

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
ВЕЧЕРНЯ ✝ 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 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>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>	



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!

A ladder or steps- this reminds us that each step on our journey back to Christ should lift us higher.



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.