that show how sometimes people fail to prepare, including Christ's cursing of the fig tree (p. 5), the story of Joseph (p. 5), the Parable of the Ten Virgins (p. 7), and the story of the repentant woman (p. 8).

5. Appropriate the story and vision

The following activity should take about ten minutes.

Let students know that when they are done, the class will regroup to contribute responses to a class chart.

Depending on how many students you have, divide students into pairs or in groups of 3. Assign each group one of the following Scriptural stories heard during the Bridegroom services. Each group should discuss the question that accompanies the reading and be ready to share with the whole class.

Alternative: Have all the students answer every question.

- Genesis 50:15–21—Joseph forgives his brothers. Think of a time when someone hurt you and you had to forgive that person. What was it like to try to find a way to comfort and speak kindly to that person?
- Matthew 21:18–19—Jesus curses the fig tree. Jesus is angry at the fig tree because it doesn't bear fruit. We can be like this sometimes, when we don't "bear fruit" by using our talents more fully or sharing what we have with others. What are some ways that we bear fruit in your life? How can you be more fruitful in your life?
- Matthew 25:1–13—The Parable of the Ten Virgins. Five are prepared with oil for their lamps, and five are not. The bridegroom, or Christ, does not recognize those who are not prepared and does not permit them entry into the wedding feast. We keep "oil" in our lamps by doing works of mercy for others. What have you done in the past week to add "oil" to your lamp?
- Luke 7:36–40; 47–50—The repentant woman anoints Jesus's feet. The Pharisee's sin was that when he looked at the woman,

Example of living a life that prepares to meet Christ	How will I do this?
A. Joseph forgave his brothers instead of being angry and vengeful toward them.	In teaching about forgiveness, it can be more helpful to think and talk about what a Christian does not do if he or she is hurt. Christians do not seek revenge, spread rumors to garner support or gain sympathy, nurture negative feelings, etc. The example of Joseph is acceptance and trust in God, in spite of his brothers' mistreatment. We should emphasize that the main thing about forgiveness is choosing to love God instead of hating or resenting another person, even if that person has hurt us.
B. Jesus curses the fig tree because it does not bear fruit.	Each student should share one specific and unique way that he or she can bear fruit. For example, how is each student talented, and what will he or she do to share that talent?
C. The oil in the lamps of the five prepared virgins symbolizes works of mercy that we are all called to do for others throughout our lives.	Help students to think about people around them who may need "works of mercy" from them. It may be a peer who is lonely, people who don't have a lot of money and who could use donations, etc. Help students to decide specifically how they will do works of mercy for someone specific and real.
D. The repentant woman changed her life and turned toward Christ, even though the Pharisee judged her.	This example can be approached from two angles: 1. Invite students to take the position of the Pharisee—is there someone they know whose life they are tempted to judge? This may include people who are seen as "sinful," but the challenge is to see them as people made in God's image and not to judge them. How can they treat these persons with love instead of judgment? 2. Invite students to relate to the repentant woman. Help them to consider and share things in their lives that they need to change in order to turn toward Christ.)

he only saw her sinfulness. He didn't see her as a full person who was turning toward Christ. Can you think of a time when you made a mistake like this, seeing someone only from the outside and seeing only his or her sinfulness? Can you think of a time when you made a change like the woman did and turned toward Christ?

6. Decision for lived response

On the blackboard, draw a 2-column chart. Fill in the left column as above. Place only the question at the top of the right column, leaving the rest of the column blank. Work through each example and ask the students to complete the right side to answer the question, "How will I do this?"

Help students to generate examples of realistic situations in which they will be challenged to follow the right example. Encourage them to be specific about what they will do in the situations that may arise in their lives.

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.

HOLY WEDNESDAY AND HOLY THURSDAY

Magazine pages 9–11

Christ heals us, makes us whole, and unites us to each other and to Him, through the sacraments of Holy Unction and Holy Communion.

MATERIALS

- *Journey through Holy Week* zine for each student
- Chalkboard and chalk, or chart paper and markers

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- **Work together** to experience the importance of unity and mutual dependence.
- **Personalize** their role as a member of the body of Christ.
- **Connect** the image of mutual dependence on the spiritual unity of the body of Christ.
- **Focus** understanding of unity in the direction of service to others.

INTRODUCTION

This lesson includes the service of Holy Unction on Holy Wednesday, the Last Supper and Eucharist on Holy Thursday morning, and Christ's betrayal on Holy Thursday evening. It begins by showing that all people should be in unity as the Body of Christ. At the Last Supper, by washing the feet of the disciples, Christ shows that humble service goes along with His unifying presence and sacrifice. This illustrates how we also are called to serve each other, and to be in unity with each other and with Christ. The next level of Christ's unity with us is in the physical pain He feels in the Garden of Gethsemane on Holy Thursday evening.

Note: In some parishes, the sacrament of Holy Unction is celebrated on Holy Wednesday during the day and the Orthros for Holy Thursday (a Bridegroom Service) is chanted that evening.

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.

PROCEDURES

1. Focusing Activity: Sentence Relay

The purpose of this activity is to show the importance of working together, depending on one another to accomplish something, and having unity. It is a “chalkboard relay,” with each team contributing a word on the board. The first team to create a complete a sensible sentence on the board is the winning team. Rules: The sentence must contain as many words as there are students on that team. The sentence doesn’t have to be true, but it must really be a sentence: it must be grammatically correct and make sense.

Divide the class into two teams.

Set a timer or watch for 1–5 minutes, depending on how many students you have. The smaller your group and teams, the less time they will need.

Once the timer starts, each team sends one student at a time to the board to write a word until every student has contributed a word. (Keep an eye on the activity to note which team creates a complete sentence first.)

If both teams finish at about the same time and both have written sentences, don’t worry about declaring a winner. Remember that the point is that each team relies on every member in order to create the sentence; if both teams have succeeded in this, show support for both.

Note: If you have a small class or don’t prefer to divide your class into two teams, this activity will also work with one group; the main idea—needing each other and working together—still comes across with one “team.”

After the teams finish, lead a discussion of the activity, with the following questions:

- If you were the first person to write a word, what helped you decide what to write?

Students may or may not say that they had to

think about what might be a good start to a sentence, and how their teammates would follow their word.

- If you had to follow someone else’s word, what did you have to think about before you decided what to write?

Students may respond that they had to think about what the person before them had written, and what might make sense for the person after them might write.

Have students again read their sentences. Point out or guide students to notice the most important part of this activity: **every person needed to participate and contribute in order to write the sentence. Every word is necessary for the sentence to have been written.**

2. Name present praxis

Guide students to the conclusion that our faith teaches us that we **are all united in one body, the Body of Christ**, and all parts of this Body are necessary for full and healthy functioning. (Just like all members of the team were necessary to write the sentence.)

3. Reflect on present praxis

Ask students:

- If we are all members of this unified Body of Christ, what part of this body do you feel that you are? Are you the hands, feet, eyes, ears, voice, etc.?

Be sure to ask them why they feel that way. If need be, allow this question to “hang,” and you may get some insightful answers, such as:

“The eyes, because I see possibilities before me; the feet, because I want to actively help people; the ears, because I help people by listening to them, and/or am trying to listen to God’s guidance; the voice, because I have a gift for sharing ideas with people; the hands,

HOLY WEDNESDAY
HOLY UNCTION



If you have ever had a cold or the flu, you probably know that when you're sick, you are just not yourself! In fact, if you become very ill, it can be very hard to even imagine or remember what it feels like to be your normal, healthy self. Have you ever broken a bone, sprained an ankle, or injured yourself? If so, maybe you couldn't do some of the simple things that you would have normally taken for granted. You needed help. You wanted to be whole again. You needed healing.

Not being ourselves and needing help from others are two problems that we bring with us to church on Holy Wednesday evening, when we receive the Sacrament of Holy Unction. This tradition of anointing with blessed oils is recorded in the Epistle of James. We believe that when we are anointed, Jesus Christ restores our wholeness both physically and spiritually.

We need this sacrament of healing in two ways: as individual Christians and as a community of Christians, the Body of Christ.

Just like having the flu makes you feel less than yourself physically, being spiritually sick also makes you less than yourself. All of us are spiritually sick, but what does this mean? Our imperfections and sins, when we "miss the mark," are our ailments. If we were to be ourselves as God intended us to be, then we would glorify Him in everything we do. Most of us do not succeed in this. When we tend to be lazy, want more for ourselves than for others, or forget to be thankful, we are not being ourselves. Inside, our souls are divided and broken instead of whole, healthy, and complete. These are some of our sicknesses. Every one of us must visit the spiritual hospital that is the Church, to ask the Lord to heal us inside and help us become whole and healthy human beings. It is impossible to think about an individual's spiritual healing without remembering how tightly connected we all are to one another. No matter how spiritually sick or well we are, all of our actions affect everyone around us. No sin is the story of just one person. The good news is that all of an individual person's positive actions also affect the people around him or her. The point is that the sacrament of Holy Unction heals our sickness and brokenness both as individuals and as the whole body of Christian people.

Remember what it is like to have a broken or sprained bone: you need help from others with simple tasks like opening doors or even tying your shoes. As the Body of Christ, we all need one another. But the body is broken. In our broken state, we forget this. We put ourselves before others; we think we are better than others; we don't always treat each other with respect; we may hurt other people without meaning to. All of these things happen because we need to be healed of our spiritual sicknesses.

The Sacrament of Holy Unction restores the whole Body of Christ to fullness, reconnecting people to one another. We can treat each other with the respect that all people, who are all created in the image and likeness of God, deserve. When this happens, we can actually see each other in a new light. We may actually look different to each other if we are striving for our brokenness to be healed. Holy Unction can restore the Body of Christ to fullness and togetherness.

Jesus restores our wholeness



because I help people by making or doing things for them."

The above answers were taken from Greek Orthodox young people when this question was asked during a summer camp discussion group. Don't be afraid to ask this unconventional question!

4. Access the Christian story and vision

Read pages 9–10.

Alternatively, you could have the students read page 9 and then discuss Holy Unction. Then have students read page 10 and discuss the Last Supper.

Explain that the sacraments of our Church help to nurture this unity, and we commemorate the celebration of two of these sacraments on Holy Wednesday and Holy Thursday: Unction and Communion.

To discuss Holy Unction (p. 9), emphasize the following points:

- Just as when we are sick or injured, we rely on each other more, we also need each other for spiritual help, too. For example, a troubled person might need a friend who is the

"ears" of Christ, to listen, or a confused person might need a friend who is the "voice" of Christ, to help explain something.

- Just like in the opening activity, each person's actions affect the whole group.
- The sacrament of Holy Unction heals each individual and unifies the whole group—the whole Body of Christ.

When you discuss Holy Communion (Holy Thursday morning, p. 10), emphasize the following points:

- Just as Holy Unction is life-giving, Christ's sacrifice at His Mystical Supper gives life to us as His Body.
- The bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit and are life-giving to each person who partakes of Holy Communion.
- When we partake of Holy Communion, we unite with Him and we unite with each other because we share in a common meal, with shared food, even a shared cup and plate.
- Christ chose to wash His disciples' feet at the Mystical Supper for a reason, and this choice teaches us something: **uniting with us and bringing us life go hand-in-hand with doing humble service for others.**
- Just as receiving Holy Communion is life-giving, so is service to others.

5. Appropriate the story and vision

Explain to students:

- Christ's choice to wash His disciples' feet answers the question, "What do I do to show that I care for or love someone?" It is an example of an action that young people can imitate in a practical way, through service. It shows that true leadership exists in service.
- Also, it **connects the Orthodox Church's**

HOLY THURSDAY MORNING

On the morning of Holy Thursday, Christ shares salvation with us, uniting us to Him and to each other in one sacramental moment. We join Him in the upper room, where He offers the first Eucharist. Imagine sitting at the table with your beloved teacher and friend, Jesus. It is the Pasover meal, a sacred tradition that you have observed year after year, a time to thank God for freeing His people from slavery in Egypt. But this time is different because Jesus says, "Take, eat, this is my body of the new covenant.... Drink from it, all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

We hear this at every Divine Liturgy, but what does it mean? What did it mean the first time, at the Pasover meal?

It means life. We say "food is life" because it keeps our bodies going. In the Eucharist, the gifts of food—bread and wine—are sanctified and consecrated. They become a gift of everlasting life, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The change is not physical, but mystical. The "qualities" of the materials they were created to be, but through blood of our Lord. When we receive Him into ourselves bodily and spiritually, we allow Him to live inside us; we make it more possible to live our lives in Him. We also call the Eucharist "communion" because we partake together. To keep Christ in and to live a life in Him is to live in loving communion with others.

In the upper room, Jesus does something else that surprises His disciples: He washes their feet. To wash someone's feet is an act of great humility. Coming from their beloved teacher, guide, and Lord, the disciples do not know how to receive this action. Why does He do it? Christ washes their feet for the same reason that He is crucified: He offers Himself as a humble servant who, as God Himself, also is supremely strong. When He washes His disciples' feet, He shows that He loves each of them intensely and personally, as He loves each of us.

Christ Washing the Apostles' Feet

- In the Gospel of John, there is no story of the Last Supper as we usually think about it. Instead, at a supper before Jesus's betrayal, Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. The icon shows Jesus washing Peter's feet. Read John 13:6-9 to see how Peter reacts.
- Washing the feet of another person was one of the most extreme forms of humility at the time of Jesus, something that usually a servant or a slave would do for a guest in a house. What do you think Jesus wanted to say about Himself by washing the feet of His disciples?

We allow Him to live inside us

- Read John 15:5-8. In the icon, find each person the passage describes. Who is the person closest to Jesus, and what is he doing?

The Mystical (Last) Supper

- Many icons have a red cloth hanging in the background to remind us that the event is taking place indoors.

HOLY THURSDAY EVENING

We enter into Christ's darkest hour, when in His final earthly days, He is betrayed and gives Himself up to be crucified. We spend a lot of time listening to twelve Gospel accounts of these events.

We go with Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane, where His prayer shows us that He is completely human and completely obedient to His Father. He knows that He is going to die, which brings Him intense pain. He first asks His Father to take the pain away, but then says, "not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36). Because He is really human, it really hurts that He must be unjustly crucified. Because He is a perfect human, He obeys out of love for His Father and for the rest of us, whom He saves by His crucifixion and resurrection. All of us can relate to the prayer to "make it go away" when we have to deal with something painful. It's okay to pray this, but Christ shows us the next step—accepting and trusting God's will.

The hymns we hear focus on a great contrast. Christ, who is our God, is treated as a lowly criminal. Each phrase of the hymn compares ideas of Christ's glory with details of His suffering.

Today is hung upon the tree, He who suspended the land in the midst of the waters.

A crown of thorns crowns Him, who is the king of angels. He is wrapped about with the purple of mockery, who wrapped the heavens with clouds.

He received buffetings, who freed Adam in the Jordan. He was transfused with nails, the Bridegroom of the Church. He was pierced with a spear, the Son of the Virgin. We worship your passion, O Christ. Show us also your glorious resurrection.

This can be a long service, with lots of standing still, lots of trying to pay attention to the readings. Try to focus on the stories, listening or reading along, because the whole story is about each and every one of us. It's okay to feel a little angry or tired. It's okay if your feet hurt. Let those hurting feet stand with Christ in His physical and emotional pain on this day. Remember that He endured our every human pain and discomfort, walking obediently through it during these last days of His earthly life.

Crucifixion

- The plaque at the top of the cross has Greek letters that abbreviate "The King of Glory." Read Psalm 24:7-10 and John 18:33-37. How do these two passages relate to one another and to the cross?
- There is a small skull in the earth below the cross, as the very bottom of the icon. It reminds us that Jesus was crucified at "the place of the skull," Golgotha. A tradition teaches that this is the skull of Adam, the first human.
- Read Matthew 27:54 to see what the centurion (Roman army officer) is saying. According to Orthodox tradition, his name is Longinos. He is a saint of the Church, and his feast day is October 18.

His prayer shows us that He is completely human and obedient

sacramental life and the call to serve. As Orthodox Christians, we start in our church, in communion with each other and with Christ, and then take Christ's love out into the world, in our actions.

- **We are called to partake of Holy Communion, but that when we do, we are also called to follow His example of humble service.**
- One way we can serve God is to plan to attend certain Holy Week services as a group and sit together. One of the reasons we call them "services" is that our attendance and participation in them is an act of "service to God."

6. Decision for lived response

Review the main ideas of this lesson:

- We are one Body, and all of us need each other.
- We are healed and unified to each other and to Christ in the sacraments of Holy Unction and Holy Communion.
- We are called to sustain this unity by serv-

ing one another as Christ served others, in humility.

Ask students:

- How can your faith in these ideas change the way you live?

Encourage students to share specific ways that they can carry forward these messages in their lives and how it may change their perspective or choices.

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.

HOLY THURSDAY EVENING AND HOLY FRIDAY

Magazine pages 11–13

Christ's suffering, pain and death reveal His understanding and presence for all of us who experience pain and suffering at some points in our lives.

MATERIALS

- *Journey through Holy Week* zine for each student
- Recordings of the hymns from pages 11–13 and a way to play them (CD player or computer with Internet connection to stream from <http://lent.goarch.org/media/audio.asp>)
- Questions from Step 5 for distribution to small groups

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- **Identify with** Christ's suffering in His last days on earth.
- **Interpret** expressions of the paradox of Jesus's full divinity and humanity.
- **Invite** Christ's life-giving light into their own suffering and challenging moments.

INTRODUCTION

This lesson includes the service of the twelve Gospel readings on Holy Thursday evening, Christ's burial on Holy Friday afternoon, and His funeral on Holy Friday evening. The most important point in the services and the lesson is that Christ brings together His full divinity with His full humanity. He feels pain and fear, prays, suffers terrible physical pain, dies, and is buried in a fully human way, yet is still God. The lesson focuses on the hymns of each service, because these hymns highlight the contrast between all-powerful God, and the suffering and dying of Jesus Christ the man. The lesson concludes with the assurance that no matter what suffering or problems we face, God understands because He Himself has experienced it. Christ fills our "darkness" with light, and is present with us in our suffering, just as He was completely humanly present in His own suffering.

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.

PROCEDURES

1. Focusing activity

Have students recall a time when they were going through a difficult or painful challenge, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. Allow a couple of minutes for them to think about this.

Ask students to record their thoughts on paper. Allow students to share if they choose to. Don't force anyone.

2. Name present praxis

Ask students to share what they did during that time, to help them deal with whatever they were experiencing. You can guide this by asking questions such as:

- Did you talk about it with friends/family, ask for help, or withdraw from others to deal with it on your own?
- Did you try to take your mind off of it?
- Did you try to solve your problem?
- Did you pray?

Again, it might be a good idea for them to note their thoughts on paper.

3. Reflect on present praxis

The main question to ask at this point is: "What were you hoping/looking for, when you were praying, seeking help, withdrawing (*whatever the previous responses were*)?"

4. Access the Christian story and vision

Read pages 11–13.

Share with students:

- When Christ Himself felt afraid and lonely, He "dealt with it" like many of us do. We see this on Holy Thursday evening, when He prayed alone in the Garden of Gethsemane.

HOLY THURSDAY EVENING

We enter into Christ's darkest hours, when in His final earthly days, He is betrayed and gives Himself up to be crucified. We spend a lot of time listening to twelve Gospel accounts of these events.

We go with Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane, where His prayer shows us that He is completely human and completely obedient to His Father. He knows that He is going to die, which brings Him intense pain. He first asks His Father to take the pain away, but then says "not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36). Because He is really human, it really hurts that He must be unjustly crucified. Because He is a perfect human, He obeys out of love for His Father and for the rest of us, whom He saves by His crucifixion and resurrection. All of us can relate to the prayer to "make it go away" when we have to deal with something painful. It's okay to pray this, but Christ shows us the next step—accepting and trusting God's will.

The hymns we hear focus on a great contrast. Christ, who is our God, is treated as a lowly criminal. Each phrase of the hymn compares ideas of Christ's glory with details of His suffering:

Today is hung upon the tree, He who suspended the land in the midst of the waters.

A crown of thorns crowns Him, who is the king of angels. He is wrapped about with the purple of mockery, who wrapped the heavens with clouds.

He received buffetings, who freed Adam in the Jordan. He was transfixed with nails, the Bridegroom of the Church. He was pierced with a spear, the Son of the Virgin. We worship your passion, O Christ. Show us also your glorious resurrection.

This can be a long service, with lots of standing still, lots of trying to pay attention to the readings. Try to focus on the stories, listening or reading along, because the whole story is about each and every one of us. It's okay to feel a little antsy or tired. It's okay if your feet hurt. Let those hurting feet stand with Christ in His physical and emotional pain on this day. Remember that He endured our every human pain and discomfort, walking obediently through it during these last days of His earthly life.

Crucifixion

- The plaque at the top of the cross has Greek letters that abbreviate "The King of Glory." Jesus' Death 267–10 and John 18:33–37. How do these two passages relate to one another and to the cross?
- There is a small skull in the earth below the cross, at the very bottom of the foot. It reminds us that Jesus was crucified at "the place of the skull," Golgotha. A tradition teaches that this is the skull of Adam, the first human.
- Read Matthew 27:54 to see what the centurion (Roman army officer) is saying. According to Orthodox tradition, his name is Longinus. He is a saint of the Church, and his feast day is October 16.

His prayer shows us that He is completely human and obedient.

- Refer to page 11 to highlight that even though Christ prayed the very human wish, for the relief that His suffering would "go away," He was a *perfect* human, obedient and trusting His Father no matter what was going to happen to Him.
- Our belief in Jesus Christ's full humanity and full divinity is one of the most defining parts of our faith.

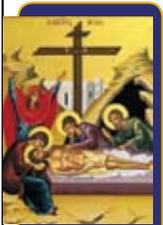
The next part of the lesson will help students to engage with the hymns from the services of Holy Week, which are **a tool to help us keep a proper view of Christ: worshipping Him for filling our humanity with His divinity.**

Play a recording of each of the hymns for the class. Have students focus on the words from the text while they listen. You might also play the recordings while the students work on the questions.

Note: Various recordings will use different translations, so most likely what the students read and what they will hear will be different.

Divide students into three pairs or three groups of three (depending on your class size), to closely read about the hymns from the three services, and answer the following questions:

HOLY FRIDAY AFTERNOON



Epitaphios

• Mary Magdalene is the woman wearing a red cloak. A tradition says that when she saw the body of Christ lying on the ground, she threw her arms in the air and cried, "Who will let these things be heard by all the world? I shall go down to Rome to the Caesars, I shall show him what evil Pilate has done!"

• When the Gospels tell the story of the burial of Jesus, they name Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and a group of women. The stories do not mention the presence of the Virgin Mary (who is about to give birth to Jesus). Check the synoptic and Matthew 27:55; Mark 16:40; Luke 23:55; and John 19:39-40.

When we come to church on the afternoon of Holy Friday, we are attending the burial of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Every image and object we see, every step we take, is part of our solemn mourning for the death of Christ. We remember the very devoted man who took down the body of Christ from the cross, Joseph of Arimathea. After Joseph removed the body of Jesus, he anointed it with oil, and then he "wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb!"

Christ is real. His death is real. To see His lifeless body on the cross, to reach up and carry His weight down, is real. We respect Joseph's act of love and devotion, and we respect the realness of Christ's death on the cross reading when we hear the story of Christ's crucifixion and death once again, the icon wraps the icon in white linen.

After Joseph took down the body of Christ he prepared it for burial and carried the body to a new tomb. The priest represents this by carrying the Epitaphios icon, a beautiful cloth icon showing Christ's body being prepared for burial, around the church and placing it in the kouvakion, which symbolizes the tomb of Christ. During the procession, we hear the hymn:

When Joseph of Arimathea took You, the Life of all, now dead, down from the cross, he buried You in fine linen, after anointing You with myrrh. He yearned with desire, humbly contained by awe, rejoicing, he cried out to You: Glory to Your condescension, O merciful God!

Notice that the priest chants to God, who condescended to die on the cross. This means that our all-powerful Lord and Creator decided to do something He didn't have to do—to become a man and die like a man, out of love. Joseph held a dead man in his arms, but we never forget that this man was God Himself.



HOLY FRIDAY EVENING



Holy Friday evening is filled with melodies and customs that are hundreds of years old. Bright, colorful flowers decorate the tomb of Christ. There is a long procession around the church. We hold candles as we sing familiar hymns. These are the things we hear, see, smell, and do during this evening's service.

We begin by descending with Christ into the tomb, where He was buried. In Hades—the place where the dead go—He rescues Adam, Eve, and all of humanity which holds the Epitaphios. We light our way with candles and we sing the Trisagion hymn: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!"

We stop a few times during our walk around the church, and the priest intones or sings petitions. We respond with "Lord, have mercy!" At the end of the procession, the kouvakion may be held high for us to pass underneath on our way back into the church. This symbolizes our passing from death to life.

In the church, the priest brings the Epitaphios into the altar, circles the table with it three times, and lays it on the holy altar table. It will stay here until the Feast of the Ascension, forty days after Pascha.

You may notice that the priest is wearing brightly colored vestments, which show joy. What is joyful about being at the funeral of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Aren't we in mourning?

We experience here something called "joyful sadness" (in Greek, *chomolyte, gopoliaki*). How can we be joyful and sad at the same time? We know how tragic and unjust it is for anyone to die, especially Christ. But we also know that His death will lead to His resurrection, and to the resurrection of us all. We know that when Christ enters the place of death, Hades, He has filled it with life. He has taken its power and transformed death from a tragic end into a joyful beginning.

As we shift from sorrow into joy, we hear one of the most exciting Old Testament prophecies. God shows the prophet Ezekiel a valley of "very dry bones." At the Lord's command, Ezekiel speaks to the bones, and they begin to rise and are covered with flesh. He then speaks to them, and then they begin breathing and stand up. God promises to put His Spirit in them, and they will live again. On the night that Christ confronts death, we learn that we are all made for life.

Part of Christ's funeral is the procession around the outside of the church. We walk behind the tomb of Christ, from eternal death. On Holy Friday evening, the Giver of Life is in this place of darkness; the Giver of Life is in this place of death. We must remember this as we hear and sing a series of hymns.

At one point, we sing a conversation between a mother and her innocent son who has been killed. What does this mother say? "O, my most sweet springtime! O, my son beloved, where does your beauty go?"

Her son responds, "Do not lament, mother. I suffer the passion to free Adam and Eve."

Have you ever heard a mother call her child "springtime"? Mary, the Mother of God, calls her Son "springtime." And her Son, Jesus, says, "Don't worry, mother. I know what I'm doing."

Part of Christ's funeral is the procession around the outside of the church. We walk behind the tomb of Christ,

Shift from sorrow into joy

A. Read the hymn on page 11, which begins "Today is hung upon the tree, He who suspended the land in the midst of the waters." What do you notice about the imagery of the contrast in each verse? Why do you think we chant this hymn at this service?

B. Read the hymn on page 12, about Joseph of Arimathea anointing Jesus after His death. What is important about this person?

C. On page 13, we read about the Lamentation hymns, the conversation between Mary and her son, Jesus. Why do you think this hymn is set up as a conversation? How does this help us worship during Christ's funeral service?

Give students about ten minutes to discuss each of the questions, and then regroup the class to share responses. Answers might include:

- A. Each image . . .
 - Hung on the tree/suspended land in the waters
 - Crown of thorns/king of angels
 - Wrapped with mockery/wrapped heavens with clouds
 - Received buffetings/freed Adam

Transfixed with nails/bridegroom of Church Pierced with a spear/son of the virgin Passion/Resurrection

. . . contrasts weakness and power, bondage and freedom. We pray this hymn on Holy Thursday evening to bring home the reality of our faith: how very wrong it was to bring death to the life-giving one; and to remind us that the one who died was God Himself.

B. Joseph of Arimathea is important because he demonstrates his love, respect, and devotion by giving Jesus a proper burial place. As he cares for Christ in the same way he would care for any other person, he is an example of someone who has faith that the man on the cross is more than just a man. We remember him at this service, to remind us of how real Christ's human death was.

C. The conversation between Mary and Jesus "brings home" His humanity, by highlighting His relationship with His mother. Mary, of course, is very sad at the death of her Son. At the same time, her disbelief shows that her Son is God Himself.

5. Appropriate the story and vision

Direct students' attention to the prophecy of Ezekiel described at the bottom of page 13, when he has a vision of dry bones coming back to life. Explain to students:

- **The focus shifts from Christ to us.**
- We read this prophecy on Holy Friday evening, to remind us that Christ's death will lead to life for all of us.
- On page 12, we are reminded that **"On the night that Christ confronts death, we learn that we are all made for life."**

Ask students:

- Why do we hold brightly lit candles in the darkness on Holy Friday evening?

Guide them to the conclusion:

- We hold candles because the light of Christ fills and overpowers the darkness of death and suffering.

Help students to relate this to their own lives, that **Christ can fill us with light even through our own "dark" times, because He Himself suffered a dark time, too.**

Highlight the reference on page 13 to *charmolype* (pronounced har-mo-lee-pee), which means "joyful sadness."

- Because of Christ, this is how we worship Him in His suffering, and this is how we can deal with our own suffering.
- Jesus experienced suffering, betrayal, and burial to give meaning to our own painful and challenging experiences.
- This also explains why we sing "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us" at Christ's funeral. We know that we are the ones who need His mercy, and we believe that even as we mourn His death, we

know because of His resurrection that He will grant us that mercy.

6. Decision for lived response

Invite students to think again about the challenging experience that they had brought to mind at the beginning of the lesson. Ask:

- The next time a sad event or challenge happens, how will you let Christ's light brighten your darkness?
- How will you have peace and hope in Christ's presence even in a difficult time?
- How will you allow the challenges of your own life to unite you to Christ?

These are tough questions. Allow them to "hang" for a few minutes, and then allow students to share if they want. Some answers to look for:

- Praying for strength; trying to be thankful for the good things; keeping a small icon or prayer rope with me to remind me that Christ understands and is with me; reading Scripture; talking to someone trustworthy.

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.

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.

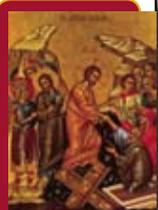
- A. Two Old Testament readings on that day that prophesy Christ's dwelling for three days in the tomb tell about two quite frightening and traumatic events: Jonah in the belly of the whale; and the three youths thrown into a fiery furnace. How is it that both Jonah and the three youths sing prayers 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 16:7 to find out what they were told.



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 tied up and in chains, representing death. The broken locks and chains remind us that Jesus destroyed the power of death over human life.

HOLY SATURDAY EVENING



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. 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.



We remember victory over death

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.

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

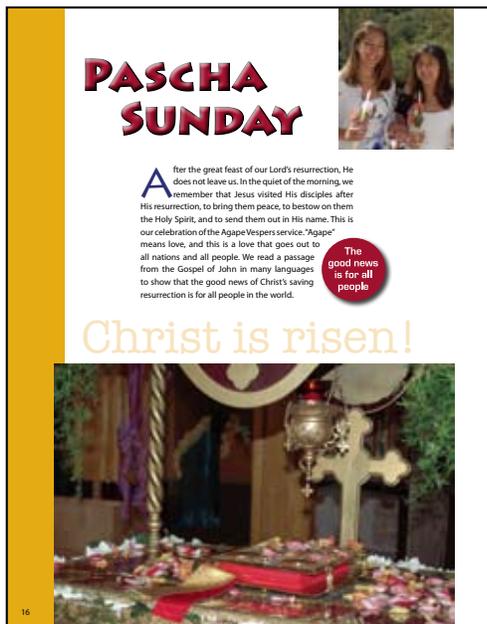
- C. Look at the icon of the empty tomb on page 14, which shows the women finding the tomb empty. Read Mark 16:4–8. How do you think the women felt when they found the tomb empty? When the young man in white told them to go tell the disciples what had happened, why do you think the women did not say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

ADDITIONAL IDEAS

The following are suggestions for ways to use some of the Scripture readings, iconography, cultural references, and other features that are not included in the lessons. This list follows *Journey through Holy Week* sequentially and notes the zine page where each feature can be found.

General suggestion for icons

Throughout the zine, many icons help to tell the story. Invite students to “put themselves” somewhere in the icon. Ask them where they would put themselves and what they would be doing, thinking, and saying.

Page 1

The “Road to Resurrection” summarizes the narrative of Christ’s final earthly days. This summary can be a useful springboard for students to make meaning of the story in a variety of ways. Students can dramatize elements of the story as a skit, artistically represent the events in sequence, or write about them.

Page 4

Have students read Isaiah 53:3–6 and answer: “How does it help you understand what you see in the icon of the Bridegroom?”

Have them read John 19:1–5 to understand the meaning of the words “Behold the man!” on some of the Bridegroom icons.

Page 5

Have students read the Bridegroom Hymn and work together to rewrite it in their own words.

Page 6

Have students read about the Presanctified Liturgy and then read Luke 9:23–26 to understand why catechumens take up their crosses.

Page 10

Have students read John 13:6–9 and discuss Peter’s reaction when Jesus washes the disciples’ feet. Have them answer the question: “What do you think Jesus wanted to say about Himself by washing the feet of His disciples?”

Have students read John 13:21–26, and find the people in the icon of the mystical supper, as they are described in the passage. Have them answer the question: “Who is the person closest to Jesus in the icon, and what is he doing?” You can also ask, “Who is also next to Jesus in the icon, in the place of honor (Judas). Why did he fall?”

Page 11

Have students read Psalm 24:7–10 and John 18:33–37 and discuss the question: “How do these two passages relate to one another and to the cross?” The psalm asks, “Who is the king of glory”; Pilate asked about Jesus’s kingship; and on the icon of the crucifixion, we see “the king of glory.”

Golgotha means “at the place of the skull.” Symbolically this represents the skull of Adam. Ask students why they think we have this tradition.

Have students read Matthew 27:54 to find out what the centurion is saying at the cross.

Page 12

Have students read the Gospel passages referenced on this page to find out who was present at Jesus’s burial. Students can compare and contrast the different readings.

Page 17

Read through the different cultural traditions with your students. Invite them to compare them and to explore those that are less familiar than the traditions they know well. Ask them to name ways they might incorporate them into their Easter celebrations. Also see the activity below, “Easter Traditions and Customs.”

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

There are many tasks that need to be done before and during Holy Week in parishes, preparing for the various services. These include making palm crosses for Palm Sunday, dyeing eggs, (traditionally done on Holy Thursday), decorating the *kouvouklion* for Good Friday, and decorating the church itself for the Paschal Liturgy.

HOPES UP!

Adapted from Easter Crafts and Activities (Gospel Light, 2000).

Help students explore the idea of hope.

Materials

- Markers
- Four large sheets of newsprint and a way to hang them on the walls around your classroom

Preparation

On each sheet write one of the following:

- What do you hope your family will do this summer?
- What do you hope to receive as a birthday gift?
- What do you hope to be when you grow up?
- What do you hope to learn to do better?

Hang these five sheets around the classroom at a height that your students can reach. Place markers by each sheet.

Procedures

Have the students go around the room to each sheet and place their answers to as many of the questions as they can on a sheet. They could write it out or draw a picture. As they do this, discuss their hopes with them. After enough time has elapsed discuss the following issues:

- Which of your hopes is least likely to happen? Which one is most likely? Why?
- Who will make these hopes happen? Does it depend on you or other people?
- Why is it hard for our hopes to happen?

After a while, say:

- As Christians, we have hope in Jesus. The people of Israel had many hopes for Jesus. They lived under Roman occupation for many years and hoped that a king—a Messiah—would restore their freedom.

HYMNS

There are many beautiful hymns in Holy Week that young people should begin to learn. To name a few:

- Behold the Bridegroom Comes (*Idou o Nymphios*)
- Of Your Bridal Chamber (*Ton Nymphona Sou*)
- Of Your Mystical Supper (*Tou Deipnou Sou*)
- The Noble Joseph (*O Euschemon loisif*)
- The Lamentations (*Engomia*) of Good Friday
- Of Your Resurrection (*Tin Anastasin Sou*)
- Christ is Risen (*Christos Anesti*)

EASTER TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS

Adapted from Easter Crafts and Activities (Gospel Light, 2000).

There are many traditions and customs at Easter time, from dyeing eggs and holding lit candles to Easter egg hunts and the Easter bunny. Some are fun, whereas others are serious. Help the students begin to distinguish between the two.

Draw a line down the center of your blackboard or white board: "Just for Fun" and "For Our Faith."

Ask students to name popular Easter traditions or customs and to decide on which side of the board to list them. You may need to explain some of the stories or origins of these customs, to help them see how some customs that appear fun are connected to the story of Easter, e.g., how red Easter eggs remind us of the blood of Christ, the egg is the tomb, cracking the egg opens up the life inside.

Then discuss which Easter traditions help us think about and understand the story of Christ's passion and resurrection.

WHO SAW HIM?

Adapted from Easter Crafts and Activities (Gospel Light, 2000).

A Bible activity that explores Christ's resurrection.

Materials

- Bibles
- Pens, pencils
- Index cards
- Markers
- Paper

Preparation

Write the following Bible passages on separate index cards, making one card per student, repeating the passages as needed:

- Luke 24:13–35
- Luke 24:36–40
- John 20:10–16
- John 20:24–29
- John 21:1–14
- Acts 1:1–8
- 1 Corinthians 15:6–7

Procedures

Divide a wall space or the blackboard into three columns: "Bible Verse," "Persons," and "What Jesus Did."

Give each student or pairs one of the prepared cards and two blank cards. Instruct the students to find and read the Bible passage. On one of the blank cards write the names of the people who saw Jesus after His resurrection. On the second blank card, write a short description of what Jesus did.

Then allow the students to affix their three cards in a row in the proper columns. Ask the students to explain to the class: How did the people who saw the resurrected Christ react to seeing Him? What did they say? What did they do? What did Jesus say to them? What do we learn about Jesus from these stories?

THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS TODAY

Adapted from Carole Goodwin and Marilyn Kielbasa, Holiday and Seasonal Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens (St. Mary's Press, 2000).

Connect the passion of Christ to the suffering of people around the world today and the hope that the resurrection offers the world. Students will also explore the biblical narratives about the Passion and Resurrection.

Materials

- Bible
- Newspapers and magazines containing articles and photos of people suffering around the world, including natural disasters, wars, crime, abuse, hunger, etc., and for signs of hope and new life, people assisting others, etc; you will need about two or three for each student
- Scissors
- Glue sticks or tape
- Six large sheets of newsprint or poster board
- Markers
- Masking tape

Preparation

On each of the sheets of newsprint or poster board, write one of the following and hang the sheets around the classroom:

- Fear and agony
- Betrayal and arrest
- Denial and abandonment
- Judgment
- Suffering, beating, and torture
- Wrongful death
- Resurrection

Procedures

Distribute the newspapers and magazines. Ask the students to find a cut out articles and photos that reflect the headlines on the sheets.

Have a student open the Bible to Luke 22:39–46 and read the passage while standing near the sheet titled “Fear and agony.” Ask any student with a story or article that reflects that particular headline to place it on the sheet.

Repeat this with the following passages:

- Betrayal and arrest: Luke 22:47–53
- Denial and abandonment: Luke 22:54–65
- Judgment: Luke 22:66–23:25
- Suffering, beating, and torture: Luke 23:26–38
- Wrongful death: Luke 23:39–56
- Resurrection: Luke 24:1–9

If time permits, engage the students in a discussion about the presence of evil and suffering in the world. Discuss how the resurrection empowers Christians to work for justice through prayer and action to overcome suffering.





Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
Department of Religious Education
50 Goddard Avenue
Brookline, MA 02445
(800) 566-1088