

Jesus Gives Himself Totally for Us

Objective: Students will be able to explain the importance of the cross as a symbol: Jesus died so we could have eternal life.

For the Catechist

For children death means a loss. They can understand the sadness and sorrow a death brings. They can relate to the loss, but they will have difficulty understanding how this loss leads to a celebration. That is why they should be encouraged to attend Great and Holy Friday and Pascha services. They will experience the awe and amazement as to how could the Son of God have gone through all this at the hands of men. The Eastern understanding of Christianity often presents a paradox. Great and Holy Friday is one of those times: we realize the disciples were saddened by the death of Jesus, but we are able to rejoice because we know about the resurrection.

Encourage the children and their families to participate in Great and Holy Friday services. The Church asks us to take time on Great and Holy Friday and Holy Saturday to be with Jesus. Some churches schedule people to watch the tomb. We are to spend those days praying as we wait for Pascha.

Each lesson in Unit 4 started with a discussion about the footsteps leading to Pascha. If possible, have the children go to church for this lesson's introduction. Start at the back of the nave, and have the students walk forward as they count the steps and review the Sundays of the Great Fast. Continue with the discussion on the cross, and have the students look for the crosses in the church before you return to the classroom.

Throughout this unit, the children have prepared for Pascha, but the Pascha lesson is part of "Unit 6—Observances."

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: "Veneration of the Cross" Prayer

Introduction: Discussion about crosses
Need: A cross from your home

Read Text Aloud: Have students volunteer to read.

Activity Tracks:

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

- *Basic:* Jesus' Message
- *Group:* "The Great Fast" Guessing Game
- *Craft:* "Our Cross" Magnet

Closing: Veneration of the Cross" Prayer and the Prayer of St. Ephrem

Icon Packets:

Come Bless the Lord:

The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem
The Crucifixion

Teaching Pics:

Lazarus Saturday . . . (GL10)
Great and Holy Friday (GL14, GL15)

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

Why Jesus Suffered

"Modern thinkers have tried to outline the psychology of One like us in all things except for sin. The picture they paint is generally close to that offered by St. Peter in his first epistle: 'He did no wrong; no deceit was found in his mouth. When He was insulted, he returned no insult. When He was made to suffer, he did not counter with threats. Instead he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.' (1 Peter 2:22-23)

"According to Peter, Christ did not react negatively as we do to the unrighteous acts of others... This kind of behavior strikes us as odd, but it is we who are unnatural, who act in accordance with our fallen nature. Christ never did, thereby restoring our nature in fulfillment of God's original creative plan." (*WEF* 32-33)

The Message of the Cross

"The experience and writing of St. Paul gives the passion a new dimension. At first frustrated and discouraged by many failures, St. Paul began to look back over his whole missionary experience from a new light. He saw that suffering and persecution had often accompanied his attempts to plant the seeds of the Gospel. However, the seed had actually grown. Paul clearly recognized in his own experience the central teaching of Isaiah the Prophet, that only in the intense awareness of one's weakness could one be filled with the power of God. St. Paul wrote, 'God forbid that I ever boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...' (Gal 6:14); 'I will do no boasting about myself unless it be about my weaknesses...' (2 Cor 12:5); 'The message of the Cross is complete absurdity to those who are headed for ruin, but to us who are experiencing salvation it is the power of God' (I Cor 1: 18). To live in this mystery means to discover the paradox of the way of Christ - wisdom and life come through weakness and death to self" (*LLI* 53).

The Sign of the Cross

"Some of the most basic elements of liturgical Tradition are the simplest, such as the sign of the cross. Such a gesture is attested to since the earliest days of the Church, pointing to the saving power of Christ under whose standard we are enrolled. The ways in which this sign has been made have differed over the years among different Churches, but the reality at the heart of gesture is clearly central to Tradition.

"The same could be said for the Trinitarian emphasis which later associated this gesture with the mention of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as the concept of using physical signs in worship which is connected both with acceptance of our own physical humanity and with the Lord's full acceptance of it as shown forth in the incarnation. As with many of the other practices we have mentioned, how we make the sign of the cross is secondary. The sign, as an appropriate profession of faith, is an aspect of Holy Tradition" (*SLW* 91).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Let's start our prayers with a prayer we said on the Third Sunday of the Great Fast. Let's look at our footsteps and find the service we had on the Third Sunday. What is it? (Veneration of the Holy Cross) Does anyone remember how the prayer began? Let's use our prayer books. (Make the sign of the cross and bow.) Let's say this prayer three times. Don't forget to make the sign of the cross and bow.

Introduction

Let's start at our first footprint and count to this Sunday. Let's stop at each sign post and read the sign for that Sunday. One, two . . . seven, Sunday of Orthodoxy. What did we do on that Sunday? (Carried icons in church—[if that is the tradition in your jurisdiction]) Eight, nine . . . fourteen, Second Sunday. Fifteen, sixteen . . . twenty one, Veneration of the Holy Cross. How do we venerate the Holy Cross? (We bow and kiss it.) Twenty two, twenty three . . . twenty eight, Sunday of St. John of the Ladder. Twenty nine, thirty . . . thirty five, Fifth Sunday. Thirty six, thirty seven . . . forty. We stop at Saturday. Let's put up the sign for this Sunday. What is it called? (Palm Sunday) Does anyone remember what happened on Palm Sunday? (Jesus was greeted as He rode the donkey and entered Jerusalem. The people waved palms.) Does anyone remember why the people were so happy to be with Jesus? (He raised Lazarus from the dead.) What is the name of the Saturday before Palm Sunday? (Lazarus Saturday) That is why we stop marking our days on the Friday before Lazarus Saturday. We are ready to begin thinking about the last days of Jesus' life on earth. What is the name given to the last week before Pascha? (Great and Holy Week)

Today I have something special to show you. It is a cross I have in my home. [Show and share any details about a cross that you have.] Let's think about all the places we see crosses. Let's make a list on the board [or on a big sheet of paper]. Let's start with the church. (On the domes, the hand cross, on icons, on the icon screen) How do we show the cross with our hands? (We make the sign of the cross.) Let's do that now—"In the name of the Father . . ."Are there any crosses in our homes? (Over the door, in the icon corner, on the wall) Do we ever wear a cross? (On a chain) The cross tells people we believe in Jesus. The cross says we believe Jesus suffered and died on the cross to save us from our sins.

Let's turn to our lesson.

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Jesus Gives Himself Totally for Us

On Palm Sunday the Church remembers the time the people of Jerusalem praised Jesus as their king. "Blessed is he who comes as king in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38). They were praising Jesus for raising Lazarus from the dead. They were praising the power of God.

Our Church gives us palms and pussy willows or olive branches on Palm Sunday. We remember the way the people of Jerusalem praised Jesus as He rode through the streets on a donkey. Our palms and pussy willows help us remember to continue to praise Jesus.

During this Great and Holy Week our Church gives us special services to attend to prepare as a Church family for Pascha.

On Friday of Great and Holy Week our Church remembers the day that Jesus died on the cross. We call that day Great and Holy Friday. It is the most solemn day of the year for the Church. The Church asks us to spend the day praying and fasting. We even fast from the Eucharist on this holy day.



So they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle." (John 19:17-18)

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Unit 4: The Church Prepares for Pascha

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).

They were praising the power of God.

What were the people celebrating on Palm Sunday? (The raising of Lazarus)

The Church asks us to spend the day praying and fasting.

What should we do on Great and Holy Friday? (Pray and fast) Are we able to receive Holy Communion on Great and Holy Friday? (No) Why not? (It is a day of special fasting.)

Joseph rolled a stone across the entrance of the tomb.

Who is Joseph? (The man from Arimathea who buried Jesus.) Where do we learn about the crucifixion of Jesus? (From the Bible—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John write about the crucifixion) What is the Holy Shroud? (An icon of the body of Jesus) How is it used? (It is placed in the tomb on Great and Holy Friday.)

We offer Jesus our thanksgiving for His suffering that grants us eternal life.

How can we let Jesus know we thank Him? (Attend church services; spend time in church praying; fast and pray on Great and Holy Friday)

The Bible tells us about the crucifixion of Jesus. On Great Friday we listen to the Gospel readings that describe the suffering and death of Jesus. We are sad to hear about the punishment Jesus suffered.

In the evening of Great Friday, the priest leads the people in a procession around the church. The priest is carrying the Holy Shroud. The Holy Shroud is a cloth with an icon of the body of Jesus written on it. We sing a song, "The Noble Joseph," as we walk in the procession. Joseph from Arimathea wrapped Jesus' body and laid it in a tomb cut out from a rock. Joseph rolled a stone across the entrance of the tomb.

The Holy Shroud lies in a tomb in front of the Icon Screen. We venerate the Holy Shroud before we leave the church. We kneel and make a profound bow before we kiss the Holy Shroud. We use our whole body to tell Jesus we are sorry He had to suffer for us. We offer Jesus our thanksgiving for His suffering that grants us eternal life.



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He died so that we could have new life.

Jesus loved us so much that He wanted us to be with God forever. The only way that could happen is if He rises from the grave. That means Jesus had to die first. What does the cross tell us? (Jesus died on the cross so we could have new life.) What do you think people thought when Jesus died? We know in three days Jesus will rise from the grave. Are we still sad on Great and Holy Friday? (Yes) Why are we sad? (Jesus had to suffer so much for us) Are we thankful? (Yes, Jesus saved us from eternal death and granted us eternal life.)

Let's review: *Why did Jesus die on the cross? (To grant us eternal life) What does the cross tell us? (Jesus died so we could have new life.) What is the Holy Shroud? (A cloth with an icon of the body of Jesus.) Where is it placed? (In the tomb on Great and Holy Friday)*

The most important symbol that the Church has is the cross. There is a cross on top of every church. There is a cross on the Holy Table. We place a cross in our homes. The cross tells us that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He died so that we could have new life.

We thank Jesus for granting us eternal life. We thank Jesus for dying on the cross to save us from eternal death. We ask Jesus to forgive us for all the times we have not listened to God. On Great Friday we venerate the Cross and the Holy Shroud and tell Jesus we are sorry for our sins.



On Great and Holy Friday Jesus gave Himself totally for us. The cross is a sign that tells us Jesus died so we could have new life.

Words to Remember:
Holy Shroud: The cloth with an icon of the body of Jesus. It is placed in the tomb on Great and Holy Friday.
Great and Holy Friday: The most solemn day in the Church year. By greater prayer and fasting we remember the death of Jesus on the cross.

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Activity Tracks

Basic: Jesus' Message

[This worksheet is in the student text.]

Our activity contains a very special message that God wants us to read, but we have to decipher it. Does anyone know what Morse Code is? It is a sound pattern that sends messages. The dots indicate a short sound, and the lines mean a long sound. Follow the instructions and decipher or figure out the message.

Jesus' Message

Complete the following sentences by using the International Morse Code. The sentences tell us how much Jesus loves us. It is through His obedience that we are saved.

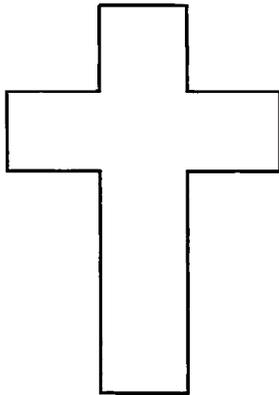
a	· · ·	f	· · ·	k	· · ·	p	· · ·	u	· · ·	z	· · ·
b	· · ·	g	· · ·	i	· · ·	q	· · ·	v	· · ·	(.)	· · ·
c	· · ·	h	· · ·	m	· · ·	r	· · ·	w	· · ·		
d	· · ·	i	· · ·	n	· · ·	s	· · ·	x	· · ·		
e	· · ·	j	· · ·	o	· · ·	t	· · ·	y	· · ·		

- JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS SO THAT WE COULD HAVE NEW LIFE
- THIS DAY IS CALLED GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY
- THE SHROUD SHOWS JESUS LYING IN THE TOMB

Group: "The Great Fast" Guessing Game

Materials: "Great Fast" worksheet, "Cross Segment" worksheet

[Have the children guess the letters for the words. When a letter is guessed correctly, add another segment to the cross.] *Today we are going to talk about the words we learned today. But before we talk about them, we will have to guess what they are. I have the words written on these papers. I need someone to volunteer. Pick one word, and on the board write a space for each letter of the word. The rest of us will try to guess the letters in the word. A part of the cross is drawn each time the guess is right. When we have all the letters, the student who is at the board will tell what he or she learned about that word.* [Follow this procedure until all the words are chosen.]



Craft: "Our Cross" Magnet

Materials: Plastic canvas, yellow and purple thin ribbon (48 inches per cross), "Our Cross" worksheet, tape, magnet strips

[Have sample ready to show children. Use the pattern to cut out crosses from clear or white plastic canvas] *Today we are going to make a plastic canvas cross. I have the crosses cut out [or you might have been able to buy them at a craft store], but I want you to decorate them using the ribbon. You may weave the ribbon in and out to make a pattern [wrap a small amount of tape at the end of the ribbon to make a sharp point to use to go in and out of the holes], or you may use the ribbon to make a border around the outside of the cross. Place a magnet on the back, and take it home to display in a special place for Great and Holy Week.*

Closing

Today we are also going to pray the "Veneration of the Cross" Prayer and the Prayer of St. Ephrem.

Almsgiving

Prayers

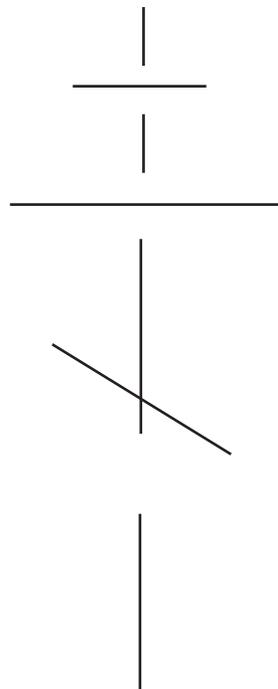
Holy Shroud

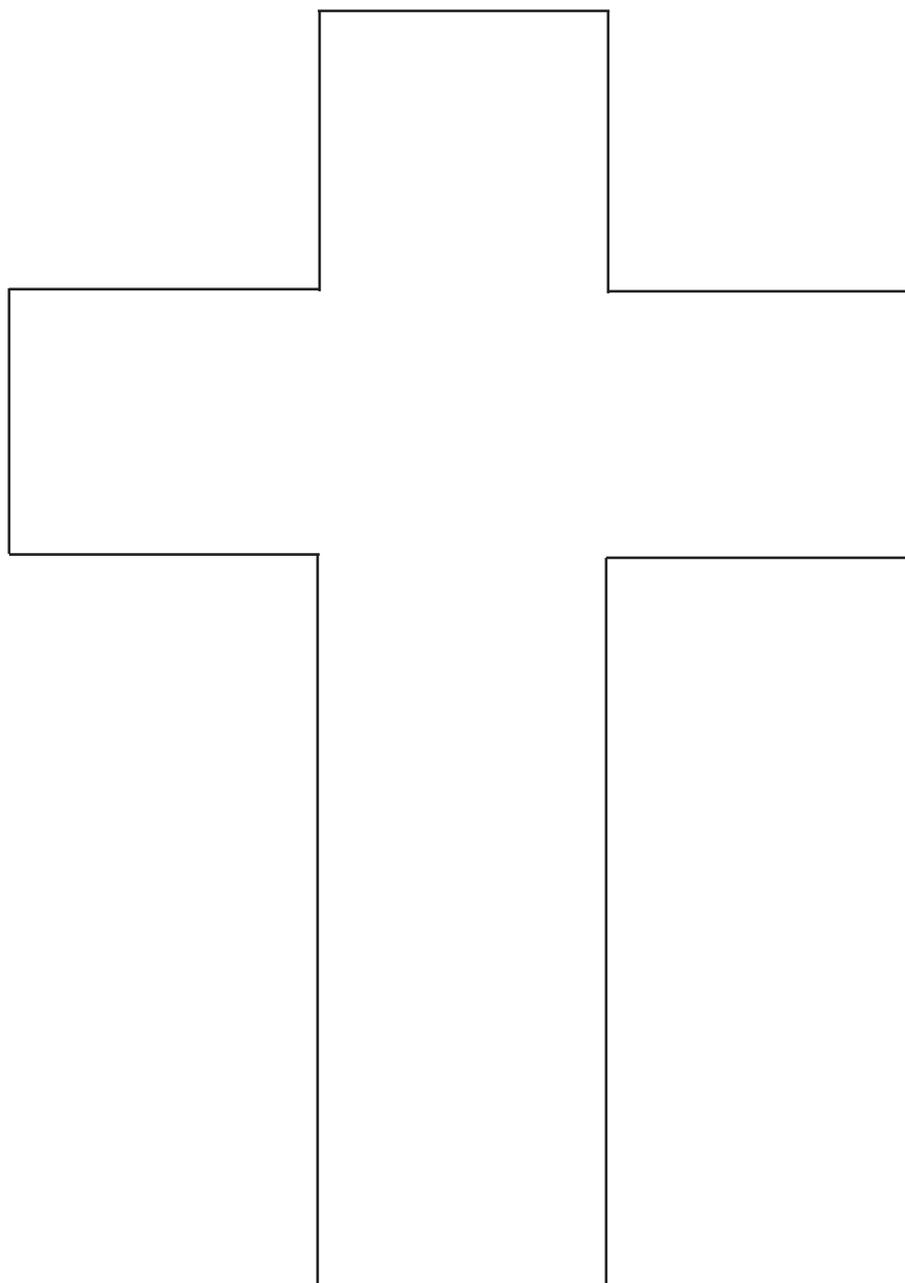
Fasting

Pascha

Repentance

"Cross Segment" Worksheet





Unit 4

The Church Prepares for Pascha

Review

1. What is the Great Fast?

(Lesson 16: The Great Fast is our 40-day period of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in preparation for Holy Week and Pascha.)

2. What is the Mystery of Repentance?

(Lesson 19: The Mystery of Repentance is our way to receive God's healing grace when we come to Him for forgiveness of our sins.)

3. Name two differences in the Church's Great Fast worship.

(Lesson 18: We make profound bows called prostrations; we see dark vestments and covers for the Holy Table.)

4. What is the Holy Shroud and how is it used?

(Lesson 20: The Holy Shroud is a cloth with an icon of the body of Jesus written on it. It is placed in the tomb on Great and Holy Friday.)

5. What is the most important symbol of the Church?

(Lesson 21: The cross is the most important symbol of the Church.)