

Session Four: Great Lent Services Part II

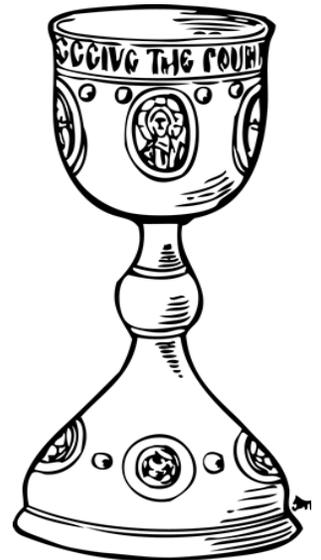
Main Ideas: Focus on one of the specific ways to prepare for Christ's Resurrection during Great Lent- special prayers and services that are only served during this time.

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:

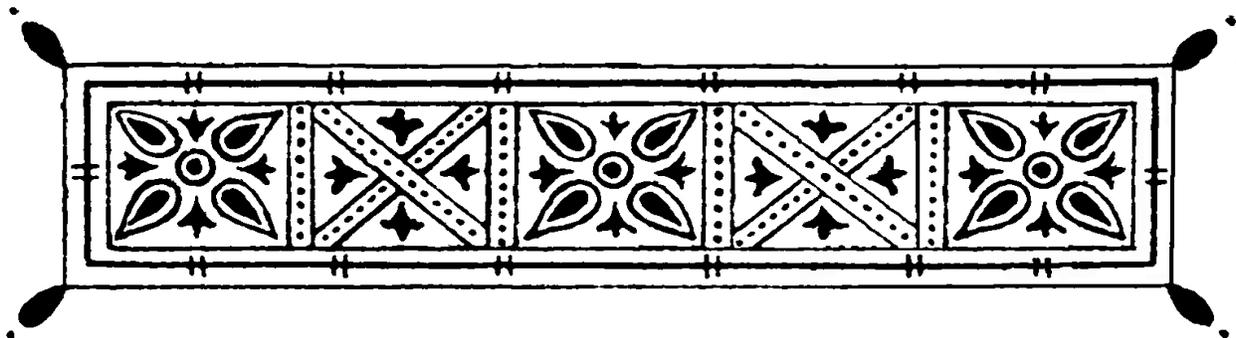
- S L O T H - laziness, lack of commitment, wasting time that could be spent in prayer and helping others
- D E S P A I R - unable to see good in anything or feeling like there is no hope, which means not believing in God's plan and in His power
- L U S T O F P O W E R - wanting more power to tell others 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.

