

Our Church Family

Objective: The children will explain that the Church family is made up of many families and define the Lord's Day and feast days.

For the Catechist

Young Christians are dependent on people for their existence and for help in understanding life. With some people—parents, brothers, sisters, family and friends—they have a special relationship of love.

Lesson one asks children to broaden their interpretation of family, a special relationship, to include those who are members of their Church. In Eastern theology, the family is the model for our concept of Church—we are family.

True religion does not deal exclusively with God because religion is a relationship of God and man. It deals with God Who has revealed Himself to man and calls him to enter into this relationship. We formally acknowledge this relationship when we worship. In the Divine Liturgy our Eucharistic Prayer (Eucharist is Greek for "thanksgiving") includes all of God's gifts to us and all He has done on behalf of our salvation. Most especially, however, we thank God for His greatest gift, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Days of Worship. The children are introduced to the concepts of worship on Sunday, the Lord's Day of Resurrection. Many of our churches offer Vespers or the Divine Liturgy on Saturday night for the following Sunday. In the Eastern Christian tradition (rooted in the practices of the Middle East) the new day begins at sundown. In other words, Sunday begins Saturday at dusk. Thus, the Saturday evening Divine Liturgy is still being celebrated for the Lord's Day—Sunday. We also worship on feast days. Through recalling to the children the tangible features of our Eastern worship on feast days (for example, blessed water on Theophany, flowers on the Feast of the Dormition, fruit on the Feast of the Transfiguration) you can help them to form a concept of worship on feast days or holy days. You may wish to have them look through the section "Our Church Year" to further this concept.

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: "To You, O Lord"

As with all prayers in the opening and closing of each lesson, consult the introduction to this grade level for the prayers according to jurisdiction. Use the approved wording for your jurisdiction.

Need: icon and votive candle, matches

Introduction: 1) Introduction of class members and teacher. **Need:** Name tag worksheet, hole punch and yarn OR pins, markers; 2) Discussion of many families making up the Church family. **Need:** photo of your family to share with class

Read Text Aloud: Ask questions noted on following pages as text is being read

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- *Basic 1:* Our Church Family
- *Basic 2:* Our Church
- *Group:* "God Loves..." Game
- *Craft:* "God's Family" Triptych

Closing: "To You, O Lord"

Come Bless the Lord Icon:

Packet I: Christ the Teacher

Packet II:

Teaching Pics

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted.)

The Sacred Church Building

"The church building becomes for us a sacred space, a visible icon of the kingdom of God. Our worship becomes a sacred time wherein we come collectively into God's presence to be united with Him and each other for our sanctification. The church structure, therefore, is given a special blessing or consecration by the bishop. It is almost a kind of baptism to mark this place as a special one where the Lord acts, a portal into the Kingdom of God. The Church also celebrates rites of blessing over all the items used in liturgical worship—icons, vestments, sacred vessels, altar cloths, reliquaries, palms, candles—each of which shares in the function of the church building" (*LLII* 92).

"The sanctuary and the nave have been given different meanings. The altar area represents the throne of God, become truly present as 'our Father in heaven' who has 'lowered the heavens' to dwell among us in His only Son. The nave, place of the worshipping community, signifies the pilgrim Church on its journey toward the kingdom of God. The goal of this pilgrim Church is to achieve unity with God beginning in this life and culminating in the future world. ('Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.')" (*LLII* 14).

The Byzantine Church Building

"All these aspects of worship find concrete expression in the Byzantine church building. Standing before the Pantokrator, the image of the inexpressible God, we find ourselves called to bow down and acknowledge our true status before God. We are surrounded by appointments recalling both the temple of Jerusalem and its heavenly prototype (cf. Ex 25:1 -27:21), but clearly focussed on the mystery of Christ at work among us. Standing shoulder to shoulder with the icons of the saints we take our place in the community of the Holy Spirit" (*LLII* 12).

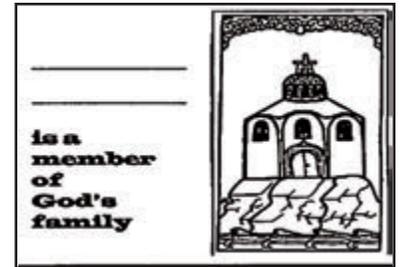
The Purpose of the Church Building

"Some people feel that church buildings are unnecessary since God is present everywhere, even in the field under the stars. If silent prayer for communing with God were the sole purpose of the church building, this argument would have weight, as many other places would serve this purpose as well. Of course, we sometimes take refuge in our churches as places of quiet and peace for private prayer, but the true purpose of the church building becomes manifest only with the liturgy celebrated there. There are essential aspects of His presence and His relationship to us which can be perceived best in the church building as it comes alive through use. In the Church's liturgical worship God is truly acting in the midst of His people. The Lord is at work, creating us anew: salvation is a continuous happening, as the Fathers often proclaimed. Hence, in the divine services, we are present to the saving events of Christ's paschal mystery as well as to the entire Church across time and space, which lives through His saving acts. The timeless and universal effect of these events is accented when they are celebrated in a properly appointed church building representing the fullness of creation touched by the saving hand of God" (*LLII* 12-13).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

[Use name tag worksheet to prepare name tag project. Have materials for name tags ready on the table as children come in. Greet students individually and direct them to a seat; explain that they are to write their names and color the name tag. Next, gather children around the icon.] *When we begin to pray, we stop what we are doing, saying or thinking. We get very quiet. We relax. Let's get ready to pray by relaxing our arms and body [shake arms and body and slowly stop]. Let's stay quiet and put our hands in the prayer position—palms open and facing upwards. Let's quietly look at the icon of Jesus and the candle. Let's think about how Jesus loves us. [Remain quiet for at least 10 seconds.] Let's say together "To You, O Lord."*



Introduction

Welcome to all of you! My name is _____. Do we all know each other? [Introduce new students.] To begin class today, let's talk about our wonderful God. Who can tell me anything about God, anything at all? [Let children share for a few minutes.] God has given us many good things: the world, our families, our Church. I love my family. Here is a picture of my family [show photo]. God is so good to give us families to love us. Tell me, what are some things you like to do with your family? [As they respond, if there are new students, ask them to tell who is in their family, where they live, etc.]. One thing I like to do with my family is come to church. We worship God together and thank Him for the many good things He has given us. Something special happens to my family when I come to church. Do you know what I'm talking about? [Let children guess.] It grows! When my family comes to church, it grows because my family is part of our Church family. In my Church family there is [name students and other church members]. All of our families come together and make up our Church family. We are the Church family of [name parish.] How many people are in our Church family? [Let children guess.] Today we'll learn about our Church family and why we come to church. [If possible, have a student read aloud. If not, read text to students. See "The Grade 1 Curriculum" in the "Introductory Notes" of this manual.]

1

Our Church Family



Come in.
Come in and welcome.
Welcome from God's family!

God's family comes to church.
God's family comes to church to say "thank You."

Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

Let's look at our first lesson. There is a photograph on the first page. What can you tell me about the photograph? [Allow responses, and if necessary ask:] Where are these people? (In front of a church) Who are they? (They probably are members of the church. The priest is there, too.) Let's read the title.

Our Church Family

Did you know that "church " means two things? It means the building we worship in and also us! We make up the Church. If all of us were in a meeting in a hotel and we had the Divine Liturgy, we would still be the Church.

[Hold up the Vocabulary Visual Aid, which is the first page after the completed lesson plan.] *Here are some words to learn. Can you guess what the first one is? [Continue with other two.] You can see these words in this lesson. Look for them, and they will help you follow the reading. [You may wish to have them point out the vocabulary words in the text.] Let's continue with our lesson.*

We say thank You to God for Jesus.

Jesus helped us become God's family. Jesus wants us to worship TOGETHER as a family. Jesus wants us to GROW TOGETHER [clasp hands] as a family grows together. Jesus showed us and taught us how God wants us to live.

We say "thank You" to God for Jesus.

Jesus taught us that God is love.

Jesus helped us become God's family.



God's family comes to church to worship God.

We worship on Sunday, the Lord's Day.

What is the Lord's Day? The Lord's Day is Sunday, the day Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Look at the picture. What is the girl doing? (Singing, worshiping God) Do you sing in church?

We worship on feast days.

Let's look at the picture at the bottom. What do you see? For which feast day do we bring fruit to be blessed? (The Holy Transfiguration of our Lord in August) Who can name another feast day? [Pascha and Exaltation of the Holy Cross were named during the introduction. Others: Christmas, Dormition, Pentecost, Palm Sunday, Good Friday] A feast day is a special holy day.

Let's review: We began our class by talking about families. We have two families: the one we share our home with, and. . . what is our other family? (Our Church family) When does our Church family worship God together? (On Sunday, the Lord's Day, and feast days)

Activity Tracks

Basic 1: "Our Church Family"

Today we learned that our Church family is made up of many families. And we learned some new words. This project will help you remember what you learned today. First, let's draw a picture of our Church family. Whom will you put in the picture? Now, let's see if we can match up the words with the pictures.



Our Church Family

In the box below, color a picture of people in your church. Match the words with the pictures.

1. our church family
2. Church
3. Jesus
4. worship

The activity includes a large empty box for drawing, a list of four words, and three small illustrations. Lines connect the words to the illustrations: '1. our church family' connects to the church building, '2. Church' connects to the group of people, '3. Jesus' connects to the portrait of Jesus, and '4. worship' connects to the church building.

Basic 2: "Our Church"

Today we learned that we are God's family and that we worship God together. To review the lesson, here is a worksheet. For the first part, fill in the missing letters; and for the second, circle the missing words. You can look back at your lesson to help you.

Group: "God Loves..." Game

Today we learned that our friends here at church are actually part of our family. God loves us all; we are all part of God's family. Here is a fun game to help you remember that God loves you and your friends. Let's say this together: "God loves my friends, God loves me, we're very close as you can see...." Now, everyone needs to stand somewhere in the room. One person will start our game. They will walk to someone else as we say our rhyme and take their hand, then continue walking around and the new person will grab someone else's hand. The game will continue until we are all a snake. Then the first person gets to make us into a tangle by going in and out of the middle of the snake.

Craft: "God's Family" Triptych

Materials: "God's Family" worksheet, construction paper cut in half lengthwise and folded twice, glue, markers

Today we learned that we are God's family and that we worship God together. One of the feast days we mentioned was the Exaltation of the Cross. Do you remember seeing the cross surrounded by flowers? That's part of our celebration of that feast day. To help you remember what you learned today, here is a project called a triptych. It opens up. You may be able to read it because of the pictures. It says: [point out as you read] "My..." what is that a picture of? (church) "Family..." what word went with the next picture? (worship) "My Church Family worships God on the Lord's Day," and here is a picture of the Resurrection to remind you of the Lord's Day, "and feast days," and here is a picture from the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Let's read it together from the beginning... [Have the children color the worksheet, cut apart the pictures, paste the first one on the front of the folded triptych and the remaining three on the inside, one for each box. Let them try to read it aloud.]

Our Church

A. Fill in the missing letters.



church



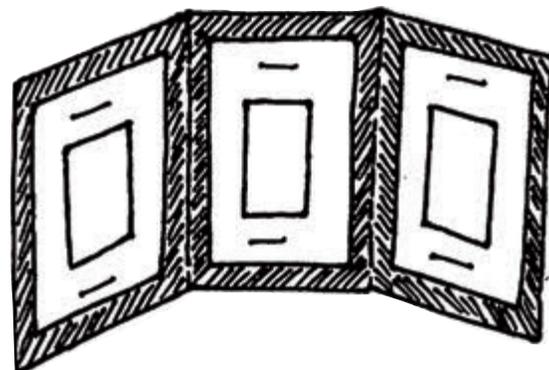
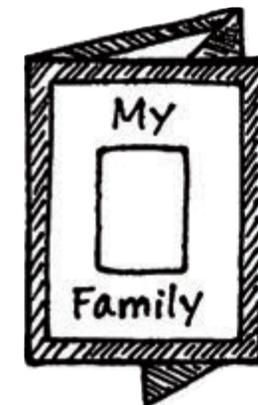
Jesus



worship

B. Circle the word that completes the sentence.

1. Jesus taught us that God is _____. love blue
2. Jesus helped us become God's _____. circle family
3. God's family comes to _____. school church
4. We _____ on the Lord's Day worship work
5. We worship on _____ Monday feast days
6. God's family comes to church to worship _____. statues God

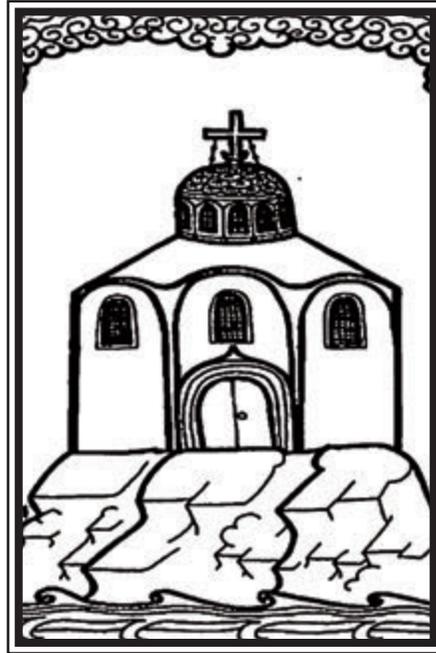


Closing

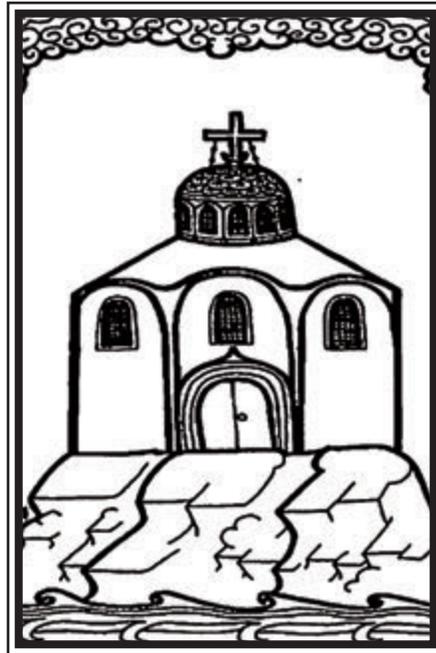
Gather the students before the icon. *God has given us so much—that's why we come to worship God: to say thank You. What can we give back to God? God has everything. What can we give to God? Ourselves. When we say "To You, O Lord," we are giving ourselves back to God, who gave us life. Remember, when we begin to pray, we stop what we are doing, saying or thinking. We get very quiet. We relax. Let's get ready to pray by relaxing our arms and body [shake arms and body and slowly stop]. Let's stay quiet, and put our hands in the prayer position: palms open and facing upwards. Let's quietly look at the icon of Jesus and the candle. God has given us so much. When we worship we thank God. Let's think about how Jesus loves us. [Remain quiet for at least 10 seconds.] Let's say together "To You, O Lord."*

God bless you; have a good week!

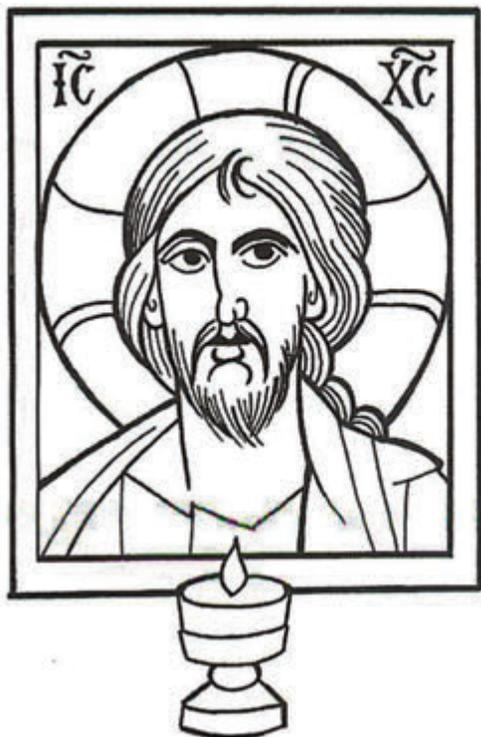
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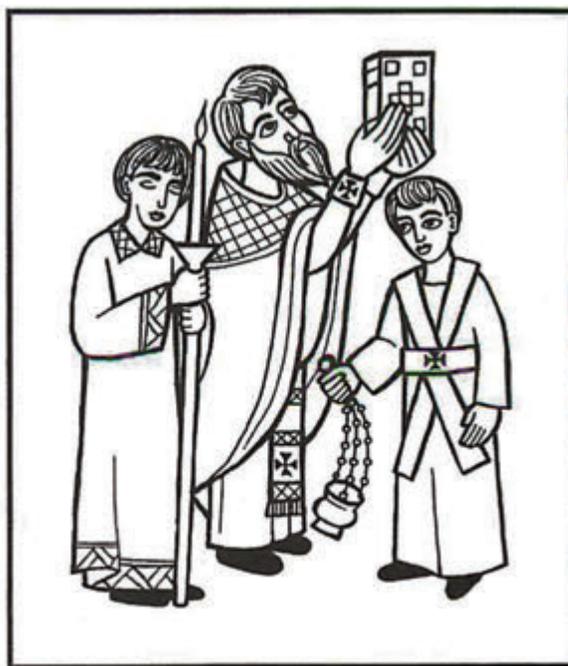


church



Jesus

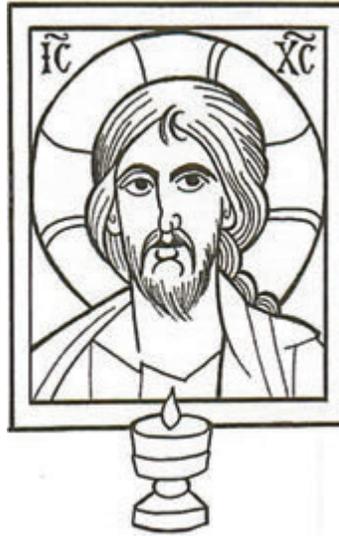
worship



A. Fill in the missing letters



chu__ch



Je__u__

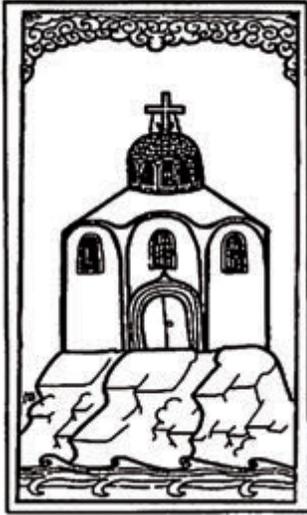


worsh__p

B. Circle the word that completes the sentence.

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My



Family

worships



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