

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA



Christ IS Risen!

2018/2019

Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry

Praxis Session Plan

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Introduction

The praxis sessions are meant to give youth and their families to live out what their faith and what they have learned in the traditional session plans. Praxis is a Greek word which means “to do”. We shouldn’t just learn about our faith, we need to live it – TO DO it. Ideally the praxis session should be interspersed with the traditional session.

This curriculum calls for families to be included in most of the sessions. Be sure to inform families well in advance of dates where you would like for them to attend and participate. For families unable to participate in a session, prepare materials and handouts for them to work at home.

There are many ways to prepare for and celebrate Pascha and to live the faith. We have collected many ideas on the Office of Youth Ministry Pinterest boards. Provide this link to your families for additional ways to celebrate the Feast of Feasts!

<https://www.pinterest.com/uocofusa/oym-holy-week-and-pascha-for-parish-youth-and-fami/>

Acknowledgments

Icons – provided courtesy of Archangel Icons. Permission has been given for reproduction of icons for the projects outlined in this program. If you are in need of any additional icons, they may be found at www.archangelicons.com or Archangel Icons on Facebook. Thank you to Michael Kapeluck for his continued gift of these icons for the use of our youth.

Photography/Logo – Myr Arts – www.myrarts.com

Additional Photography – Olena Lymar for the UOC Camping Ministry



Praxis Session One: Fasting and Cooking as a Family!

Main Ideas: Helping families discover ways that they may incorporate fasting into their daily life.

Supplies needed: Ingredients for recipes, copies of recipes, copies of binder cover art and resource page(Supplemental Materials), binder for each family (or ask each family to bring a binder).

Preparation: If possible, order the book *Fasting as a Family: Planning and Preparing Delicious Lenten Meals* by Melissa Naasko available at <http://store.ancientfaith.com/fastig-as-a-family/> . If it is within your budget, purchase a copy for each family. There are many websites, blogs and books that provide ideas and recipes for fasting. Ms. Naasko also has a Facebook page (same name as her book *Fasting as a Family*) with regular posts.

Ask your parish priest to prepare a short introduction about fasting that can be presented at the beginning of the session. How can fasting enhance your spiritual and family life? Why do we fast during certain times of the year and twice during most other weeks? What makes fasting different from dieting or simply "giving up" certain foods?

Ensure that you choose a date for this session with input from the families to ensure maximum participation. It is suggested to hold this session prior to the Nativity Fast. Ask families to bring one of their favorite fasting recipes (with enough copies for all attending).

If time, space, and other logistics allow, consider asking a few people to bring in a lenten dish so that families (especially children) can "taste test" the foods they like and add those recipes to their books. Another idea is to treat part of the session like a cooking class and have families work together to prepare an entree or meal. Each family could do one task to contribute to the dish or each family could prepare one dish to make a full meal together. Ideally, they could each take something home to have on hand for a future fasting meal. Families may want to try this again a few times during Great Lent to share successful recipes and to share the work of meal prepping.

Introduction: Fasting may seem intimidating to many people, especially families. Today's families often live with very tight and busy schedules. Often, eating together is not accomplished on a daily basis. Food

allergies have also become a challenge for many of our families. With all of these factors, throwing the time and forethought needed for fasting may just seem like too much. While there is more to fasting than the list of foods and ingredients to avoid, we know that families are more likely to be successful in this part of their spiritual life when they have easy recipes and simple ingredients on hand. We hope this Praxis lesson will help to give families choices and opportunities for bringing fasting into daily life.

When choosing the recipes for this session, try to choose items that may consider the following:

- Easy Preparation with simple, easy to find ingredients
- Foods that can be kept in the refrigerator for several days and multiple servings (such as salads or casserole)
- Items that could be used in a child/youth's lunch
- Dishes that can be portioned and frozen for future meals.

Once the session is over, ask families to choose a dish to prepare for an upcoming coffee social following Divine Liturgy or at a pot-luck evening event. In this way we share and enjoy together as a parish family!

Session Outline:

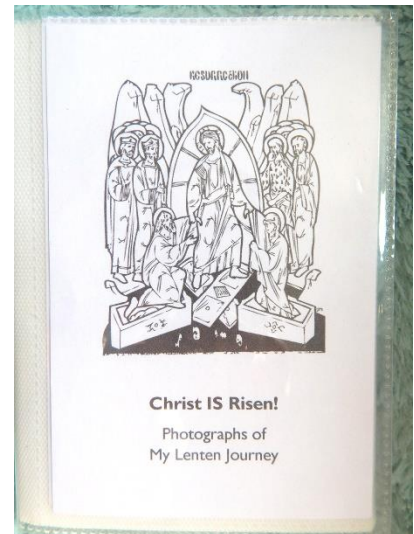
- Opening Prayer
- Introduction by Spiritual Father
- Prepare the recipes
- Allow families time to create their recipe books
- Share a meal together!
- Plan your special coffee hour together
- Close in Prayer

Praxis Session Two: Lenten/Paschal Journey Books

Main Ideas: Providing families with a communal project to travel through Great Lent and Pascha.

Supplies needed: 3 Ring Binders or Scrapbook, Scrapbooking papers, Icons (provided in supplemental materials), scrapbooking materials (gems, stickers, washi tape, etc), copies of Journey Book Outline (supplemental materials), resource page for Journey Book materials (supplemental materials).

Preparation: Purchase starter materials for the families for their Journey Books. You may also choose to use the project outline/activity provided in the Christ is Risen! Leader Guide for youth 4-8. (pictured right). Your family may also choose to share your journey on-line.

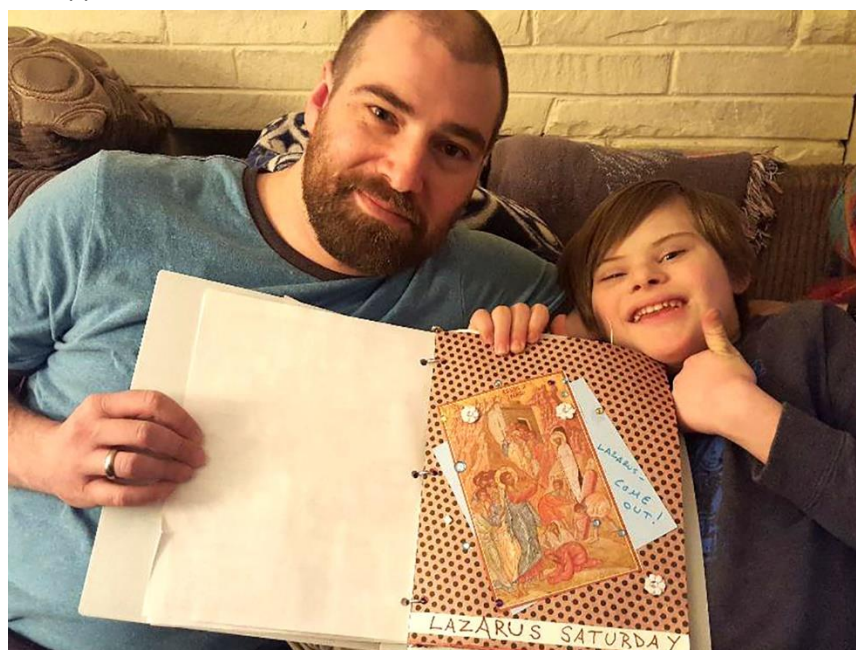


This session may be conducted in two ways:

1. Bring your families together to explain the project and begin by creating their cover page.
2. Start the project with your youth and send the materials home with a letter of explanation.

Ask youth to bring in their Journey Books periodically to share. Perhaps use your family Facebook group or Instagram to ask families to share in this way. Throughout the fast and Paschal season, you could also ask families questions about what they are learning via social media.

An additional list of resources from where you may obtain pages and handouts for the journey books may be found in the supplemental materials.



Praxis Session Three: Supporting Attendance at the Services of Great Lent

Main Ideas: Providing families with support in attending the services of Great Lent/Holy Week/Pascha



Supplies needed: Handouts (optional)

Preparation: Speak with your parish priest to set up times for families to arrive early or stay later after services. Ensure that these times are well advertised for the families.

Great Lent can be an intimidating time for families. In addition to already hectic schedules, they are now being called to attend additional church services. Many families don't even attempt adding to their schedule because the thought is too overwhelming.

The goal of this session (or hopefully, sessions) is to make participation in the beautiful services of Great Lent not only a possibility for families but something to look forward to!

Ways to encourage and support families so that they can participate in the Lenten Services as much as possible:

- Provide an introduction letter to your families concerning Great Lent in your parish. A sample letter is provided in the supplemental materials. Even if a family is unable to attend all services, committing to make a few is a great start! Having information ahead of time about what to expect and ways to participate will help parents to prepare themselves and their children to participate fully.
- With the blessing of your priest, designate several of the services as “teaching services.” Fifteen minutes prior to or following the service, your priest should discuss the meaning of the service and point out important moments so that children know what to look and listen for. For Pre-Sanctified Liturgies, a fellowship meal following the service is a wonderful time to discuss the service. It may be too difficult to gather prior to the services during Holy Week. Ask your priest if he can do an overview of the services on Palm Sunday or Lazarus Saturday.
- Provide materials for the family Lenten Journey Books at each service so that youth can add them to their book. This could include a coloring page or icon connected to the service or a copy of a prayer to “illuminate.” You can also provide handouts to the families on the Sunday prior to a Lenten service so that they can learn about the services before attending. If a family is unable to attend, they can still review the information and maintain a connection to the Lenten Journey. A list of resources are listed in the Supplemental Materials.

- Facilitate participation from home when appropriate: Families may live far from the parish, parents may not always be able to leave work in time to attend evening services, one parent may bring older youth to the service while the other stays at home with younger family members, etc. Provide copies of the services ahead of time so that families can read the text. For example, in the Ukrainian tradition, we split the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete into four nights. Perhaps the family can make it for one evening service. Provide them with a copy of the service and encourage them to pray one or two of the Odes with their children at home during the rest of the week. Obviously, the goal is not to replace attendance at the services with home prayer but keeping a connection to the services can encourage future attendance.

Praxis Session Four: Sharing in the Feast

Main Ideas: Providing youth practical tools to celebrate and prepare for Pascha

Supplies needed: Directions for Pascha basket covers (Supplemental materials), baskets, supplies for paska bread, paska bread recipe, list of parish shut-ins.

Preparation: Determine what method you want to use to make your Pascha basket covers. Purchase all needed materials.



Pascha baskets are a special part of our celebration. In this session, we will not only teach youth how to make some of these preparations but share the light of our risen Lord with those around us. This is a two-part session: 1. to create the basket covers and 2. to bake paska bread.

You may choose to prepare the dough ahead of time so that it may rise and be ready for decoration. You may also ask some experienced bakers in the parish to do this for you. Another avenue would be to teach the youth how to make the dough. As it is rising, utilize that time to create the basket covers.

Discuss with the youth why we take the time to put together our baskets. *Although what goes into the basket is a “t” tradition, there is a prayerfulness that is associated to our preparations. This time helps us as we ready to celebrate the Great Feast and conclude the fast. Preparing your basket as a family not only passes along your traditions but brings the whole family together to pray and contemplate the Resurrection of our Lord. While you prepare, you could discuss the upcoming feast and how you will participate in services during the festal period until Pentecost. Here is a link on the meaning of what goes into the Pascha basket <http://www.charmingthebirdsfromthetrees.com/2011/04/how-to-put-together-traditional-pascha.html>*

We are called to care for those who are sick, alone and in need. Many of our elderly do not have families to celebrate with them. Putting together a small basket for the shut-ins of your parish is a meaningful way for our youth to see Christ IS Risen! in action. Once the paska bread is finished, you may need to freeze them until they can be delivered. Determine with the youth how and when you will deliver the baskets. You can make this a group effort or each youth could deliver to one of the parishioners on the list.

Praxis Session Five: Carrying the Light!

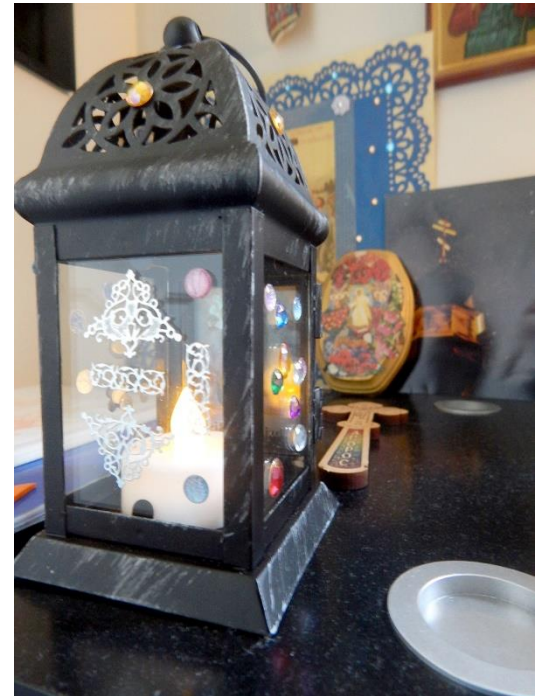
Main Ideas: Providing youth practical tools to celebrate and prepare for Pascha

Supplies needed: Lanterns, Icons of the Resurrection, gems, decorations, etc.

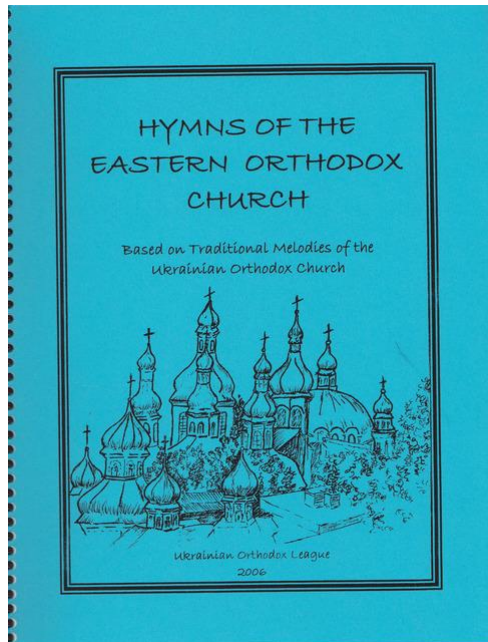
Preparation: Purchase enough lanterns - one per child or one per family. You will need to determine how you will print your icons (printable sticker paper is an easy choice. You can purchase clear sticker paper.) Once you have determined a method, prepare accordingly. You may use a line drawing icon (available at <http://dce.o.ca.org/>) or a color icon provided in the supplemental materials. Additional directions may be found in the Christ is Risen! Leader Guide youth 4-8

This session should ideally take place after Session Seven, which discusses the Holy Myrrh-bearers. Ask youth what they remember about the Myrrh-bearers. You may need to provide them with a few prompts. Explain that we will be walking in the footsteps of these saints on Pascha as we process around the church. Ask them if they know why we make the procession at the beginning of the Pascha services and what happens when we arrive at the doors of the church? The church is dimly lit as we exit. We journey into the darkness to make our way to the tomb. When we arrive at the doors of the church it is as if we have arrived at Christ's tomb. The priest will tap on the doors with the cross. When they open, the doorway is now flooded with light. We stand at the entrance of Light - of our Risen Lord!

Explain that they will be creating special Paschal lanterns that they will use during the upcoming procession. When completed, the lanterns may remain at the church or they may take them home to be returned on Pascha!



Praxis Session Six: Pascha Through Music



Main Ideas: Providing youth practical tools to celebrate and prepare for Pascha

Supplies needed: written music, recordings or video of paschal music

Preparation: Make enough copies of the chosen music for all participants. Ensure you have procured the needed audio to play during the session. If needed, speak with your parish choir director for assistance and to aid in the session if possible.

Music is a key part of Orthodox worship. The music of Pascha is filled with theology and brings joy to all who hear it. Through the hymns of the church, we learn and remember the meaning of the Resurrection.

Introduce your youth to the Paschal Odes. Take time to read through them and ask them what may be learned from the Odes. One suggested activity is to look for words in each Ode that are connected to 'light.' Each ode celebrates Christ's triumph over death and connects it to the foreshadowing of the Old Testament prophets. Another suggestion is to highlight the Irmos of Ode 5- "Let us arise at the rising of the sun and bring to the Master a hymn instead of myrrh, and we shall see Christ, the sun of righteousness, who causes life to dawn for all." Help youth to connect the idea of the hymns to the previous lessons that discuss the myrrh-bearing women, Joseph, and Nicodemus. Ask your parish choir director to teach a song that will be sung during the Pascha services so that youth can help to bear witness to the Resurrection through their song.

Next move on to the most recognizable music of Pascha, the Tropar of the Feast - *Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life.* Ask the participants why this tropar is so powerful. What is the meaning of this simple sentence in their lives? Refer to the classroom sessions that discuss making the Resurrection last throughout the year (Sundays celebrating the Resurrection, confession, A New Commandment, etc.) This Tropar sums up the most important aspect of Christianity.

If time allows, teach several versions of the tropar or introduce a favorite Paschal hymn of your parish. The book, *Hymns of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, is available through the Consistory store (https://www.uocofusa.org/service_books.html). This book contains many Paschal hymns in English and Ukrainian.

Perhaps the youth can sing what they learn during this session during the services at your parish. If you notice that some of your youth have an interest and aptitude for singing/music., encourage them to join your choir if they have not already done so. Let them know that you will go with them the first few times if they are nervous.

Praxis Session Seven: Sharing What We Learned

Main Ideas: Learning has a more lasting impact when youth are asked to share with others. Sharing what they have learned requires them to think about and recall information and helps them to make deeper connections with it. Additionally, sharing with an authentic audience gives them more incentive to do quality work and sends the message that what they are doing in church school classes and youth ministry sessions is valuable to the parish.

Preparation: Determine how and when you would like to provide your youth and their families an opportunity to share their Paschal Journey Books. Coming together as a parish family is a wonderful way to show how Christ is Risen all year long. Below are some suggestions for gatherings:



- *Join your parish for the Agape meal. These meals take place during various times. Sometimes after the Paschal Liturgy and sometimes after Agape Vespers. Check it out and join in this wonderful fellowship opportunity. Take a picture and add it to the last page of the book.*
- *Feast of Pentecost - have families not only bring their books to share on this day but ask them to provide their favorite dishes for coffee hour. Pentecost is a favorite day for parishes to celebrate First Holy Confessions. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss with your youth how Christ is Risen in their lives. Remind them of the session on confession. Ask them if they remember their first Holy Confession and how it was a special day. Have the youth make cards for the youth participating in the sacrament. Check out the OYM Pinterest page for ways to celebrate the feast.*
- *Parish picnic - Many parishes conduct their annual summer picnics in June. Ask families to bring the Journey Books. A wonderful way to keep Pascha alive in our lives. Have youth greet everyone at the picnic with Christ is Risen! Explain to them that St. Seraphim would greet all he met, no matter what time of the year, with Christ is Risen! my beloved! We too can greet people as St. Seraphim did - reminding ourselves and others of this amazing fact!*
- *Ask youth to post weekly/monthly to a youth/parish Facebook or Instagram account. They should post something that reminds them that Christ IS Risen! everyday.*