

We Meet the Lord Jesus in Icons

Objective: The students will be able to identify the ways we prepare for the Nativity of Jesus: we pray, fast, and give alms during the Nativity Fast.

For the Catechist

Preparing for Christmas involves traditions to which children look forward. Many of these activities are family events that help us prepare for the birth of Jesus. Our Church family also prepares in a special way for the Nativity: we observe the Nativity Fast (Philip's Fast). In this *God With Us* series, lessons on the Great Fast have been included in all the earlier grade levels. This is the first year for the introduction of the Nativity Fast, which asks us to prepare in the same way as we do during the Great Fast.

The Church asks us to prepare by praying, fasting, and almsgiving. The Nativity Fast starts on November 15, the day after the Feast of St. Philip on November 14, and lasts through December 24. We do not fast on Sundays. The other fasting practices for each jurisdiction are included in this teacher manual in "Part II Liturgical Texts for Each Jurisdiction." Children should be encouraged to see these fasting practices as our way to prepare by saying "No" to certain foods and "Yes" to Jesus.

Throughout the Nativity Fast, we need to stay focused on preparing ourselves to meet Jesus. This is difficult at times because many people are celebrating before December 25. We need to remind ourselves to use this preparation time to wait for Jesus, the fulfillment of the Scriptures (Mt. 1:22-23):

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel,' which means 'God is with us.'"

This lesson should be taught as close to November 15 as possible. That means other lessons might have to be rearranged to accommodate the liturgical cycle. The lesson on the Nativity of Jesus Christ is in the last unit called "Observances."

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: The Creed

Introduction: Ways to prepare

Need: One magazine or personal picture of a vacation place and one of a party

Read Text Aloud: Have students volunteer to read the text. Use questions in the teacher manual to discuss the lesson with the students.

Activity Tracks:

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

- *Basic:* We Prepare for the Nativity
- *Group:* "How Will You Prepare?" Game
- *Craft:* "The Creed" Prayer Page

Closing: The Creed

Icon Packets:

Come Bless the Lord:
The Nativity of Christ

Teaching Pics:

Nativity of Christ (F3)

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

Fasting

"There is another way which the dining table offers us as a means of non-verbal prayer, and that is fasting. Not eating, like feasting, is a way of using our mealtimes to glorify God who is our true nourishment. Christ Himself fasted, as the gospels record, and He told His followers to do the same. In that way, many Fathers taught, the Fall which was caused by eating out of turn is reversed.

"Fasting is the necessary complement to feasting. If feasting is a daily event for us, we are no longer celebrating the Lord when we feast: simply satisfying our desires. If we give ourselves over to the rhythm of feasting and fasting, then our table actually becomes a place where God is glorified. All our eating becomes sacramental: a means of communion with the Lifegiver" (*DC 32*).

Fasting, Praying and Almsgiving

"Fasting is counterproductive to spiritual growth unless it is coupled with prayer and almsgiving. Simply not doing something can create a vacuum, and so the time and energy usually devoted to eating or entertainment needs to be redirected. Just not eating will probably not draw us closer to the Lord" (*DC 33-34*).

"Increasing your religious activity can mean attending divine services more frequently, reading, using religious video or audio cassettes or devoting time to charitable concerns, such as working in a shelter for the homeless. Many people keep a container on their dining table and place in it the cost of the foods they are giving up, to be used for charitable purposes. By maintaining the link between prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we increase the possibility that we will be sincerely fasting in the spirit as well as in the body" (*DC 34*).

Children and Fasting

"Our society teaches constant and unchecked consumption: if you want it, get it now! Children quickly absorb this principle from television, especially from the commercials aimed at them during children's programming. By teaching them to fast we provide a check on the untrammelled spirit of acquisition our culture endorses.

"Teaching children to fast can also help in another way. By enabling them to do without pizza or cheeseburgers, we are preparing them to say no to drugs or illicit sex. If we insist that they cannot survive without one kind of food when so many other kinds are available, can we reasonably expect them to say no in the back seat of a Pontiac?

"While we may not want to deprive children of something nutritious such as milk, there are a number of foods from which they would do well to abstain (candy, cookies, artificial breakfast cereals, soft drinks and the like, i.e. junk food). Not only foods but entertainment has been a traditional subject for fasting. Young people could be brought to fast from TV or the stereo and replace them with the bible games and videos mentioned above. Many people regulate these items anyway; certainly fast times are ideal for suggesting such activities to honor the Lord" (*DC 34*).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Today we are going to begin learning the Creed. I think once you begin saying it, you will remember hearing the words. Do we say the Creed during the Divine Liturgy? (Yes) Let's begin with the sign of the cross. [Use the prayer page at the end of this lesson. These are the same pages that will be used for the craft.]

Introduction

Let's start class with a game today. I am going to hold up a picture of a place, and you tell me how we have to prepare for this place. [Hold up a picture of a vacation spot—the seashore, the mountains.] Maybe some of you have gone on vacation to this place. What did you need to do to get ready? (Tickets, reservations, suitcases, money) [Hold up a picture of a birthday party or celebration.] What are these people doing? (Having a party) What did they have to do to get ready? (Send out invitations, get food, decorate) Okay, I think we planned enough today.

We just shared all the ways we can plan for something special. When we get ready to go somewhere or do something special, we have to plan. How many of you help your family plan for something special? After the plans are made, we have to wait. Sometimes we get tired of waiting. But finally we get to go on our vacation or have our party. How do we feel then?

Our Church also prepares for certain events throughout the year. Also, our Church asks us to prepare ourselves so that we are ready to celebrate the event. One of those times is now. We are getting ready to prepare to celebrate Jesus' birthday. We have to get ready. What is the name of the feast that honors the birth of Jesus? (The Nativity) [Show the Nativity icon.] We are starting our preparation time this week. We call this preparation time the Nativity Fast (Philip's Fast).

Let's turn to our books to find out how we prepare.

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As Church, We Prepare for the Nativity



We do many different activities during the week.

We play with our friends. We eat meals with our families. We go to church. We go to school.

Some weeks, however, are different. They are different because we know something special is going to happen. We spend those weeks preparing and waiting for the special event.

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Unit 3: As Church, We Act

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).

What are the people doing in the pictures on the first page of our lesson? Do you do those things every day? What else do you do every day or week? [Allow responses.] Let's start our reading.

We spend those weeks preparing and waiting for the special event.

What are some things you do while you wait for an important day? (Mark off the calendar, make a list of what needs to be done)

...which means 'God is with us'' (Mt. 1:22-23).

What was God's promise? (To send His Son)

What does Emmanuel mean? (God is with us.)

Jesus brought light and love into their dark world.

Where was Jesus born? (In Bethlehem) What did Jesus bring into the world? (Light and love)

...to help us get ready to greet Jesus.

What do we call this time of preparation?

(Nativity Fast) When does it start? (November 15) What is the last day? (December 24) How many days is that? (40)

In the Bible we read about many people who waited and prepared. They believed God would keep His promise to send someone to save them. The people prepared by praying and fasting. When God knew the people were prepared, He sent Jesus to be born in a cave in Bethlehem.



All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us."

(Matthew 1:22-23)

Jesus brought joy and happiness to the people who waited and prepared. Jesus brought light and love into their dark world.

We also must prepare while we wait for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus on December 25, Christmas. Our Church helps us by giving us a time of preparation called the Nativity Fast. Some people call it Philip's Fast. The Nativity Fast begins on November 15 and lasts through December 24. We fast and prepare for forty days to help us get ready to greet Jesus.

Our Church wants us to be ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus on the Feast of the Nativity or Christmas. We will be ready if we use the Nativity Fast to pray, fast, and give alms.

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We pray, fast, and give alms as we wait for Jesus.

What are three ways we prepare for the birth of Jesus? (We pray, fast, and give alms.) To whom do we talk when we pray? (God) What do we do when we fast? (We say "No" to certain foods and "Yes" to God.) What does it mean to give alms? (We share what we have with those who have less.)

Let's review: *What are some foods from which we can fast? [The fasting rules for each jurisdiction are listed in "Part II: Liturgical Texts" in this Teacher Manual. Encourage the students to add other food items.] What are some prayers we can say during this time? Are there any special church services we can attend? How can we give alms? [If your church has special collections, encourage the children to donate. Maybe your class can collect for the local food bank.]*

One way we prepare is by praying. When we pray, we are talking to God. Some churches have special services during the Nativity Fast. These services give us more time to pray and be with God. This is our time to tell God we love Him and are ready for Jesus' birth.

Another way we prepare is by fasting. Fasting is our way to show God He is most important in our lives. We say "No" to certain foods and activities, and "Yes" to God. We are showing God we want to be with Jesus.

Another way we prepare is by doing good works. We share our time and our talents to help others who need help. We give alms to share what we have with those in need. The Nativity Fast gives us time to show our love for each other. We want to learn how to love each other as God loves us. God loves us so much that He sent us His Son to be with us. We share this love that God gives every time we give alms.



Our Church helps us prepare for Jesus' birth.
We pray, fast, and give alms as we wait for Jesus.

Words to Remember:
Nativity Fast (Philip's Fast): The preparation time before the Feast of the Nativity
Nativity: The birth of Jesus

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Activity Tracks

Basic: We Prepare for the Nativity
[This worksheet is in the student text.]

Today we learned how to prepare for Jesus' birth. What are the three ways? (Praying, fasting, and giving alms) Now let's think about ways we can do all of them. Complete the sentences on this page. Write what you plan to do to help you prepare for the birth of Jesus.

[Help the students complete the sentences. Use the rules for fasting for your jurisdiction to help students complete the sentence on fasting.]

We Prepare for the Nativity

Complete the following sentences. Write what you plan to do to prepare for the Nativity of Jesus.

1. We do not eat everything we want while we are preparing for the Nativity. We call this fasting.
One food we try not to eat is _____.
I will remember I am waiting for Jesus every time I do not eat _____.

2. We spend more time talking to God during the days before the Nativity. We call that praying.
Every day I will try to say this prayer, _____.

3. I will practice showing Jesus' love by being nice to other people. One way I will try to be nice every day is by _____.

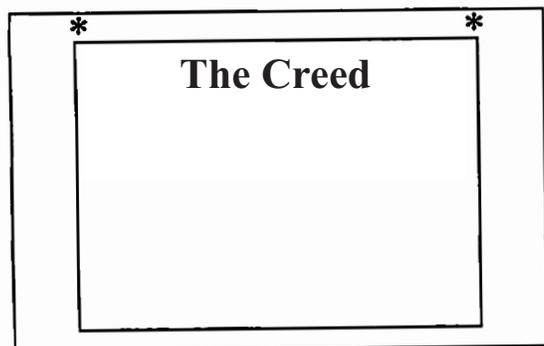
Thank You, Jesus,
for this time to prepare for Your Birth.

Group: "How Will You Prepare?" Game

Materials: Beach ball or any kind of ball

We learned we are to prepare for the birth of Jesus. What is this season of preparation called? (Nativity Fast) Today we are going to think of ways we can prepare. Let's stand in a circle. We are going to pass the beach ball around. I need a volunteer to come to the front of the room and cover your eyes. You will say stop whenever you want and turn around. The person holding the ball will have to say one specific way to prepare. Then these two people will trade places. I will be the first one to cover my eyes.

[Suggest specific ways to prepare: eating no meat on Wednesdays and Fridays (Friday is a fast day all year); going to Confession; saying extra prayers at night; attending additional church services]



Craft: The Creed" Prayer Page

Materials: "The Creed" worksheets according to each translations, heavier white paper or construction paper (1/2 sheet per student), hole punch, markers, stickers or stars, scissors, and glue

[Have sample ready to show children.] *We said the Creed at the beginning of our class today. What are the first two words? (I believe) Where do we hear the Creed? (During the Divine Liturgy) Today we are going to make another page to add to our prayer book.*

Paste the words on a half sheet of construction paper. You can draw pictures around the words, or you can add the stars or stickers I have here. Punch two holes to match the ones on the prayer cover. Untie the yarn on your prayer book cover and add this new page. Now pull the yarn through the holes and tie.

Closing: Let's pray, "I believe in one God..."

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father
before all ages: Light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one sub-
stance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our
salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin
Mary, and was made man; who was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suf-
fered, and was buried; who rose again on the third day in accordance with the
Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is enthroned at the right hand of the Father;

who will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead;
and of whose kingdom there shall be no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father,
who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified
who spoke through the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I profess one baptism for the remission of sins.

I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life
of the world to come.

Amen.

Melkite
Greek
Catholic
Church

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father
before all ages: Light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one
essence with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from Heaven and was
incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;
He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried.

The third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended into
Heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again with
glory to judge both the living and the dead;
of whose kingdom there shall be no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the
Father, who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified;
who spoke by the prophets.

And in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.

I expect the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Romanian
Greek
Catholic
Diocese of
Canton

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, the only-begotten, born of the Father before all ages. Light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin, and became man.

He was also crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.

And He rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

And He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; and of His kingdom there will be no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the Prophets.

In One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

I profess one baptism for the remission of sins.

I expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Ruthenian
Byzantine
Catholic
Metro-
politan
Province

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through whom all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man;

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and he suffered and was buried. On the third day he rose according to the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified; who spoke through the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.

Amen

Ukrainian
Catholic
Diocese of
St.
Josaphat

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is seen and unseen.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father. Light from light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, one in being with the Father.

Through Him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven: by the power of the
Holy Spirit He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and suffered, and was buried.

On the third day He rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; He ascended into
heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to
judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father.

With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Ukrainian
Catholic
Synod