

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA



Christ IS Risen!

2018/2019

Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry

Leader Guide Session Plan Ages 8 -12

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Leader Notes:

Thank you for serving as a youth leader! This year's curriculum aims to explain the significance of the resurrection in several ways:

- *Christ IS Risen- The accounts from His friends and witnesses prove that He actually rose from the dead*
- *Christ IS Risen- We say IS because the Resurrection continues for eternity*
- *Christ IS Risen- Christ fulfills the Old Testament Prophecy of the coming Messiah*

This curriculum is designed to be carried out in one Session per class meeting, but please feel free to adjust in response to the children. If you find that they want more time to discuss a particular idea or Session, others may be shortened or abbreviated, as long as the main understandings above are addressed.

Sessions are divided into two types: Traditional and Praxis (Experiential). The first nine sessions are developed in a traditional format and the following eight are set in an interactive format. It is suggested that the praxis sessions be interspersed or combined with the traditional sessions based on your discretion. The praxis sessions may be found in the Praxis Session Plan.

This teacher's guide includes many suggested topics and activity ideas. Again, feel free to modify based on your class and their maturity. Be sure to check with the Spiritual Father if any significant changes are made.

The first sessions of this curriculum follow the events of Great Lent, Holy Week, and the Resurrection. Depending on when you begin this program, we realize that some of the sessions may be implemented long before your youth actually experience the events. We suggest returning to these Sessions during Great Lent as a reminder of what the youth have learned, but the goal is to learn about these events outside of their happening in the life of the church.

Modifications: This curriculum is written youth in grade school, but the maturity and academic abilities of 8 to 12 year olds can vary greatly, as can their familiarity with the topics being discussed. Although there are some specific ideas for modification listed throughout the curriculum, here are a few general suggestions:

Modifying for younger students/lower abilities:

Rephrase sections of the text, or ask a quick question as students read to be sure they are comprehending. This may also be useful if you find the students need more time working on a different section of the Session.

Answer questions together. In most cases, the students are given a space to explain concepts and main ideas after reading or learning about a saint. If you feel students may need more explanation, ask them to answer together using the white boards or large paper, and have them all write down an answer the class is comfortable with.

Modifying for older students/higher abilities:

Have students read passages individually and paraphrase them in their own words to share with the class. You may also give a particular student “homework” to read and prepare an explanation of a passage in order to begin the class discussion the next day.

Allow students to lead parts of the Session. This works best if the student knows which part they will lead the day before, and if you are able to give them some suggestions or guidance on how to lead the discussion. Some students may not be comfortable doing this, but positive reinforcement and encouragement may help them embrace the challenge by the end of the week.

Sensitivity: Sensitivity and empathy are key to any learning environment. Encourage students to talk freely about experiences they have had. As facilitator of these discussions, it is important to remind the students that everyone deserves our respect as images of Christ, and that God is the only judge. Keep an eye on all of the students and be sure to address any unusual/unexpected conversations with the encampment Director and Spiritual Advisor in case further discussion is needed. If this is the first time being together for the majority of the group, it might be helpful to do a few “get-to-know-you” activities first. Be sure to include yourself in some of these activities so that the youth begin to develop a relationship with you as well as their peers

The content of sessions and conveying that content is an important part of your ministry. However, the time spent together and relationships created and maintained are just as crucial. It is within this combination of worship, relationship, interaction, learning and living that our youth encounter Christ and deepen their relationship with Him and His church.

Iconography use: Icons exist first and foremost as a tool through which we glorify God. Access to images of icons on the internet can enhance the understanding of your students and bring authenticity to their work, however it is important to consider the source of the icon, to be respectful of the author's work, and to be thoughtful about any applicable copyright issues. When possible, it is best practice to use icons after receiving permission from the iconographer. Most of the icons provided in the curriculum materials are used with the permission of the iconographer. Please consult your parish priest for guidance in the selection of appropriate icons.

Taking it Home

It is highly recommended that you create a strong link between your youth programming and the families of youth that you serve. Send home a weekly summary of what you worked on with the youth. This could be accomplished through handouts, email, Facebook groups, etc. You may want to include some points or questions for discussion in the home. Ask the youth to provide suggestions for how they can “take home” and live what they learned. These could be included with the parent update.

We have included a template for this correspondence. There are suggestions throughout the curriculum for activities to be completed at home and brought to the next session. We understand that many parishes struggle with consistent attendance, however, setting this as a habit and expectation may help to keep youth as involved as possible.

Supporting the Session

We hope to supply additional resources and ways to live the Resurrection everyday on our social media outlets. Have older youth or parents keep a look-out for these updates. Ask them to share with the group what they learned. You may share the progress of your youth with the OYM Office, which in turn could be shared on our social media for other parishes to enjoy and from which to gain ideas.

We will also be offering additional sessions created by the Ukrainian History and Education Center of NJ. These session expand on Ukrainian traditions associated to celebration of Pascha.

**** NOTES FOR SESSION STRUCTURE****

Each session should contain an element of prayer. You may simply choose an appropriate prayer to begin and end the session, choose a tropar of a saint who you are discussing that day, or join together in a service such as evening prayers, vespers, or an akathist.

Chart paper- There are several activities that involve the use of chart paper and sticky notes. Generally, this can be used in any space, but there may not always be appropriate places to hang the chart paper. The instructions will refer to the chart paper but if you need to use a whiteboard or lay the paper on a table, please do so.

Acknowledgments

Iconography – Archangel Icons - www.archangelicons.com

Orthodox Clip Art – Orthodox Church in America Department of Religious Education
<http://dce.oca.org/resources/line-drawings/>

Christ Is Risen! Logo/Photography - Myr Arts

Red Egg Christ is Risen Graphic – ManyMercies Blog – Free Printables

Session One: Introduction - Christ IS Risen!

Main Ideas: Introduction to the theme and acclimation to the new season.

Supplies needed: chart paper or whiteboard, writing utensils, poster board (or continue to utilize chart paper), a copy of the Participant Workbook for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.) Refreshments for open house and getting to know you activities.



Preparation: Place your poster board (chart paper) somewhere in the room. Separate the paper with two columns. At the top write "greeting" and at the other "response". Under the first column write, "Christ is Risen" and in the second, "Indeed He is Risen!" We suggest that throughout the year you add new greetings and responses in different languages. You will open and close each session with "Christ is Risen".

(10 minutes) Begin this Session with a piece of chart paper with the word "Pascha" written in the middle. After greeting the students, have students think of words that come to mind when they think of "Pascha" then ask them to write them around the outside. You can prompt students by saying Easter if necessary. Invite children to share their favorite memory about Pascha. It can be as simple as remembering lighting their candles in the complete darkness or a favorite item in their basket. If there isn't time for everyone to share, give students the opportunity to share with a partner and then write a quick reminder in case you have time to share later.

(5 minutes) When you finish your conversation, turn to this page in the workbook (page 3 in their book) and take turns reading the following section.

Indeed He IS Risen! This short, but powerful phrase is our theme this year. Throughout the next two weeks we'll look at what it means to us. We'll learn about Pascha, when we traditionally greet each other this way, the events leading up to and following Pascha, as well as the many ways in which this truth applies to our life all year long. Let's start with the meaning of the words- Christ IS Risen! Indeed He IS Risen! They are simple, but tell the most important message there is to tell.

CHRIST: There are lots of ways to talk about or describe Jesus, but for this message- Christ is Jesus, the Son of God, an equal part of the Trinity and who was born on earth as a man to be the Messiah who was foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament.

IS: We don't say Christ 'rose' or 'has risen' like it happened many years ago and now it's over. His resurrection was completed many centuries ago, but the most important part of the Resurrection is that it opened heaven to us, and it is and will always be open to us. He will never be 'un' risen.

RISEN: We will learn more about the events of Holy Week and Pascha later, but for now it is important to know that Jesus was born here on earth, His earthly body was crucified on the cross, and then He appeared again risen from the dead.

These three words wrap up the most important aspect of our beliefs. It isn't just a happy way to greet your Orthodox family and friends, it is a statement of faith. Saying "Christ IS Risen!" shows that you believe in Him, in His Resurrection, and in God's power to defeat Satan, allowing us into heaven.

When you respond to someone with "Indeed He IS Risen!" it is not just a polite reply... it's an agreement. You are saying, "Yes, I too believe in Him, in His Resurrection, and in God's power to defeat Satan, allowing us into heaven."

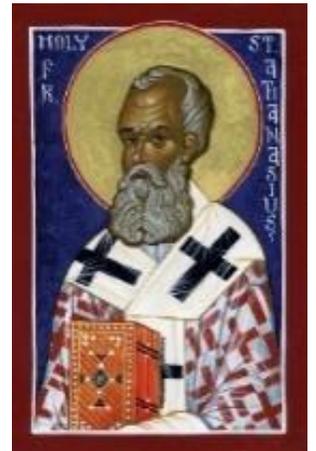
What else can we learn about Christ and His Resurrection? You don't have to be a theologian, someone who studies and becomes an expert in the faith, to let the world know that Christ IS Risen, but the more we learn about the reasons why we say it, the more we can share with others. Let's begin!

For the grace of the feast is not limited to one time, nor does its splendid brilliancy decline; but it is always near, enlightening the minds of those who earnestly desire it.

-St. Athanasius

At this point we suggest conducting a "Welcome Back" social for parents and youth. You may want to invite parents to attend the first session so they will also learn what will be addressed this year. Encourage parents to participate in the discussion. An alternative would be to have parents have a special meeting/introduction to discuss aspects of the coming year.

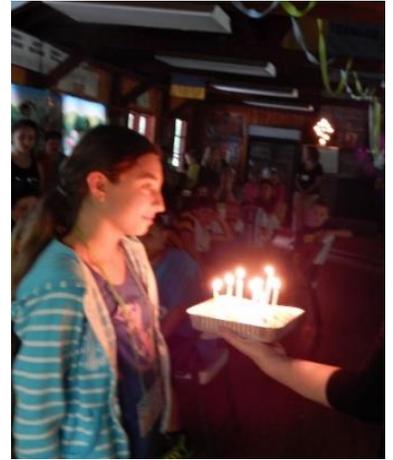
During the Welcome Back Social, you may choose to conduct some "getting to know you" activities for any families who are new to your program or just to renew current friendships. Activities for returning families could focus on what they experienced during the summer. Consider asking older children to plan and lead an activity.



Session Two: Preparation

Main Ideas: Pascha is such an important time in the life of the Church that we are expected to prepare. The Church provides many ways in which to get ready for this special day.

Supplies needed: chart paper or whiteboard, writing utensils, tape measure, handouts from Antiochian Orthodox Department of Religious Education (ww1.antiochian.org/LetUsAttend) choose the four Sessions that correspond to the Sundays listed in the Session, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.)



(5 minutes) Before reading on, have students use a new piece of chart paper to make a list of important events in their lives. Answers may vary, but encourage them to think of things like a birthday party, wedding, graduation, musical performance, game or other sports competitions, an art show, etc.

(10 minutes) When you feel like you have a variety of answers, move back to the workbook (page 4) and have students take turns reading and completing the next sections. Look at the list of important events your class has created. Choose one of the events, perhaps one that recently occurred in your life or will be happening soon, and make a list of ways in which people will prepare for that event. Think about who might be involved, what they will need to do, will they need any items, how far in advance will they begin to prepare?

Whether it's a personal celebration like a birthday party, a competition, a performance, or some other event, it's likely that if it is important to you or to someone else, you put effort into getting ready.

Time to prepare- the Triodion (tree-OH-dee-uhn)

Pascha is the most important day, ever. The Church knows that none of us are as ready for the day as we could be, and provides us with a special time and tools to help us prepare. This special time is called the Triodion, and it begins with three weeks (four Sundays) of preparation for Great Lent, Great Lent itself,

and Holy Week. A special book called the Triodion, or Lenten Triodion, includes all of the special songs and readings for the services during this time period.

(Have the reader pause for a minute here. Ask for a volunteer or two. The goal is to illustrate how taking a running start can help you to jump farther, which is mentioned in the next section. You could do this a number of ways, but consider using a chair or another object to mark the starting line. Have them jump as far as possible one time, starting right on the “line.” Mark their distance with another object then have them jump again with a running start to see how much farther they can go. Depending on how much time you have, you could give everyone the opportunity to jump at once, or a few at a time to compare their distances.) Continue reading.



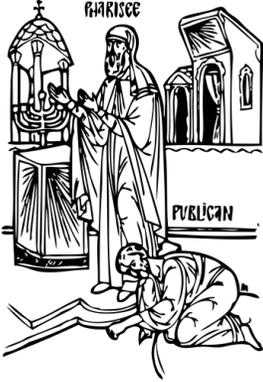
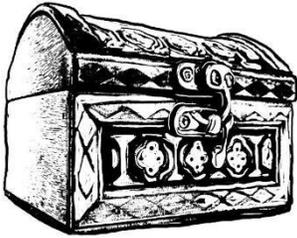
Preparing for Great Lent

During Great Lent we are asked to make some significant changes to the way we live our lives such as fasting, praying more, and attending more church services so that we can get ready for Pascha. The Church knows that if we try to jump right into something difficult, we are less likely to be successful. Competitors in track and field competitions often receiving a warning bell or siren to let them know the race is about to start so that they are mentally prepared for the event. Competitive jumpers take a running start- it would be nearly impossible to jump as far without one. The four Sundays before Lent are like our warning bell and our running start so that we are ready to be successful during Great Lent. Most years, there are only a few weeks between the end of the Nativity season and the beginning of the Triodion. The Church knows we may still be putting Christmas decorations away and humming carols for the last time, so the warning bell is sounded- it's time to get ready!

(20 minutes) Read the following paragraph, then break students up into four groups. Assign each group one of the four Gospel readings. Ask them to read the handout and fill in the blanks in the corresponding box (handouts downloaded from the Antiochian Orthodox Religious Education noted in *Supplies Needed*). Once each group is ready, have them take turns paraphrasing their assigned reading so that all groups fill in all blanks. Younger classes may need to read through each one together. The teacher can read and students can fill in the blanks as they go to save time. Consider having students move around the room as they work so that they get a physical break.

Tools to prepare- the Gospels

The Gospel readings for the four Sundays at the beginning of the Triodion alert us to the coming of Great Lent. They are also a tool that we can use in our preparation for Great Lent and Pascha- this is our running start to be ready for a successful Great Lent. Each gospel contains a message that can be used as a guideline to remind us what is important to focus on during Great Lent. After reading each Gospel, fill in the blanks on the following chart to explain the main ideas of each story.

	<p>The Publican and The Pharisee (Luke 18: 10-14)</p> <p>The Pharisee worshipped with <u>‘himself’</u>, focusing on the good things he had done and not on his relationship with God.</p> <p>The Publican was so sad about the things he hadn’t done right, that he <u>‘bowed’</u> to the floor asking God’s mercy.</p> <p>This Gospel reminds us that no one is perfect, but the person who humbles himself and asks for forgiveness will be lifted <u>‘up’</u>.</p>
	<p>The Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32)</p> <p>The younger son asked his father for his portion of his inheritance. Since this was usually given when the father died, it was an insult to his father to ask before it was time. When he realizes his many mistakes and returns for forgiveness, not only is he forgiven, his father <u>‘celebrates’</u>. The older son does everything his father asks but feels like his brother got more of a reward for making mistakes. This Gospel teaches us two important things: No one is perfect, but if we ask for forgiveness when we make a <u>‘mistake’</u> God will be happy to have us back and we will all be rewarded in heaven.</p>
	<p>The Last Judgement (Matthew 25: 31-46)</p> <p>No one is perfect, but we will all be judged. Jesus uses this Gospel to explain the criteria that will be used at our judgement.</p> <p>First, we will be judged by what we do for <u>‘others’</u>. Not just what we do for ourselves.</p> <p>Second, we are all made in the image and likeness of God, so when we do good things for others, we are doing them for <u>‘God’</u>. No exceptions.</p>
	<p>Forgiveness Sunday (Matthew 6: 14-21)</p> <p>The messages in this Gospel set the tone for Great Lent:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God will <u>‘forgive’</u> us in the way we forgive others. None of us is perfect, so we should forgive others freely. 2. How we <u>‘fast’</u> is even more important than following the rules of fasting. We should fast to become closer to God, not to show how holy we are. 3. Focus on doing good here to build <u>‘treasure’</u> in heaven.

(10 minutes) Finish reading this section. The teacher may read to move things along if you are short on time. If you finish with more time, consider allowing students another opportunity to share a memory about Pascha.

At this point you can end the Session or choose to continue with the following text on fasting and confession. Alternatives for this information could be to send the workbooks home and ask families to review this information together or inviting your parish priest to come and briefly discuss these tools with the class and parents. You may also choose to leave this information to be covered during the Praxis Session 1 - Fasting and Cooking as a Family.

Tools to prepare- Fasting

The Gospel on Forgiveness Sunday gives us a reminder about fasting quietly, not broadcasting our success with everyone. But what is fasting? Most people think of it as not eating, or not eating specific foods. While this is true, there is more to the idea of fasting in the Orthodox Church. Fasting is a tool that we can use to try to be more in control of both what comes into our body and what we use our bodies for. We all need to eat. Think about the special events you listed earlier in the Session. Food



probably plays an important role in many of them. Athletes who are preparing for a big game or race often change what they eat so that their body has the right fuel to play their best. Singers performing in a show or musical are very careful about what they drink so that their voice is at its best. You might plan a special meal or have cake for a party or celebration. Parents and teachers encourage us to eat a good breakfast before a test so our brains have the nutrition they need.

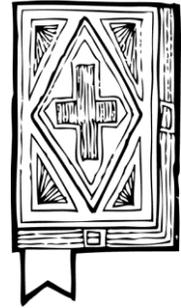
There's nothing wrong with eating- obviously, choosing not to eat would be very damaging! But, because we all eat, it's something the Church can use to help everyone. The Church suggests fasting from specific foods because saying 'no' or 'wait' to those foods helps us to practice saying no to temptations that can hurt our souls, like getting angry with friends and family, judging others, disobeying parents and teachers, etc. It helps us practice following the rules. We know that fasting is something that pleases God because Jesus did it. He fasted in the wilderness before He began His ministry on earth so that he was focused on his mission. We also know that fasting is the opposite of what Adam and Eve did. Adam and Eve were told they could have anything they wanted in the Garden of Eden, except the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Instead of doing what God asked, they gave in to the temptation of the serpent (the Devil) and did what made them happy instead.

There are some exceptions for special days during Great Lent, but generally the Orthodox Church prescribes fasting from foods that come from animals- meat, dairy, fish, butter, eggs, olive oil (which used to be stored in the skins of animals so it had come in contact with animal blood). It is important to make decisions about fasting with parents and your Spiritual Father or parish priest. Just like a doctor prescribes medications and doses specifically for each patient, your parents and priest know what's best for you. For example, fasting very strictly if you've never done it before would be very difficult. Many

priests recommend starting with an easier rule to follow, then working up, or suggest different rules depending on how old you are.

Tools to prepare- Confession

Another tool that the Church gives us to prepare for Great Lent and Pascha is the sacrament of Holy Confession. In any part of our life, if we are going to be successful in our goals, we need to fix mistakes from the past. To use some of our examples from before, athletes watch videos of past games with their coach to change their plays or their technique. Musicians and singers make notes on their music to remind them of tricky spots that have tripped them up in the past. Teachers have students correct their mistakes from a test to learn the right answer to the information. We will learn a little more about Confession in later Sessions, but the Church reminds us that Lent is a good time to come to Confession so that when we celebrate the Resurrection, we are free from the sins that separate us from God.



Finish each Session with CHRIST IS RISEN! And ask students to respond with INDEED HE IS RISEN!

Session Three: Great Lent

Services Part 1

Main Ideas: Focus on one of the specific ways to prepare for Christ's Resurrection during Great Lent- commemorations of people and events each Sunday that guide us in our journey.

Supplies needed: 5 envelopes, copies of icons from Supplemental Materials, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.)



Preparation: You will need enough copies of each icon for each participant. Place the icons in each of the five envelopes. Make five stations in the classroom by spreading out the envelopes that contain the icons for the chart about the Sundays of Great Lent. You'll use these later in the Session.**

(10 minutes) Greet students with Christ IS Risen! (or other language) and begin reading this first section, taking turns with each paragraph.

In our last Session, we talked about getting a running start for Great Lent. During the first weeks of the Triodion we ease into fasting and are given special readings to prepare us for Great Lent. In this Session we will learn about some of the special days during Great Lent, as well as some of the prayers and services that are added at this time that can help us as we get ready to celebrate Christ's Resurrection on Pascha!



ПРОШЕНА НЕДЕЛЯ
FORGIVENESS SUNDAY
ВВЕЧЕРНЯ ✝ ВЕСПЕРС



Forgiveness Sunday Vespers- Great Lent begins on the Monday after Forgiveness Sunday (although because of the timing of our services, 'Monday' begins with Vespers on Sunday evening). We heard about the importance of forgiveness in several of the Gospel readings we learned about in our last Session. Great Lent is challenging- we are trying to break habits and make new routines through fasting and praying more. As we begin our Lenten journey, it makes sense that we would start by asking for forgiveness from anyone we have hurt, and by forgiving others. Guilt about times when we made a bad choice or hurt someone can weigh us down. Holding onto anger or sadness about someone who hurt us can weigh us down. Worrying about the past can weigh us down. By forgiving others and asking them to forgive us, we lighten our load a little bit so that we can focus on the challenges ahead.

Suggested Alternate Activity: Have the youth make a circle (include yourself in the circle). Explain how we ask one another for forgiveness during the service. Beginning with yourself, go around the circle and ask each young person for forgiveness. Teach them the following, You: “ __ (name) _____ please forgive me.” Youth: “ God forgives, as do I.” If the youth have never done this before, it may be awkward at first. That is ok! Remind them that in the Lord’s prayer we ask “forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” The more we forgive and make a habit of asking for and giving forgiveness, the more we can hope to be forgiven.

Sundays of Great Lent-Technically Sundays are not part of Great Lent itself, but because Sunday is such an important day, we use them to mark each week. For each Sunday during Great Lent, there is something special to remember. In our next activity, you’ll complete the chart to learn about these special people, places, and events.

(15 minutes) Divide students up into pairs, or a group of three if necessary. They should first travel around the room to visit each of the envelopes that were placed around the room. At each envelope, the students should read the information in the packet about the remembrance for that Sunday and glue the icon from the envelope onto their chart. They should show you their completed chart when they are done.

(20 minutes) Scavenger Hunt (This may be conducted in the session or as a home assignment. If you choose to send this home, ensure that you inform families. In this way, parents/guardians may work with their child or for youth who may have missed this week, so that they come prepared for the following Session)

Send students off on their scavenger hunt when they complete their chart, or you may want to have them all come together to review the rules, then send them off to look for items at the same time. The goal is for students to find an item that is connected in some way to the symbol listed for each Sunday. They can bring the physical item with them or describe/sketch it on the chart. Give some room to be creative (maybe a flower pattern on a friend’s shirt could count for the Sunday of the Cross). Define the area where students can search , so that you can still monitor all groups as they work. Have students describe what they found for each Sunday (this may also be a good time to review the information for each Sunday instead of right after filling out the chart).

Icon	What is remembered on this Sunday?	Symbol	Scavenger Hunt Item
 <p>The icon depicts the 'Restoration of the Icons' with a church on the left and several figures, including a central figure holding a cross, on the right. The title 'RESTORATION OF THE ICONS' is written at the top.</p>	<p>The first Sunday of Great Lent is known as the Triumph of Orthodoxy. For over 100 years, people fought over whether or not icons should be used and venerated. Part of the controversy came from the second commandment the Lord gave to Moses- <i>“You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in heaven above ...you shall not bow down to serve them.”</i> (Exodus 20: 4-5) Defenders of icons argued that they aren’t idols because we don’t bow down to worship the wood and the paint. Instead, we use the images of Jesus and the saints in icons to guide us to worship God. In 843 the St. Theodora restored the icons!</p>	<p><u>Icons</u>- this is the day when we remember the triumphant return of icons to our homes and churches.</p>	
 <p>The icon shows St. Gregory Palamas with a beard, wearing a white and gold robe with a cross. He is holding a scroll with text. The name 'ST. GREGORY PALAMAS' is written vertically on the left.</p>	<p>St. Gregory Palamas is remembered on the second Sunday of Great Lent. St. Gregory received a world class education, but only cared about what was important to God. He joined a monastery with several family members and spent his time in prayer and fasting, to the point that the other monks had great respect for his dedication to God. St. Gregory wrote many letters defending the connection between our mind and our body in prayer, because at that time there were people who said that praying with our brains was good enough. St. Gregory fought tirelessly to defend the faith, and his teachings were finally accepted towards the end of his life. Some call this the second Triumph of Orthodoxy.</p>	<p><u>A cross</u>- making the sign of the cross is a reminder of the connection between our minds and our bodies as we pray</p>	

Icon	What is remembered on this Sunday?	Symbol	Scavenger Hunt Item
	<p>We commemorate the cross on the third Sunday of Great Lent. Of course, the cross reminds us of the Crucifixion of Christ that will be coming during Holy Week. It is also a reminder of Jesus’s struggle as He carried and was crucified on it, and a symbol of His victory over death. We are given strength as we struggle through Lent focusing more on God and less on the world, and it is a symbol of victory that is waiting for us if we follow Him. In the Old Testament, the Israelites struggled in a land where the water was very bitter until Moses dipped a piece of wood in it. The cross is in the middle of the fast, reminding us not to be bitter while we fast, but to focus on the joy of the Resurrection!</p>	<p><u>Herbs & flowers-</u> on this Sunday, the cross is usually displayed on a tray with flowers and the herb basil which was growing near Jesus’s cross when Empress Helen found it</p>	
	<p>On the fourth Sunday of Great Lent we remember St. John Climacus. When St. John was a young man he decided to give up what he had and became a monk. For many years, he prayed and fasted. Many people saw how holy God had allowed St. John to become and he was asked to write something that would help others to do the same. St. John compared our journey to reunite ourselves with Christ as a ladder- you can’t just jump straight to the top, but must move step by step. The higher you go the more difficult the journey, but you can get right back on!</p>	<p><u>A ladder or steps-</u> this reminds us that each step on our journey back to Christ should lift us higher.</p>	



On the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent, we remember an example of the power of repentance and forgiveness. For many years, St. Mary of Egypt did not care about God. She did what made her happy and enjoyed convincing others to ignore God too. One day she joined people going to venerate the cross, but while everyone was entering the church something invisible kept her out. Eventually she realized that her choice to ignore God was the problem and after praying to the Mother of God and asking for forgiveness, she was able to enter. St. Mary spent the rest of her life in the desert and devoted her whole life to God.

Sand or Soil- a reminder of St. Mary's time in the desert where she spent her life praying and fasting.

Session Four: Great Lent Services Part II

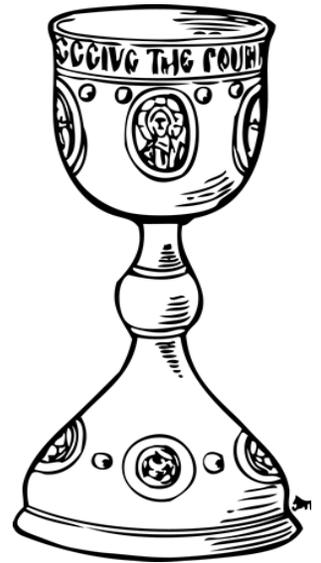
Main Ideas: Focus on one of the specific ways to prepare for Christ's Resurrection during Great Lent- special prayers and services that are only served during this time.

Supplies needed: Copy of Prayer of St. Ephraim, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.) If you choose to illuminate the prayer at the end of the session, you will need craft supplies for this.

(5 minutes) Have students return to their workbooks to read the following information about special services during Lent.

Special Service- The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Usually, when we receive Communion, it is as part of the Divine Liturgy. There are some exceptions, like when the priest visits someone in the hospital. Another exception occurs during Great Lent. The leaders of the early church had a conundrum... receiving Communion was something that people did as often as they could. During the first Communion, when Jesus was with His disciples, "He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" People followed His command, receiving Communion in remembrance of Jesus. In many areas, being a Christian was unpopular or worse, illegal. People came together to receive Communion to give them the strength to continue following God. On the other hand, Great Lent was supposed to be solemn and quiet, focusing on correcting our sins and preparing to celebrate the Resurrection. Because each Divine Liturgy is a celebration of the Resurrection, it was decided that Divine Liturgy should not be served on weekdays during Great Lent. The leaders of the Church recognized that receiving Communion often was a good and important thing to do and so the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated, usually on Wednesdays and Fridays during Great Lent. Communion is served on those days, but was consecrated during the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday before.



Special Service- Canon of St. Andrew

Another service that occurs during Great Lent is the Canon of St. Andrew. St. Andrew of Crete was a monk who wrote many hymns for the church. His most well-known canon is sung in four parts during the first week of Great Lent and then again on the Wednesday of the fifth week of Great Lent. The Canon of St. Andrew is also called the Canon of Repentance. Throughout the service St. Andrew lists the many ways in which he has sinned and he asks God over and over again for forgiveness.

Suggested Additional Activity: The Canon of St. Andrew is rich with Old Testament examples of righteous and unrighteous living. Consider having students complete a mini research activity about a specific person who St. Andrew showcases as an example of righteousness. You could do this in a variety of ways- you might provide a short summary of the person's life and ask the students to read it, or you might direct them towards theologically sound resources to read on their own. Student can

then create something to show what they learned about their assigned topic; some ideas for ways to show what was learned include: each student brings in an object that represents that person's life (a ladder for Jacob or a cloth like Elijah's mantle) and explains it to the group; creating a scrapbook style page with the saint's icon and tropar if they have one and displaying them in the classroom or the parish social area; creating a slide for a digital slideshow about the saints of the canon. This could be done within this Session or possible as a homework assignment to extend the Session. It is important to note that our faith is experienced first and foremost through prayer and participation in the services, but adding this layer of understanding of who St. Andrew is comparing himself to can deepen the experience later when students attend the service later in the year.

Connecting to our 'Biblical' Roots

Throughout Great Lent, the special services, hymns, and daily readings probably include more information from the Old Testament than any other time of the year. They often reflect the connection between the Old Testament prophecy and Christ's Resurrection. Throughout Great Lent we are reminded that God promised His people that a Messiah was coming to save them. The prophets of the Old Testament shared messages from God, sort of like clues, about how they would know that the Messiah was here. The songs and the readings during Great Lent remind us of these clues so that we understand that Jesus is the Messiah and the importance of His Resurrection that we celebrate on Pascha. Also, in the very early history of the church, Great Lent was a time of teaching and learning for catechumens who were preparing to be baptized during Holy Week. These references to the Old Testament taught people about the beginnings of our Faith.

(15 minutes) Have students read the information below about the prayer of St. Ephraim, then complete the fill in the blank activity. If there is time you may want to have students practice making a prostration. Be sure to emphasize that the goal is to practice a serious activity to be sure that they are doing it correctly- not a game and not exercise 'reps.'



Lenten Prayers- Prayer is another tool that the church gives to us during Great Lent. One specific prayer that we say during the Lenten Period is the Prayer of St. Ephraim. This short prayer sums up our Lenten goals- the first line asks God to take away our temptation for sinful behavior and the second sentence asks Him to replace those temptations with virtues, or good ways of life. The third sentence reminds us to focus on our efforts to improve our behavior and not judge how far anyone else has come. After each sentence, we make a prostration by making the sign of the cross, then bowing to touch our forehead to the floor. Fill in the blanks below using the words from the prayer of St. Ephraim on the following page. Unscramble the letters in the circles to complete the phrase at the bottom

Take from me the spirit of:

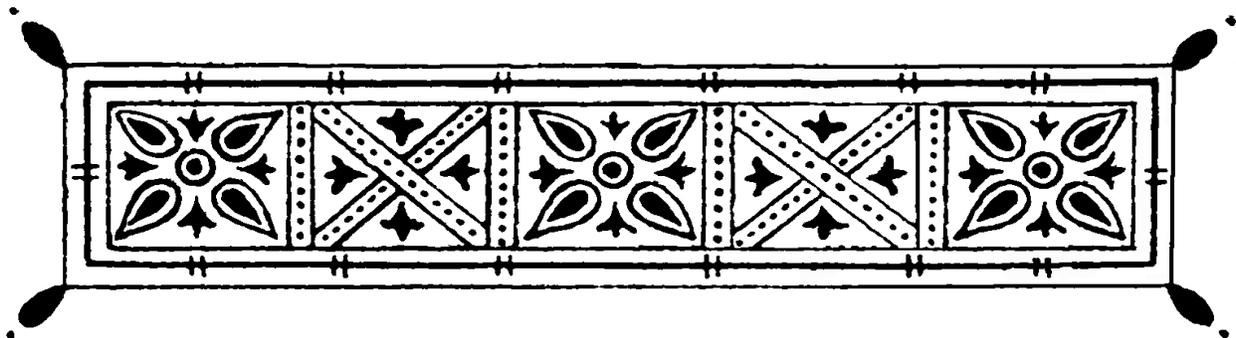
- S L O T H - laziness, lack of commitment, wasting time that could be spent in prayer and helping others
- D E S P A I R - unable to see good in anything or feeling like there is no hope, which means not believing in God's plan and in His power
- L U S T O F P O W E R - wanting more power to tell others what to do, to get your way, or to harm others instead of using power to bring yourself and others closer to God
- I D L E T A L K - using your words for harm, gossip, or for things that are not pleasing to God

Give rather the spirit of:

- C H A S T I T Y - Pure intention in actions and relationships with others
- H U M I L I T Y - Being humble, recognizing that no one is perfect and not putting yourself and your accomplishments ahead of others'
- P A T I E N C E - Accepting God's time table, not being quick to judge people or situations, but waiting and acting to bring peace and love into any situation
- L O V E - God is love, treating all people you meet as images of God

Through this prayer, we ask God to take away the temptation to act in ways that will lead to D E A T H of our soul and ask Him to grant us virtues that will help us to live a good life so that we can join God in H E A V E N.

(If there is extra time at the end of this Session or later in the week, students can color in the words and decoration on this page. End the Session with Christ IS Risen!)





Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian

Lord and Master of my life,
take from me
the spirit of sloth, despondency,
lust of power and idle talk
Rather, grant to your servant
the spirit of chastity, humility,
patience and love.

Yes, Lord and King,
grant me to see my own sins
and not to judge my brother,
for blessed are You,
unto the ages of ages.

Amen.



Session Five: Holy Week Part I

Main Ideas: The events of Christ's Passion are the fulfillment of the Old Testament Prophecy. When we say "Christ IS Risen!" we are recognizing that He is Christ, the Messiah, the One who was foretold.

Supplies needed: Chart paper, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed)

Holy Week - Some aspects of Holy Week can be gruesome. In most cases, the goriest details are not included. Keep an eye on children, especially younger ones. Even if they are used to watching or reading about violence, being in a different environment and away from home may affect a child's reaction. Remind children that the church teaches us that if you have done the best you can to follow God's will and have asked for forgiveness when you make mistakes, death on earth means returning to God. So while the violence may be unpleasant, the end of Christ's suffering means resurrection and salvation!

(15 minutes) Read through the sections about Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday.

After making our way through the 40 days of Great Lent, we begin one more week of fasting and preparation, Holy Week. During this week, the services of the church walk us through Christ's passion—the events that led to His death on the Cross. We hear the account of what happened from those who were there. We learn of the many ways in which Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy, signaling to the people and to us that Jesus was truly the Messiah coming to save all through His Resurrection. We incorporate actions and symbols to help us understand what happened that week in Jerusalem.

"Lazarus Come Forth"

Holy Week begins with Lazarus Saturday, the day we remember Jesus raising His friend Lazarus from the dead. This action would be the last straw for the Jewish leaders who were jealous of Jesus. After hearing Him teach and seeing the miracles that He performed, people followed Him, looking for the Messiah

that had been promised to them. The Jewish leaders were losing their power over the people. [Ask Youth: "How do you think the leaders felt about that?"](#)

Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary, were followers of Jesus. They had heard Him teach and He had even visited their house. When Lazarus became sick, his sisters sent a message to Jesus telling Him, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick (John 11: 3)." Jesus responded saying, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it (John 11:4)." Then He did something that might seem surprising. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again (John 11:5-7)."

[Ask youth, "if you had a friend who was a doctor, wouldn't you want them to visit your family if someone was sick? What would you expect them to do?"](#)

Jesus's disciples remind Him that powerful people are getting angry with Him, but Jesus said that they must go. "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe (John 11: 14-15)." It is easy for us to think if Jesus really loved them why did He wait? Why was He glad that they hadn't gone to be with Lazarus? You wouldn't be the only one wondering...

Martha greeted Jesus saying, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give you." Jesus told Martha that her brother will rise again. Because they had been learning from Jesus, Martha said she knows that he will rise again at the time of the resurrection. She shows that although she knows that Jesus is holy, she doesn't fully understand that He is God...He doesn't have to wait for God's permission or power to raise Lazarus from the dead. Jesus used this moment to explain, "I am the resurrection and the life...Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord. I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world (John 11:25-27)." Martha called her sister and when Mary saw Jesus, she also said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died (John 11:32)." Jesus saw how upset His friends were, and He too was sad, but now we will see what He meant when He told Mary and Martha that Lazarus's sickness would not be for death but so that the Son of God would be glorified.

Jesus went to the place where Lazarus was buried four days earlier and asked someone to remove the stone covering the tomb. After thanking God loudly so that everyone heard Him, He commanded Lazarus to come out of the tomb. To everyone's surprise, Lazarus appeared, still wrapped in the cloths from his burial. [Ask youth, "What do you think people were thinking about what they just saw? What do you think their friends would say if they told them about seeing Lazarus come out from the tomb?"](#)



After seeing this miracle, many people believed that Jesus was God. Waiting until after Lazarus had been dead for several days meant that many more people became believers- the Son of God was glorified through it.

The end of this section of John's gospel lets us know what will happen next as Jesus returns to Jerusalem for the Passover. *"Many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place our nation...Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death (John 11: 45-48 & 53)."*

(15 minutes) "Catch the King" activity- Set up a piece of chart paper with the question: 'What are some qualities of a good king?' Ask them to add anything that comes to mind. After they've added something to the list, have students move their chairs into a circle facing each other to play a game called, "Catch the King." Students may have played games with a similar premise before, but the goal is to figure out who is the "king" of the circle. Choose one student to be the person trying to catch the king and ask that student to leave the room. Everyone else remains seated while you quickly choose one other student to be the "king" of the circle. That person begins an action such as clapping their hands, tugging their ear, shuffling their feet, etc. Everyone else mimics the action the "king" chooses and the "king" attempts to change the action every so often without being caught. The rest of the circle tries to pay attention to the "king" without giving their identity away. The person who left the room returns to the center of the circle and tries to catch the "king." For example, if the "king" was shuffling their feet on the floor, they may begin to tap their knees with their hands, without the person "catching" them. The "king" continues to change the action, while the "catcher" makes guesses about who they think the king might be. If the student can catch the "king," the king becomes the next person to guess and the "catcher" gets to pick the next "king." You will not have time for everyone to be catcher and/or king, so you may want to set some guidelines so that you get a few rounds in. Consider requiring the king to change the motion every 10 seconds and/or limiting the number of guesses or amount of time the person has to catch the "king." If the catcher is unsuccessful, they should find a spot in the circle (don't leave them in the middle for too long).

Play the game for about 10 minutes, then take a few minutes to go over what the students wrote on the chart paper. What themes do they see? Return to the workbook to finish the session.



The King they wanted

Take a look at the list you made about what makes a “good” king. Shortly after raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus and His disciples headed back to Jerusalem. News of what had happened in Bethany had already spread to the city and people were there to greet their “Messiah,” the king they had been waiting for. As we mentioned in the last Session, the Jews were given many clues in the Old Testament about who the Messiah would be. For centuries, the Jewish people had been ruled by other powers like the Babylonians and now the Romans. They believed that their Savior would be a warrior who would kick out the Romans and let the people live their own way. When they realized that Jesus was the Messiah, they greeted him with palm branches, ready for a victory parade.

The King we needed

However, they hadn’t paid close enough attention to the clues from the prophets and Jesus’s teachings. Jesus was not coming to destroy the Romans, He was coming to destroy the power of death. When Adam and Eve were sent out of the Garden of Eden for disobeying God’s rules, they separated both their soul and their body from Him. Before Jesus’s resurrection, when a person’s body died, their soul went to Hades. The gates to Heaven were still shut. The Messiah wasn’t coming to free the Jews from the Romans. He was coming to free the souls of all of the Righteous people who had lived a good life and were waiting for the chance to rejoin God in Heaven. [*Ask youth, “How does it feel when you think you are*](#)

[*about to get something- maybe a present or something you’ve been asking for and it turns out you get something different?”*](#)

This is how the events of Holy Week begin. Throughout the week we remember Christ entering into Jerusalem on a young donkey, spending His last few days with His disciples, being betrayed by one of them who turned Jesus into the council of Jewish leaders. They, along with the Roman leaders, put Jesus to death. We mourn the death of Jesus, but Just like Lazarus, the death of His body will be so that God will be glorified and we will all be given the chance to go to heaven.

The Old and the New

Throughout the services of Holy Week, we hear that the events that happened around Jesus and to Him were done in a specific way to fulfill the prophecy. When we say that ‘Christ IS Risen!’ is a statement about what we believe, then we have to know that this was actually Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the one whom the prophets were talking about. Some people thought that Jesus was just a really holy man, maybe a prophet. By looking for the connections between



the clues (prophecy) about the Messiah in the Old Testament with Jesus, the New Testament, we can see that truly He is the One the prophets were telling us to look for.

Draw a line from each piece of Old Testament prophecy to the part of the New Testament that shows Jesus fulfilling the prophecy.

(15 minutes). Have students read the information about Christ fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy, and then draw a line to match the Old Testament prophecy with the New Testament witness. Finish the Session with Christ IS Risen!

Prophecy of the Old Testament

*“O Lord, save us now; O Lord, prosper us now. Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord”
Psalm 118:25-26*

*“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Proclaim it aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King comes to you; He is righteous and saving; He is gentle and mounted upon a donkey, even a young foal.”
Zechariah 9:9*

*“Although He was ill-treated, He opened not His mouth. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before his shearers, so He opens not His mouth.”
Isaiah 53:7*

*“Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord; “Behold I will open your tombs, bring you up from your grave, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord.”’
Ezekiel 37:8*

New Testament Account

*“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;”
Matthew 27: 50-52*

*“And He said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it... Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it.”
Mark 11: 2 & 7*

*Matthew 27:50-52 “When they heard Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: ‘Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!”
John 12:12-13*

*“And the high priest arose and said to Him, ‘Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against you?’ But Jesus kept silent.”
Matthew 26: 62*

Session Six: Holy Week Part II

Main Ideas: Learning about the events of Holy Week and Christ's Passion.

Supplies needed: Chart paper, copies of Holy Week Explanation (found in Supplemental Materials) Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.) If you choose to illuminate the prayer at the end of the session, you will need craft supplies for this.

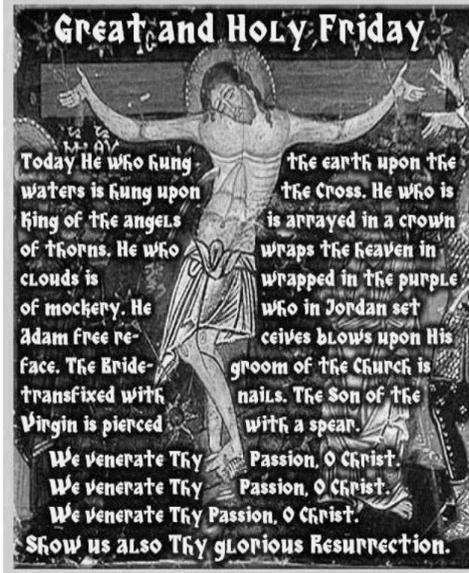
Preparation: Make a copy of the Holy Week Explanations found in your Supplemental Materials. Affix these to the wall around your room at student eye level. You'll use these later in the Session. **

Be sure that students understand that our services aren't like Civil War Reenactments. On the one hand, we aren't acting out what happened like actors on a stage and we certainly can't say that by reading the Passion Gospels we know exactly what it felt like for Jesus. On the other hand, we do try to put ourselves in those positions, to come as close to the events as we can and to experience their power.

"TODAY"

In the introduction to our theme, we learned that we say 'Christ IS Risen!' because it is not just something that happened once a long time ago. The Resurrection is true today and always will be. Many of the hymns that we sing use the word "today" as if we are living in the moment that we are celebrating. While we don't pretend to know exactly what it was like for Jesus to go through His Passion, we try to live out the experiences that we hear about. Focusing on the suffering He went through gives us strength to live through our own struggles and challenges.

In our next activity, you will learn how the services of Holy Week provide something for each of our senses. Complete the chart on the following pages so that you can use them as a guide every year during Holy Week. These services are full of information, so each year you may learn something new. Also, please note that these are the services that are served specifically for Holy Week, but parishes may do something slightly different based on the guidance of their priest and bishop.

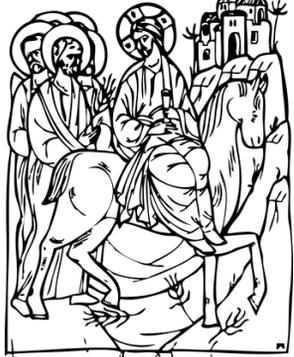


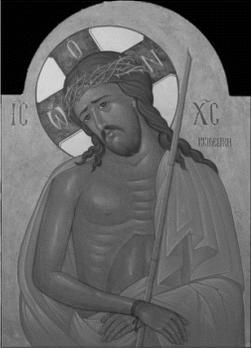
(30 minutes) You could do this next activity in a number of ways, but the suggestion below should work for any of the groups (especially the younger ones). The goal is for students to learn a little bit about each service and to think about how their senses are being involved so that they aren't just listening to a story, but are trying to experience what is being described during the service.

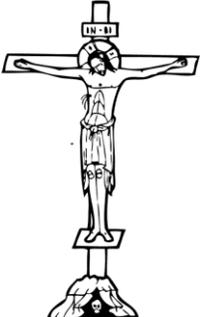
The suggested approach is to have the students walk around the room reading the information about the service, then ask students to write down what sense(s) might be involved and in what ways. Walk around while this is taking place and checking with students for understanding. Once everyone has completed the round, take time for them to share the senses they chose and why.

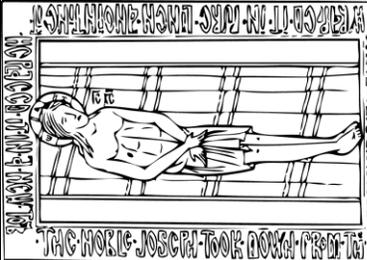
In reality, each of these services could have its own Session, and students may have more questions. For the sake of time, the information provided is brief, but should cover the main points of the services. The "answers" below are suggestions, accept anything that seems reasonable and that students can explain in their own words.

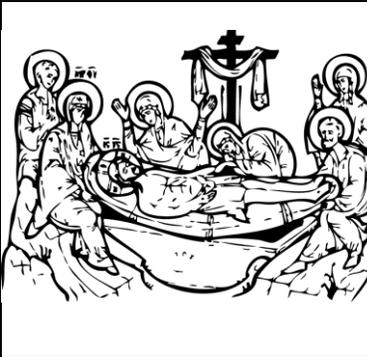
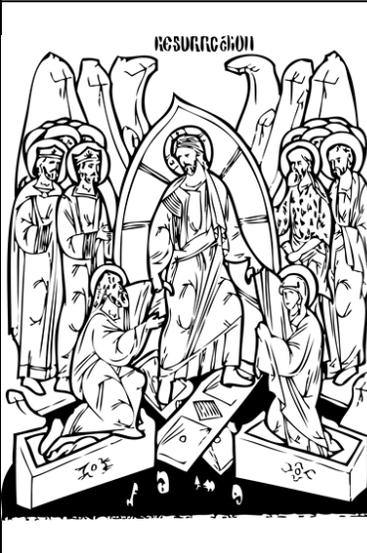
The Services of Holy Week

Icon	Service	How we experience it
 <p>RAISING OF LAZARUS</p> <p>The icon depicts Jesus on the left, gesturing towards Lazarus on the right, who is being supported by others. Lazarus is wrapped in bandages. The scene is set outdoors with a building in the background.</p>	<p>Lazarus Saturday-</p> <p>On this day, Divine Liturgy is served. We remember Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, foreshadowing His resurrection in just a few days.</p>	<p>Hearing the words- especially Jesus wept</p>
 <p>ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM IC XC</p> <p>The icon shows Jesus riding a donkey, surrounded by people. A city with towers is visible in the background.</p>	<p>Palm Sunday-</p> <p>During the Divine Liturgy, we remember Jesus arriving in Jerusalem. While the Jews were preparing for the Passover celebration, Jesus we are preparing for His glorious Resurrection.</p>	<p>Touch- holding the palms in our hands and waving them like the people in Jerusalem</p>

Icon	Service	How we experience it
 <p>An icon of Christ as the Bridegroom. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a crown and a long, draped garment. He has a halo with a cross and the letters 'IC XC' on either side. The background is dark.</p>	<p>Bridegroom Matins-</p> <p>This service is held three times, during the evenings of Holy Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Even though Matins are normally held in the morning, Holy Week is not like any other time.</p>	<p>Sight- seeing the icon of Christ as the Bridegroom traveling through the church</p>
 <p>An icon of the Sacrament of Holy Unction. A priest in a dark robe is shown anointing a man's forehead with oil from a small vessel. The man is kneeling in prayer. Other figures are visible in the background.</p>	<p>Holy Unction-</p> <p>The Sacrament of Holy Unction is a service for healing and strength. Although this service can be done any time of the year, it is usually celebrated in the evening on Holy Wednesday.</p>	<p>Touch- feeling the oil</p> <p>Possibly Smell- sometimes the oil has a light fragrance</p>

 <p>The icon depicts Jesus Christ seated at the center of a table with his twelve apostles. They are gathered for the Last Supper. The scene is set within an architectural frame with the words 'LAST SUPPER' inscribed at the top.</p>	<p>Holy Thursday- Commemoration of the Mystical Supper-</p> <p>A Vesperal Divine Liturgy is served on Thursday morning. During this service we remember the first Eucharist, or Communion that took place shortly before Christ's crucifixion.</p>	<p>Taste- Living the first Eucharist by receiving Communion on this day</p>
<p>Icon</p>	<p>Service</p>	<p>How we experience it</p>
 <p>The icon shows Jesus Christ on the cross. The cross is set on a base. The words 'INRI' are visible on the top part of the cross.</p>	<p>The Twelve Passion Gospels- Matins of Great & Holy Friday-</p> <p>This service is held on the evening of Holy Thursday. We relive the betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus.</p>	<p>Hearing- The text of this service is heavy with descriptions of Jesus being beaten and tortured, carrying his cross, being pierced by the sword, etc.</p>

	<p>The Royal Hours of Great and Holy Friday-</p> <p>This service is held in the morning on Holy Friday. Hymns and readings give us more details about the suffering of Jesus and the connection between Him and the Old Testament prophecy.</p>	<p>Hearing- the hymns of the church are rich in details that cause us to think deeply about what happened in Jerusalem</p>
	<p>Great Vespers of Great and Holy Friday- Taking Down the Body of Jesus From the Holy Cross</p> <p>Vespers are held in the afternoon on Holy Friday. We remember Joseph of Arimathea and those who took Jesus' body down from the Cross and buried it.</p>	<p>Sight- seeing Jesus's body (on the plaschanitsa) being carried like Joseph and his companions carried Him</p> <p>Touch- venerating the plaschanitsa; kissing Jesus's wounds from the crucifixion</p>
<p>Icon</p>	<p>Service</p>	<p>How we experience it</p>

	<p>Matins of Holy Saturday- The Lamentation Service</p> <p>This service occurs in the evening on Holy Friday. We sing hymns that are both sorrowful for Jesus's suffering and hopeful because we know the Resurrection is near.</p>	<p>Smell- The rose water that is sprinkled is incredibly sweet and fragrant</p> <p>Sight & Touch- another procession with the shroud/plaschanitsa helps to act out Jesus looking for Adam and Eve in Hades</p>
	<p>Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great- Christ's Victory Over Death & Harrowing of Hades</p> <p>On Holy Saturday, this special service is held. Jesus went into Hades and broke open the gates, freeing all the dead!</p>	<p>Sight- seeing the church literally change from dark to light with the changing of the cloths/rushnyky</p> <p>Hearing- the songs also get brighter, we sing joyfully instead of solemnly</p>

Please preview session five- there is an additional activity at the end and you might want to assign a homework task at the end of Session four in order to prepare for that activity

Session Seven -Pascha: O Death Where is Your Sting?

Main Ideas: Focus on the events of the Resurrection, the evidence provided to us in the Bible, and connections to the services we celebrate on Pascha.

Supplies needed: Bibles, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.)

(15 minutes) Warm up activity- have students think about what they can remember from an event in the last week or two- the goal of this activity is to illustrate the fact that multiple people can be eyewitnesses to an event, but not have the exact same memory of it, so ideally, they would describe an event that they all attended. For example, ask them to tell you what happened at coffee hour the previous Sunday. Students can jot down a few things then each tell their 30 second version of “What happened at Coffee hour.” The goal is for students to see that even though they were all present, they participated differently and saw things differently from one another.

(20 minutes) Have students take turns reading the following workbook sections out loud, then break them up into four groups. Each group should read one of the Gospel readings listed and answer the questions that follow based on only their reading. When everyone has finished, have each group share their answers, while the other groups add any missing details to their answers.

Christ IS Risen! In today’s Session we will focus on Pascha, the day of Christ’s glorious Resurrection. We’ll learn a little bit about what happened on that day many centuries ago, how we celebrate it today, and some of the traditions that we follow.

Christ IS Risen!



Since this phrase is our theme for the year, and Pascha is the reason that we say it, let’s take a closer look at its meaning. In our last Session, we compared the Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah to what actually happened during Jesus’s crucifixion and burial to see that He really was the One who the prophets said would be coming. He really is Christ. Now let’s look at the last part of the phrase- Risen! In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul talks to those who are having trouble believing that Jesus rose from the dead, and that He raised those who had been waiting in Hades with Him. St. Paul reminds them that although he didn’t witness the crucifixion himself, he spoke with Jesus on the road to Damascus after He had risen from the dead. He heard multiple stories from the disciples about what they had seen and he says that the people in Corinth can go and ask them. *“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are all men the most pitiable (1Cor. 15:17-19).”* Do you know what futile means? It means that there is no point. St. Paul

explains to the people in Corinth that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then Hades wasn't defeated, and Heaven wasn't opened.

The four Gospel stories of Jesus's Crucifixion and Resurrection are sort of like witness statements from people who were there, or heard the stories from people who were. In your warm up activity you talked about the fact that each individual person will remember an event differently from all of the other individuals who were present, but we can still use the information to create a complete picture of what happened. Since we've already seen that it was really Christ, let's use the Gospels to see that He is truly risen. What questions might the Corinthians have had? Perhaps who was the first to find out that Christ had risen from the dead? And what did they find, if Christ's body wasn't there? How did other people find out? Are they sure He actually rose from the dead?

The four Gospel readings that tell us about this time are:

John 20: 1-18

Luke 24: 1-12

Mark 16: 1-12

Matthew 28: 1-9

Who was the first to find out that Christ was no longer in the tomb?

[John- Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb and sees that the stone is rolled away; she goes and gets Simon Peter and John himself \(they may not realize that John refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved\); when she tells them the stone has been moved, she says "we" don't know where they put Jesus so there may have been other women with her.](#)

[Luke- at first it just says the women who had come from Galilee, but later names Mary Magdalene, Joanne, Mary the mother of James and other women; See the footnotes in the Orthodox Studet Bible, it may have been Mary the Mother of God](#)

[Mark- Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of James^^ and Salome,](#)

[Matthew- Mary Magdelne, "the other Mary"](#)

If Jesus's body wasn't there, what did they find?

[John- they find the cloths that were used to wrap Jesus's body.](#)

[Luke- two men, angels who asked them why they were looking for someone dead; they reminded the women that Jesus had told them that He would rise again.](#)

[Mark- an angel who told them to go to Galilee, Jesus had risen and would meet them there](#)

[Matthew-There was an earthquake and an angel appeared to them, rolling away the stone; he tells them to come and see the place where Jesus was then sends them to tell their friends](#)

How did other people find out about Jesus's Resurrection?

John- Mary saw Jesus who told her to go and tell the disciples; she did as she was told

Luke- the women went and told the disciples, but they didn't really believe them; Peter did go to look for himself and others followed him

Mark- In this version, the women tell no one because they are scared.

Matthew- The angel told them women to tell their friends, and they did

How do they know that He actually rose from the dead?

John- Jesus appeared to Mary. She didn't recognize Him at first, but then tries to hug Him. He tells her that things aren't exactly as they were before, but she recognizes Him as her friend and teacher

Luke- The cloths that they used to wrap Jesus's body were still there.

Mark- an angel told them and they could see the cloths

Matthew- the angel tells them to come and see the place where Jesus had been so they could see that it was empty; he told them Jesus would meet them in Galilee and they saw Him on their way.



“Before the dawn, Mary and the women came and found the stone rolled away from the tomb. They heard the angelic voice, “Why do you seek among the dead as a man the One who is Everlasting Light? Behold the cloths in the grave! Go and proclaim to the world: The Lord is risen! He has slain death, as He is the Son of God, saving the race of men.”

-Hypakoe on Great and Holy Pascha

(15-20 minutes) Have students read the following text. If possible, have audio available so that they can listen to a priest read St. John's sermon out loud (Many parishes have uploaded videos of their priest reading the sermon on YouTube, at a minimum you could play one of these through someone's phone) . If you do not have audio, read the sermon aloud for the youth. The students may not understand every single part, but hearing it read out loud with a passionate voice is very compelling on its own.

Yesterday I was Crucified with Him, Today I am Glorified with Him!

Like many of the Holy Week services we learned about, there are many ways in which we celebrate the Resurrection as if we are right there. We venerate the shroud/plaschanitsa one last time as we enter the church because during the first service of Nocturns (Midnight Office), the priest comes to the tomb and removes Jesus's body to show that it is no longer in the tomb. Then the church is in complete darkness. The Hypakoe which is one of the hymns from the Matins service says that the women came to the tomb “before the dawn.” Most churches begin these services around Midnight as we move from Saturday night to Sunday morning. Some begin very early in the morning on Sunday before the dawn, just like the women. . From the total darkness that reminds us of the darkness of death before Jesus came to save

us, the priest brings out his candles, and everyone else spreads the light, just like Christ, throughout the church. We make one more procession, this time as if we are the women going to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. Then we proclaim that we too know that Jesus IS Risen and follow with Matins and Divine Liturgy. Many parishes also have Agape Vespers service around noon on Sunday to continue the celebration.

The Paschal Sermon

On this, the day of the Resurrection, every Orthodox Church hears the sermon of St John Chrysostom. St. John begins by telling us that everyone, even if they aren't as prepared as they should be, everyone who wants to join in this holiest of days is welcome and encouraged to attend. It is one of the most moving moments! Listen as St. John interrogates the devil, challenging him, and celebrating Jesus's victory over death.

The Catechetical Sermon of St. John Chrysostom is read during Matins of Pascha.

If any man be devout and love God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast. If any man be a wise servant, let him rejoicing enter into the joy of his Lord. If any have labored long in fasting, let him now receive his recompense. If any have wrought from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward. If any have come at the third hour, let him with thankfulness keep the feast. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings; because he shall in nowise be deprived thereof. If any have delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near, fearing nothing. If any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, let him, also, be not alarmed at his tardiness; for the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first; he gives rest unto him who comes at the eleventh hour, even as unto him who has wrought from the first hour.

And he shows mercy upon the last, and cares for the first; and to the one he gives, and upon the other he bestows gifts. And he both accepts the deeds, and welcomes the intention, and honors the acts and praises the offering. Wherefore, enter you all into the joy of your Lord; and receive your reward, both the first, and likewise the second. You rich and poor together, hold high festival. You sober and you heedless, honor the day. Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast. The table is full-laden; feast ye all sumptuously. The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away.

Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness. let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shown forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was embittered, when it encountered Thee in the lower regions. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a

body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

Icon of the Resurrection

Icons incorporate many symbols that add layers of meaning. Many of the early Christians were unable to read and write, and in some cases it was illegal to practice Christianity as well. Being able to receive information about a particular saint or feast day from an icon helped people to learn and grow in their faith. Take a look at an icon of the Resurrection and with the help of your teacher or parish priest, record the meaning of each of the symbols below. Notice that not all icons will include all of these elements, and you may even want to look at a few different ones in your church, in your home, and in this book.

The broken doors and chains:

The layers of blue surrounding Christ:

Adam and Eve:

St. John the Baptist (the Forerunner):

Other people such as Abel, King David, King Solomon, etc:

The figure imprisoned under Christ:

What else do you notice about this icon?

Why do you think this icon is placed in the casket when a person falls asleep in the Lord?

This icon of the Resurrection can be seen behind the altar of the St. Thomas Chapel at All Saints Camp.

Suggested Additional Activity: Show youth the icon of the Resurrection (consider going into the church to do this in your parish has an icon large enough/close enough to see details). Explain the various elements of the icon, or give youth some information about one of the symbols in the icon and ask them to share what they learned with the group- this could also be a task assigned as homework at the end of the previous Session so that youth come prepared to share their symbol. (Heaven Meets Earth: Celebrating Pascha and the Twelve Feasts by John Kosmas Skinas contains a thorough and accessible explanation of the icon on page 38)



Session Eight: Symbols and Traditions for Pascha

Main Ideas: Over time, the Church has developed many traditions that add to the celebration of the Feast of Feasts

Supplies needed: Icon of the Resurrection, copies of pysanky coloring page from supplemental Materials, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.) You may check the Leader Plan for ages 4-8 for an alternate egg decorating activity.

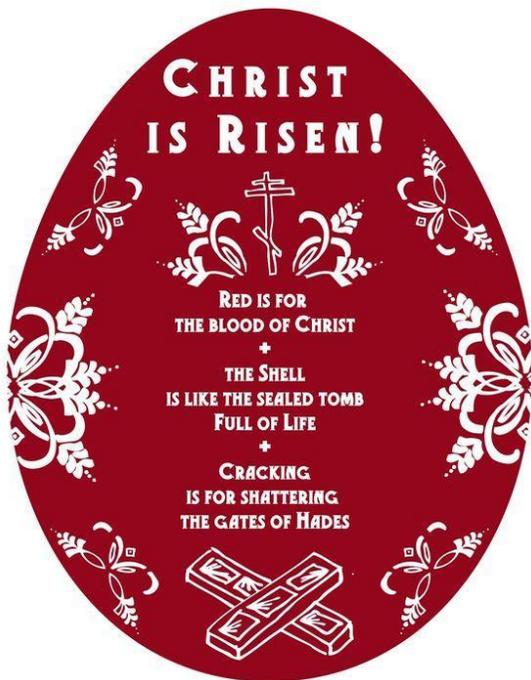
In addition to the services that walk us through the Resurrection, over time, Orthodox Christians have included many symbols and traditions to remember this holiest of all days. Let's take a look at a few, and you will have a chance to share your own!

The Easter Candle

Instead of blowing out your candle after the procession or after the services, many people try to keep the light from the candle going as long as possible. During the Paschal Matins we sing, "Now all things are filled with light..." Some families bring a small lantern so that they can protect the flame (and get it home safely in their car!). Once it is safely at home, some families make the



sign of the cross on the ceiling in front each doorway, asking God to protect everyone and everything that comes into their home. Another nice tradition is keeping the candle lit or relighting it each evening and singing, "Christ is Risen!" as the family sits down to dinner together.



Eggs!

There are many traditions and symbols connected to eggs. First, if a person has been keeping a strict fast, they won't have had eggs in many weeks. So they "break" the fast with something delicious! Eggs are also a symbol of new life because baby chicks are born out of them.

At the end of the Pascha services, the priest usually passes out eggs that have been dyed red. One story behind the red egg takes place soon after the Resurrection. Mary Magdalene was visiting the head of the Roman Empire- Emperor Tiberius Caesar. As she was telling the Emperor and the other guests about Jesus's Resurrection, he laughed at her and said there's no way that that could have happened. He joked that it was just as likely that the egg she was holding in her hands could turn red, and immediately it did!

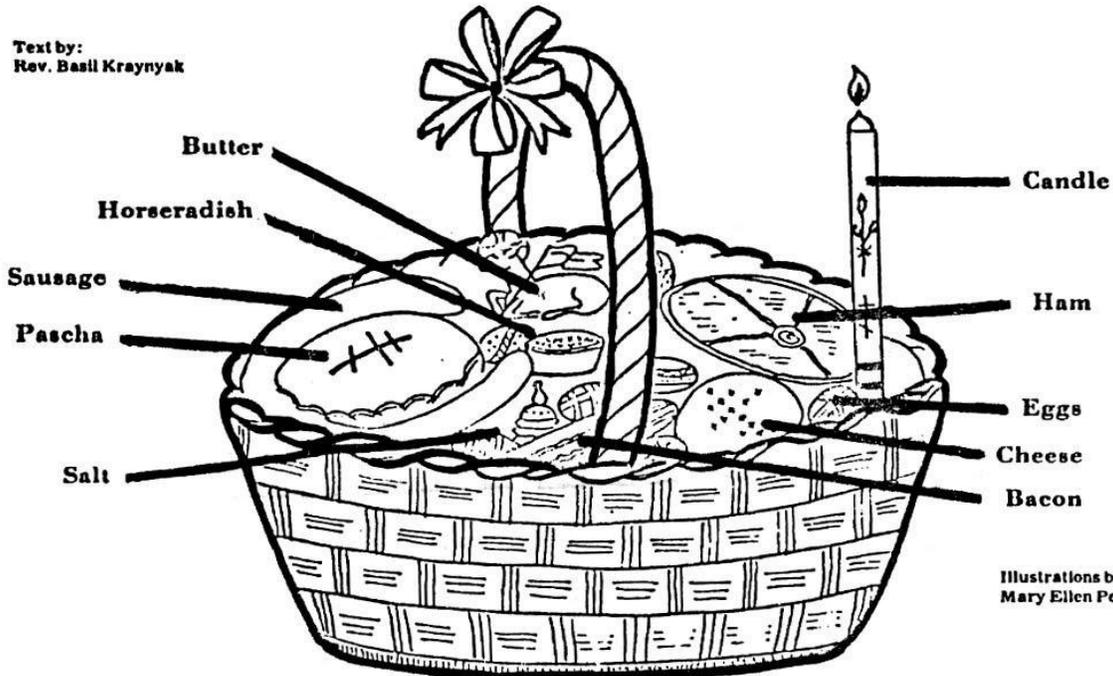
Another tradition connected to eggs are the beautiful hand decorated pysanky that are a Ukrainian cultural tradition. For centuries, farmers buried an egg in their field, hoping to have good crops in the coming year. People also buried the eggs in the grave with their loved ones who had passed away, hoping that just like baby chicks break through their egg, that the soul of their loved one would be freed after their death. Christ's resurrection means that we can all break from our shells and our souls can go to heaven.

Easter Baskets

Every family includes a unique combinations of items in their basket, but many include at least some of these traditional foods. Take a look at the diagram on the next page to learn more about what each food symbolizes (note some families may also have different names for different foods).

How to Put Together a Traditional Easter Basket

Text by:
Rev. Basil Kraynyak

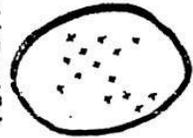


Illustrations by:
Mary Ellen Petro

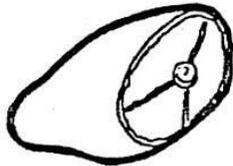


PASCHA - The Easter Bread (pron. pá-ska.) A sweet, yeast bread rich in eggs, butter, etc. Symbolic of Christ Himself who is our True Bread. Usually a round loaf baked with a golden crust decorated with a symbol indicative of Christ. Sometimes a cross (—) of dough is placed on top encircled by a plait giving it a crowned effect or Greek abbreviations for the name of Christ. The letters XB indicate the Slavonic for Christ is Risen.

CHEESE (Slav. Hrudka or Sirets pron. hrood-ka or sí-rets) A custard-type cheese shaped into a ball having a rather bland but sweet taste indicative of the moderation that Christians should have in all things. Also, creamed cheese is placed in a small dish and both are decorated with symbols (see Pascha) out of cloves or pepper balls.

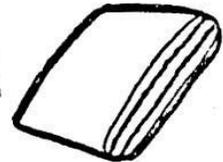


HAM (Slav Šunka - pron. shoon-ka.) The flesh meat popular with the Slavs as the main dish because of its richness and symbolic of the great joy and abundance of Easter. Some may prefer Lamb or Veal. This is usually well roasted or cooked as well as other meats so that the festivity of the day will not be burdened with preparation and all may enjoy the Feast.



BUTTER (Slav. Maslo pron. má-slo) This favorite dairy product is shaped into a figure of a Lamb or small cross and decorated as the cheese. This reminds us of the goodness of Christ that we should have toward all things.

BACON (Slav. Slanina pron. sla-ní-na) A piece of uncooked bacon cured with spices. Symbolic of the overabundance of God's mercy to us.



SAUSAGE (SLAV. Kolbasi - pron. kol-bú-í) A spicy, garlicky sausage of pork products, indicative of God's favor and generosity.

EGGS (Slav. Pisanki pron. pi-sún-ki) Hard-boiled eggs brightly decorated with symbols and markings made with beeswax. Indicative of new life and resurrection.



SALT (Slav. Sol' pron. sol') A condiment necessary for flavor reminding the Christian of his duty to others.



HORSERADISH (Slav. Chrn pron. khrn) Horseradish mixed with grated red beets. Symbolic of the Passion of Christ still in our minds but sweetened with some sugar because of the Resurrection. A bitter-sweet red colored mixture reminds us of the sufferings of Christ.

These articles are placed in a wicker basket and a ribbon or bow is tied to the handle. A decorated candle is placed in the basket and is lit at the time of blessing. A linen cover usually embroidered with a picture of the Risen Christ or symbol with the words "Christ is Risen" is placed over the food when brought to the Church.

In some places a large Easter Bread (Pascha) is made and brought separately in a large linen cloth. If the origin of the people was from a wine growing area, a sweet wine may be brought.



Suggested Additional Activities:

-Consider presenting this Session at the beginning of one of the related Praxis sessions found later in this workbook. You may also want to present this Session on a separate day and end the Session by asking youth which of the traditions they would like to participate in- providing leadership opportunities for older youth.

-Another option to consider would be to ask youth to interview an older family member or member of the parish to find out how these traditions have been passed down to them from earlier generations.

-Ukrainian Pysanky- This could be done in a variety of ways. Supplies for making pysanky in the traditional method, as well as video tutorials and sample designs can be found online. Perhaps there are members of your parish who would be willing to serve as guest instructors and helpers. If time and resources don't allow, consider purchasing paper mache or craft eggs from a craft store or the internet and have students create designs with markers. Eggs could also be included in pascha baskets for shut ins of the parish.

Session Nine-“Pentecostarion” The Feast of Feasts

Main Ideas: Christ IS Risen- the celebration of Pascha continues throughout the year. Focus on commemorations of people such as St. Thomas and the Myrrbearers and events that followed Christ’s Resurrection, such as Ascension and Pentecost during the fifty days that follow Pascha.

Supplies needed: From supplemental materials - “I Believe it” and “Unbelievable” cards and trivia question/fact sheet, chart paper, markers, colored pencils, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.) My Little Orthodox Christian Activity Book available at

<https://www.orthodoxmarketplace.com/esss/product/my-little-orthodox-christian-activity-book>

Preparation: Set up your “I Believe it!” and “Unbelievable” cards.

(10 minutes) Warm Up Activity- “Would you believe that...?” Post the red and green “I Believe It!” and “Unbelievable” cards somewhere in the classroom, such as on opposite walls or tables on either side of the room. Have students start in the middle of the room, then one by one, read the statements below starting with “Would you believe that...” Students should move to the side of the room that reflects their answer. Depending on time, students could return to the middle after each statement or just switch sides if they think the answer for the next statement is different. The questions and answers aren’t really relevant, the goal is to start thinking about how you decide what to believe and what not to believe. A few statements have been included below, but consider coming up with a list of facts about the history of your parish or your town to make the info more relatable to youth of your parish.

Believe it or not:

An octopus has three hearts (True)

A butterfly can taste with its feet (True)

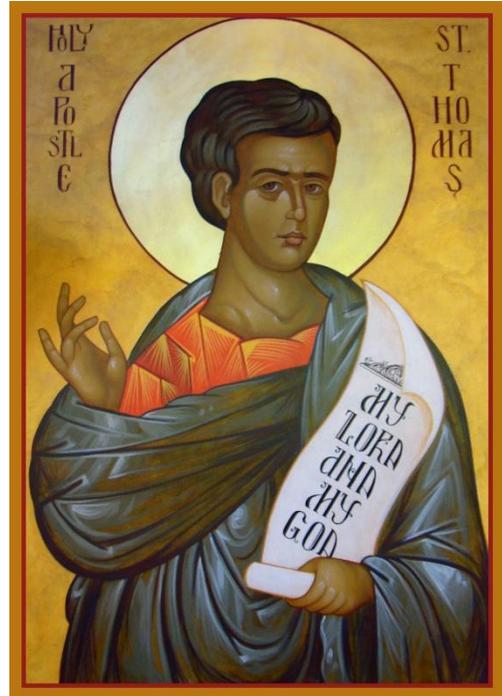
Mars has the shortest days of all the planets (False, Jupiter does)

Polar bears have black skin (True)

Orcas, usually known as Killer Whales, are actually a type of fish (False, they are a type of dolphin)

The largest ostrich egg ever laid weighed 12 pounds (False, It weighed a little over 5.5 pounds)

The human hand has 27 bones (True)



Peanuts grow underground (True)

(15 minutes) Have students take turns reading out loud about St. Thomas.

The Feast of Feasts

Pascha is the Feast of all Feasts, and because it is so important, the Church celebrates for over fifty days! “Pentecostarion” is a special name for the time after the Resurrection including Christ’s Ascension into heaven, through the coming down of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and remembering the Holy Host of all the saints. Just like the Triodion is a period time that gets its name from the book of songs and services, The Pentecostarion is also book with the special songs and services celebrating the special time of the year. In this Session, we’ll learn a little bit more about how the joy of the Resurrection continues on!

Doubting Thomas

Just like the Sundays before and during Great Lent, the Sundays following Great Lent are each assigned a specific person or event to remember. On the second Sunday of Pascha we remember Thomas, one of the Twelve Apostles. Remember that Mary and the women went to Jesus’s tomb on Sunday morning, and learned that His body was risen from the dead. Later that evening, the Apostles were gathered together in a room, hiding from the Jewish leaders who knew the Apostles were friends and followers for Jesus. All of a sudden, Jesus was in the room with them. Read John 20: 19-29 to find out what happened when they gathered there.

“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.”

Ask youth: “What do you think it means that they were glad?”- Give them opportunities to respond, making sure to emphasize the relief and comfort they must have felt- many around them thought they were silly for believing that Christ would return, they were joyful to have their friend with them again, and probably felt some degree of comfort and protection from those who might seek to harm them for their belief.

Thomas was not with them when Jesus came to visit and when he returned you can imagine that his friends told him that they had seen Jesus and were sure that it was him. Thomas, couldn’t believe it. *“So he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’”*

Our game at the beginning of class got us thinking about what was believable and unbelievable. Unfortunately for Thomas, he gets a little bit of a bad reputation for not believing his friends, and not believing in Jesus’s power. But this Sunday teaches us that it is natural to have doubts or questions about the faith. The Church realizes that asking questions is a way to learn, and we get the message that if our doubts or questions lead us to grow in our faith, then they can be useful. For example, there is a difference between refusing to take a medication because you can’t believe that it will work and talking to your doctor about how it works so that you are sure to take it in the right way. Jesus returns to show that He is not mad at Thomas, and Thomas has a chance to grow his faith.

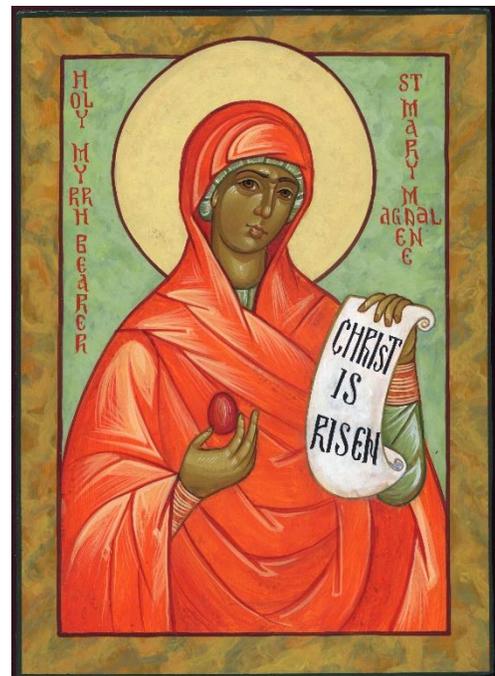
“And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace to you!’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and My God!’ Although He doubted at first, Thomas sees that this is truly God. His doubt turns into true faith that he will eventually share with many nations. You might think, it was easy for Thomas to believe because he could see and touch Jesus’s wounds to know that they are real, but we can’t do that. Jesus recognizes that Thomas’s faith is strong now that he has seen Jesus for his own eyes, but adds something for all of us. He says, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Jesus knows that we don’t have the chance to see and touch His wounds, so He blesses those who believe anyway because they have strong faith.

[\(10-15 minutes\) Have students read about and work on the puzzle for the Myrrh-Bearing Women](#)

The Myrrh Bearing Women, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus

On the third Sunday of Pascha, the church remembers several people who bravely showed their faith in Jesus and gave witness to the Resurrection.

Following the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, asked Pontius Pilate for permission to take Jesus’s body down from the Cross. Pilate gave them permission and the men wrapped Jesus’ body in linen cloths and placed it in a tomb that had not been used before. They took a great risk caring for the body of Christ and Joseph in particular had a lot to lose because he was a wealthy and a member of the Jewish leadership. Even though Pilate had given them permission, the Jewish leaders captured St. Joseph and threw him in prison. Christ appeared to Joseph while he was in prison and after he was released, he spent the rest of his life telling others about the truth of the Resurrection.



[At this point you may want to pass out copies of any relevant puzzles or activities from My Orthodox Christian Activity Book. This will provide a short break in the session. The book contains choices for many feast days and saints.](#)

As we heard in the Gospel stories of the Resurrection, Mary and the women were the first to go to Jesus’ grave after His death. These women bravely traveled before dawn to go to the tomb. As we learned in Session Five, the different Gospel accounts list several different names for the women in the group. Use the passages below to unscramble the names to complete the list of the eight women who are commonly counted among the Myrrh Bearing Women. The footnotes in the Orthodox Study Bible may also be helpful

Matthew 28: 1

Luke 24: 10

Mark 16: 1

John 20: 1

Mary _____ (AEEGANMDL)

Mary the MOTHER OF GOD

_____ (NJAANO) _____

(LESOAM)

Mary the wife of Cleopas

_____ ASNUNSA

Mary of Bethany

Martha of Bethany

We Are All Called to be Myrrh Bearers

The Myrrhbearers are an example for all of us to try to follow. They showed how important Christ was to them by coming “very early” in the morning to care for Christ’s body and bringing expensive oils and spices to anoint Him. They shared their testimony to what they saw so that others would believe in the Resurrection of Christ. We can follow their example in many ways. Make a list below of some ways in which we can be like the Myrrhbearers:

Youth can brainstorm together or individually and then share their lists. There could be many answers, but encourage them to add the following if they don’t come up with them on their own: “very early” could include arriving to church early and making sure that we wake up earlier enough each morning to say our prayers without being rushed; just like they brought oils and spices we can offer items like candles each Sunday and wear our nicest clothing; bearing witness to the Resurrection and to Christ by talking about our faith to others and not being afraid to say prayers in public places.

(10 minutes) Have students read through the information about Ascension

The Ascension of Our Lord

For forty days after Pascha Jesus appeared on earth. He talked with His disciples, ate food with them- not because He needed food to survive anymore, but to show that His human body had truly risen from the dead. As the time was coming for Him to go back to Heaven, He called the disciples together and told them that it was now their responsibility to take their knowledge and their faith in the resurrection out to all of the nations. By ascending in body into heaven, Christ shows us that our human form is even higher than the angels and if we want to rise to the place that He has prepared for us, we need to try as hard as we can to avoid the sins that will weigh us down. Just like the disciples, we are responsible for sharing what we know about God so that as many people as possible can join Christ in heaven.

(15 minutes) Have students read through information about Pentecost, then complete the activity sheet.

Happy Birthday!

Pentecost marks another very important day in the life of the Christian Church- its birthday! Before this time, people had followed Jesus, but were not a formal Christian church with all of the services, practices, rules, etc. that we have now. After Jesus ascended into Heaven, the Apostles had to figure out how they were going to carry out His command to go and tell all of the nations. They went to the temple and gathered together to pray, but they would need help. Ten days after the Ascension, the disciples and others were gathered together and all of a sudden there was sounds like whooshing wind and tongues of fire appeared over each of the Apostles. This fire didn't burn them, it was the Holy Spirit coming to be in their midst. The Apostles began speaking to the crowds of people outside, telling them about Jesus, His Resurrection, the healing and other miracles that He had performed, and more. Being in a large city, there were many people who did not speak the same language as the Apostles, or even as each other. But, the power of the Holy Spirit made it so that everyone could understand in their own language. In that first day, over three thousand people asked to become followers of Christ, the beginning of the Church.



The Head and the Body

When Jesus Ascended to Heaven, He told His disciples, *“I, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).”* His body went to Heaven and so the Church was established to be His body on Earth, to do the work for His glory. Fr. Anthony Coniaris puts it this way... we are as *“the members of the Body (the church) reporting for duty to the Head (Christ).* He continues to be present in the world today through the members of His Body.

Have your teachers ever taken you on a field trip and told you to be on your best behavior because you are representing the teacher and your school? When we pray, when we help others, when we come to services together, we are representing and showing to the world what Jesus was all about. We can follow the example of the apostles and their actions on Pentecost throughout our daily lives. While many of

our peers at school, on sports teams, in after school activities, etc. may speak the same language as us, many may be unfamiliar with the teachings of the Jesus and of the church. Just like the apostles, the Holy Spirit can guide us to share our faith so that others can hear it and understand it even when we aren't sure of the right words to say.

A Special Prayer

Since Pascha, we have not said the prayer, "O Heavenly King..." which is usually said at the beginning of the Trisagion, among other times. From Pascha until Ascension it replaced with "Christ Is Risen from the dead..." and then with the Tropar for Ascension. We also don't kneel from Pascha until Pentecost. On Pentecost we say special prayers to return to kneeling at appropriate times during services and we return to the Prayer of the Holy Spirit. "O Heavenly King, the Comforter the Spirit of Truth, Who is everywhere present and fills all things. Treasury of blessings and giver of life, come and abide in us and cleanse from every impurity and save our souls O Good One!





The Holy Spirit descended on the Twelve Apostles. Sketch in a candle for each Apostle and label their names.

(Hint, look in Acts 1:12-26 if you need help remembering their names.)

End the Session with
Christ IS Risen!

Session Ten- Sunday: The Lord's Day

Main Ideas: Christ IS Risen- the celebration of Pascha continues throughout the year. Focus on Sunday as a weekly celebration of the Resurrection.

Supplies needed: Markers, colored pencils, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.)

Preparation: Invite your choir director or priest to this session. Ask them to sing each of the tropars for the youth so they may hear each tone. If you are unable to have someone present, utilize a recording.

(10 minutes) Warm up activity. Set up a piece of chart paper with the question "What do plants need to grow?" As children enter the classroom, have them write answers on the paper. Go over a few before jumping into the work book.

(10 minutes) Have students take turns reading the information about Sunday. Keep an ear out for students who may not attend church regularly and might have questions or concerns- the goal isn't to make anyone feel bad about how frequently they attend, it's to focus on what makes going to church great.

"This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it! (Psalm 118:24)" We sing this verse from the Psalms on Pascha, but we don't just mean the day of Pascha itself. Every day is a gift from God. Now that we've seen how the church keeps celebrating Christ's resurrection in the weeks after Pascha, let's look at an example of how we remember that Christ IS Risen all year through. In this Session, we'll learn why Sunday is such a special day in the life of the church and how it connects to our theme.

In the Old Testament, the most important day of the week was Saturday, the Sabbath. The fourth commandment that God gave to Moses was to 'Remember the Sabbath day and keep it Holy.' The Sabbath was considered the holiest day because when God created the earth, He rested on the seventh day after finishing His creation- the first Sabbath. The Jews rested on the Sabbath after a long week of working. But Jesus changed all of that through the power of His resurrection.



Jesus Rose from the Dead On a _____ Sunday _____

Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, and there is nothing that could be more important than Him saving those who had been waiting in the tombs and opening the Kingdom of Heaven to us.

Jesus Showed Himself to His Friends On a _____ Sunday _____

Not only did He rise on a Sunday, He showed Himself to His friends. The Gospels that describe the Resurrection tell us that Mary Magdalene and the other women came to His grave on Sunday morning and He greeted them. Jesus came into the room where His disciples had gathered later that evening so that they could see His risen body and see His wounds.

The Holy Spirit Came to the Apostles On a _____ Sunday _____

Remember that the Church began on Pentecost. As the disciples prayed and were guided by the Holy Spirit, they wrote down guidelines for living a Christian life in a book called the Didache (did-uh-kay). They said that Christians would come together for worship on Sunday morning, just like the Holy Spirit came down on a Sunday morning for Pentecost.

We celebrate the Resurrection every Sunday

Christ IS Risen every Sunday when we remember His Resurrection. He IS Risen every Sunday when we receive Him in Communion. He IS Risen every Sunday when the hymns of the church remind us of Mary and the myrrh-bearing women and the Apostles. Each Sunday we come to church to refill and recharge ourselves with the joy of the Resurrection.

One example of the connection between the Resurrection and the Divine Liturgy that we serve every Sunday are the Tropars and Kontakions, special hymns that are teaching tools in the first part of the Liturgy. We rotate through them, so every 8 weeks one of the following Tropars is sung in your church. See if you can find the connection to Pascha and the story of the Resurrection in each one.

(10 minutes) Consider breaking students into groups and having each one read one tropar, then summarize the connection to the Resurrection. Encourage students to underline or highlight the words that stick out to them and/or make notes in the margins.

Resurrectional Propers

Tone 1: When the stone had been sealed by the Jews,/ while the soldiers were guarding Your Most-Pure Body,/ You arose on the third day, Savior,/ granting life to the world./ Therefore, the Powers of Heaven cried to You, Giver of Life:/ Glory to Your Resurrection, Christ./ Glory to Your Kingdom./ Glory to Your Divine Plan, only Lover of Mankind.

Tone 2: When You descended to death, Life Immortal,/ You slayed Hades with the splendor of Your Divinity,/ And when from the depths You raised the dead,/ all the Powers of Heaven cried out:/ Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to You.

Tone 3: Let the heavens rejoice,/ Let the earth be glad./ For the Lord has shown strength with His arm./ He has trampled death by death./ He has become the First-Born of the Dead./ He has delivered us/from the depths of Hades/ and has granted the world great mercy.

Tone 4: When the women disciples of the Lord/ learned from the angel the joyous message of Your Resurrection,/ they cast away the ancestral curse and with gladness told the apostles:/ Death is overthrown. Christ God is risen,/ granting the world great mercy.

Tone 5: Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word,/ co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,/ born for our salvation of the Virgin./ In His Good Will He was lifted up on the Cross in the flesh/ to suffer death/ and to raise the dead/ by His glorious Resurrection.

Tone 6: The angelic powers were at Your tomb,/ The guards became as dead men,/ Mary stood by Your grave/ seeking Your Most-Pure Body,/ You captured Hades, not being tempted by it,/ You came to the Virgin, granting Life,/ Lord, risen from the dead,/ glory to You.

Tone 7: By Your Cross, you destroyed Death./ To the Thief, You opened Paradise./ For the Myrrh—Bearers, You changed weeping to joy./ Christ God, You commanded Your disciples to proclaim/ that You are risen,/ granting the world great mercy.

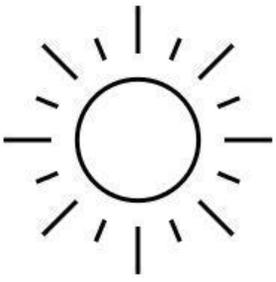
Tone 8: You descended from on high, Merciful One,/ You accepted the three-day burial/ to free us from our passions./ Lord, our Life and Resurrection: Glory to You.

In his book “Sacred Symbols That Speak,” Fr. Anthony M. Coniaris compares our hearts to a garden to explain why we should come to church as frequently as possible.

“Actually we have in our hearts ... a whole garden which needs watering at least once a week, namely, the flowers of faith, hope, love and forgiveness. These flowers become droopy at times and need reviving, which is one of the purposes of Sunday Worship.” -Fr. Anthony M Coniaris, “Sacred Symbols That Speak”

For our next activity, we are going to “grow” a garden like the one that Fr. Coniaris says is in our hearts. Some ideas have been provided for you, but you can add your own thoughts too. You can choose to use the “garden” that has been provided or you can use the blank paper to sketch your own. Label the flowers with the virtues of good behaviors that need to grow in your heart. The roots are a strong foundation of the church. Decide what helps you to grow your virtues and draw or label those as well. This is a chance to be very creative!

Virtues that grow when you attend church (Flowers)	History that provides a strong foundation for you & the church (Roots)	Ways that being in church could help you to grow in your faith (Sunlight, water, nutrients)
Faith	Jesus showed Himself to the women at the tomb and the Apostles on Sunday, revealing the Resurrection	Receiving Communion and Confession
Love	Sunday is The Lord’s Day- the Joy of the Resurrection	Hearing the Gospel as an example of what to do and what not to do
Patience	The Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles on a Sunday morning	Singing in the choir
Self-Control	In the Didache (did-uh-kay), the Apostles set aside Sunday for participating in Communion	Serving at the altar
Hope	Jesus shared the first Communion with His disciples	Listening to the sermon
Forgiveness		Lighting candles
Obedience		



Growing in Christ



Session Eleven- Confession: A New Start

Main Ideas: The Resurrection opened the Gates of Paradise to us, but we still need to show God that we want to enter to be with Him in eternity. We will make mistakes, but God has also given us a way to repair those mistakes so that we can enter Paradise.

Supplies needed: Bibles, Participant Workbooks for each youth

(10 minutes) Have students begin reading about confession.

We've been talking a lot about the happiness that comes with Jesus's resurrection. Most importantly, we are joyful because we no longer have to worry that when our body dies, our soul will go to Hades and be trapped there. Through His resurrection, Jesus "trampled down death, by death" and opened the gates of Heaven. Jesus's friends were also filled with joy after His resurrection. They had witnessed His crucifixion and burial, and were so happy when He joined them again. The songs we sing in church celebrate all of these and more, and when we say Christ Is Risen! we know that He is and always will be.

One thing that we need to remember is that even though Jesus opened the gates of Paradise, we still have to show God that we want to enter with Him. In our first Session, we learned about the Gospel reading of the Last Judgement when Jesus separated the sheep and the goats. As the shepherd, only His sheep will go where He is going. He told the people that if they chose to help someone who needed food or clothing or love, they were also helping Jesus because we are all made in His image. People who chose to keep walking or who weren't even paying attention to what other people needed had ignored Jesus too.

Any time we choose to ignore God or the rules that He has given to us, we are committing a sin. Sometimes, we might realize we are doing something wrong and choose to do it anyway (have you ever taken something from a sibling or heard your parents calling you and chose to ignore them or take your time getting there?). Pause and ask youth to answer the question Other times, we realize later that we should have done something differently. Maybe we said something to a friend that we meant as a joke but they didn't take it that way, or we broke or lost something that we didn't realize was valuable to someone else. (There are many guides with questions that will help you to think about ways you may have sinned. There is one in our camping program prayer book.) Just like a brick wall is made up of many smaller bricks, each time we sin we build a bigger wall between us and God. Taking time to think about the ways you might be building a wall is very important. Fill in the blocks below with a way in which

someone might separate themselves from God. It could be something that you have done in the past, but it doesn't have to be.

Told a rumor I heard about someone			
		Yelled at my sibling	
Laughed at someone who made a mistake			

(10 minutes) Students may want to work with a partner or alone. You may want to have the prayer books available for this activity so that students can look at the questions for preparing for confession, although the goal is not for them to put their confession on this paper. Decide if it would be a help or a distraction.

(10 minutes) Have students read the next section and the story about Longinus)

God gave us the gift of free will. He wants us to want to be with Him. The good news is that we can't build a wall that God can't break down-if we show that we are really sorry and want to join Him again. Through the sacrament of Holy Confession, we tell our sins so that God knows that we understand what we have done wrong AND repent which means to tell Him that we are sorry. A Confession isn't complete without both parts. (Think about how it would feel if you confronted someone who shared a rumor about you and they said, "yeah I did that" but didn't apologize). Then we ask God to forgive us-to break down the wall that we built. The priest is present at our confession because even though it's God that we are talking to, the priest can help us by giving us suggestions for fixing our mistakes. They can help us think of ways to avoid committing the same sin in the future.

Learning about the saints can help us as we try to live our lives according to God's will. There are many saints who lived a life that was not pleasing to God, but repented, saying that they were sorry and were

forgiven! You learned about once such saint, St. Mary of Egypt, in an earlier Session. Today we are going to read about a saint whose life was changed by Christ's resurrection.

Longinus the Centurion

Department of
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
ORTHODOX CHURCH in AMERICA

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



On Friday of this week we remember the martyred saint Longinus the Centurion, who stood at the foot of the cross and pierced the side of Our Lord with a spear. He was moved, as he stood there, to make a powerful confession of faith. He declared, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

If we think for a moment about what took place during the hours before Longinus uttered his memorable words, we'll have to dwell on some ugly scenes. Soldiers like Longinus were responsible for many of the terrible things done to Our Lord during those hours. Jesus was mocked, scourged, ridiculed and crowned by having sharp thorns put roughly on his head. The soldiers were more than willing to cast lots for His clothing, and to hear without anything but agreement the mocking of passersby as He endured agony on the cross.

Longinus belonged to the Roman Empire's fighting elite. He was trained to value power, and to believe in ruthless suppression of any who were perceived to be Rome's enemies. He would have been unlikely to have compassion for, or interest in, an itinerant preacher who had stirred up the populace in an alarming way. He could watch without emotion as that preacher was put to death in the slow, incredibly painful way reserved for criminals who were not citizens of Rome.

Longinus, according to most sources, was the officer in command at the Lord's crucifixion. It was his job to make sure that those on the crosses were definitely dead. This is why it is surprising to find, in some modern books that claim to "demythologize" the Christian Gospel, the bald assertion that there were no eyewitnesses to the Crucifixion. These books then claim that without eyewitnesses we have no certainty that Jesus Christ actually died and rose again.

Yet the Gospel of John, in 19: 31-35 tells us in detail how the soldiers dealt with the crucified bodies that day, and in verses 26-27 it tells us how Jesus gave His Mother into John's care. So there were a number of witnesses, a fact which is one of the foundations of our faith.

Longinus was one witness who was overcome by what he experienced when Jesus died. He was awestruck at seeing the earth shake and the rocks split, and he knew that Jesus was the Son of God, as He had claimed to be. The rest of his life, after he accepted baptism, was spent as a follower of Christ who witnessed to others. He died a martyr at the hands of Pilate's soldiers, who pursued him and reluctantly followed their orders to kill him.

Troparion - Tone 1

Longinus, you beheld the King of Glory
who was nailed to the Cross,
yet shone on those in darkness.
You were enlightened by His rays
and became a martyr and save those who cry:
Glory to Him who gave you strength!
Glory to Him who granted you a crown!
Glory to Him who through you grants healing to all!

Just a bored centurion who had to make sure the Jewish troublemaker on the cross was really dead—those ordinary words describe Longinus. Yet he was changed, to become a great witness to the Resurrection. That is what God can do, and all the "demythologizing" books in the world can't undo it.

(15 minutes) Read through the next section and fill in the blanks. Depending on time, you could have one student read out loud or have students break into groups to read the Bible passage. When they finish they can color in the image of the Jesus prayer on the last page of this Session.

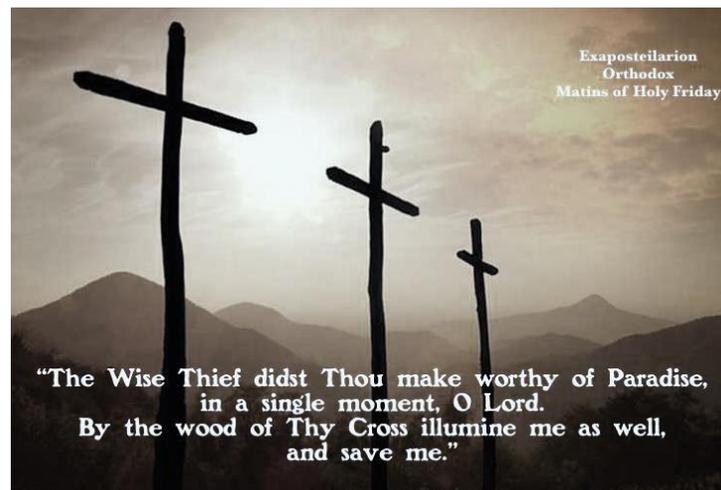
The Wise Thief

There's another moment from the events of Jesus's Resurrection that teaches us something about how important it is to repent. Two other men were crucified with Jesus. They were both thieves, one to the left of Jesus and one to the right. Read Luke 23: 39-43 to learn more about these men.

Fill in the blanks as you listen:

“Then one of the [criminals](#) who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed [justly](#), for we receive the due rewards of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, [remember me](#) when You come into Your kingdom.’ And Jesus said to Him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in [paradise](#).’”

The thief who asked Jesus to remember Him, literally repented in the last few minutes of his life. By telling the thief that He would be with Him in paradise *today*, Jesus sends the message to us that repentance is necessary if we want to go through the gates that He opened. The words below come from the service of the Twelve Passion Gospels that is served in the evening on Holy Thursday.



The Jesus Prayer

In addition to repenting through the sacrament of Holy Confession, we can continually pray to God, asking for forgiveness and strength to avoid the temptation to sin. Although there are many prayers that can help us, we learned about one last week in the Session about preparing for Great Lent. Remember the Pharisee who went in to the temple to praise what he had done right, and the Publican who bowed down in church and repented for all of the things he had done wrong. Jesus told his disciples that the Publican is the one who had acted properly. The prayer known as the Jesus prayer is similar to the prayer of the Publican and it can be a helpful tool for us to focus on repentance. Practice saying it as often as you can and you will find that it helps in any situation- when you are sad, afraid, in need of help.



Jesus Prayer

*Lord
Jesus Christ,
Son of God,
Have Mercy
on Me
a Sinner.*

Session Twelve: With Faith and Love

Main Ideas: Christ IS Risen! Each and every day of our lives through our faith and through the love we share.

Supplies needed: Copies of hymn “A New Commandment”, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.)

(10 minutes) Later in the Session, there will be a discussion about faith. Depending on time, you can begin the Session with a short trust fall activity, or you may want to start in the text book, then do the trust falls during the section about faith.

(15 minutes) read the section about Love and have students will in the blanks from the psalms.

During the Divine Liturgy the priest calls us to receive Christ through Communion “with fear of God and with faith and love draw near.” In this final Session, we will talk about how we should also leave the Liturgy and go out into the world and reflect faith and love there.

Love

In several of our Sessions we learned about the Old and the New Testament. We learned that Jesus’s resurrection fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. We learned that Jesus’s resurrection established Sunday as the Lord’s Day, making it even more important than the Old Testament Sabbath Day. In the Old Testament, many laws were given to the people by God. You might be familiar with the Ten Commandments that Moses gave to his people. Throughout the Old Testament (mostly the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) there are actually 613 commandments! While that might seem like a lot of rules, the Law was respected and even loved by the Hebrews. Most of us wouldn’t say we love, or even like, having rules, but there are times when we realize how important they are. Have you ever felt like you didn’t know what to do for a project in school and wished the teacher had given more ‘rules’? Can you imagine what the roads would be like if we didn’t have traffic laws?

The Ten Commandments that Moses received were placed in the Ark of the Covenant, a special golden box that held their most important possession. In the Psalms, King David writes about the goodness of the laws and the guidance that God had given. Read Psalm 18 (19): 8-11 and fill in the blanks below with the different words for ‘law’:

“The law of the Lord is blameless, converting souls;

The _____ of the Lord is trustworthy, making children wise;

The _____ of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;

The _____ of the Lord is bright, enlightening the eyes;

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring unto ages of ages;

The _____ of the Lord are true, being altogether just.

More to be desired are they than gold and a very precious stone,

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”



The Hebrews loved the law because they saw that it brought order to their world and when people followed it there was harmony between the people and with God.

[\(10 minutes\) Finish this section on Love. Students may want to sing ‘A New Commandment’ at the end.](#)

A New Commandment

During the Bridegroom Matin service on Holy Monday evening, we read from the Gospel of St. Matthew. Remember the Pharisees and Jewish leaders who were jealous that people were following Jesus? In the weeks leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection, they tried to catch Jesus saying or doing the “wrong” thing. They thought they could use the Law to trick Him.

“But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher which is the greatest commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to Him, ‘You shall Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and will all your mind. This is the first and great command. And the second is like it: ‘You shall Love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Have you ever done something that was technically following a rule, but not with love? For example, Samantha’s parents have a rule that all toys need to be cleaned up before coming to the dinner table. When her mom says that dinner is almost ready, she grabs the toy her sister is playing with and throws it on the shelf. Technically she was following the rule, but she wasn’t acting with love. What could she have done differently to do both?

Remember that shortly before the Resurrection, Jesus instituted the first Communion with His disciples. After Judas left, Jesus gave His final teaching (knowing that Judas would not be with them) commandment for how they should go out into the world once He was longer with them.

“A new commandment I give to You, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13: 34-35

This commandment isn't just for the Apostles, it is true for all of us. Not only are we supposed to love one another, but when we show love to others, we are showing Christ to them. The best way to show others what a Christian believes is to show them love. We can't expect to join Christ in the joy of the Resurrection if we don't have love. Underline the word love every time you hear it in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”



[\(10 minutes\) read the story about Blondin below. You may want to do a trust fall activity here.](#)

Faith

Earlier we learned about Thomas and his doubts. We learned that our doubts and our questions can lead us to stronger faith in God, but ultimately we must believe in the Resurrection if we want to be part of it. In his podcast “Simply Orthodox” Dr. Bradley Nassif, an Orthodox professor of biblical and theological studies at North Park University, Dr. Nassif tells a story that helps us to understand how important it is to have faith.

“Perhaps the best way to illustrate the Session of St. Thomas is to share a story. About a century ago, there was a famous tightrope walker named Blondin. One day he decided to do a great feat in front of everybody, so he went to Niagara to cross the great waterfalls. The day came, and hundreds of people stood atop the mountain waiting for Blondin to do his trick. He put his tightrope on one side of the falls and then hooked up the other side. Down below was a loud and torrential waterfall with rocks at the bottom of the falls.

Needless to say, it was very dangerous. Blondin then picked up his balancing pole and began slowly walking across the falls as everyone waited quietly. He reached the side and slowly turned around to walk back. Everyone was as quiet as a mouse, but sure enough, Blondin made it. Everyone cheered. “Wow, what a walk! Great job, Blondin!”

Then Blondin did something unexpected. He turned to the crowd and asked them a question: How many of you believe I can take you across the falls with me?" he asked. "Yeah, you can do it!" they said. "Okay," said Blondin, and he walked over to a man who was standing there and he said to him, "Get on my back." "No way," said the man. "I believe you can carry me across the falls, but don't ask me to get on your back. Not me." Blondin went to several other people, asking the same question: "Do you believe I can take you across Niagara Falls safely?" "Yes," they replied. "Okay, get on my back." But no one would trust themselves to him. They believed he could do it. They believed he had the ability to do it, but would not entrust their lives to him.

Finally, one little 12-year-old boy perked up. "I believe you can carry me across the falls." "You do?" asked Blondin. "Yes, I do." "Okay, then get on my back." The young man got on Blondin's back. I don't know where his mother was at this time, but he got on anyway. Well, the young man entrusted his life to Blondin, and Blondin began to walk across the falls. Everyone was anxiously waiting as they went slowly to one side of the falls, and then back to the other side, very slowly, and they made it.

Well, this little story tells an important truth that fits well with the Sunday of St. Thomas. You see, the adults believed in Blondin. They had the head knowledge. They knew he could take them across the falls, but they were not willing to actually get on his back and let him take them across the falls.

The same is true for us. We, like Thomas, might believe that Jesus is the Son of God. We might confess the Nicene Creed, go to Church every Sunday, make the sign of the cross, say our prayers, and sing in the choir, but that is not enough to save us. We need to actually put our lives in Jesus' hands. We need to say to Jesus, "Lord, I believe in you, and I give you my heart. I entrust my whole life to you. I not only recite the Creed, I get on your back and trust you as my Lord and my savior. Like Thomas, I believe you are my Lord and my God."



So, just like we draw near to Christ in faith and love, we are to go out into the world with faith and love. We've seen and heard that without either one, we will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. But if we live our life with both, we can't go astray.

Christ IS Risen! Indeed He IS Risen!



**Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death,
And upon those in the tombs bestowing Life!**