

What good news do we celebrate on Pascha?

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the students should be able to

- identify the myrrh-bearing women as the first ones to announce the Resurrection.
- explain that Christians are to announce the Good News to all people.
- list the ways our Church helps us share the Good News.

For the Catechist

Lessons on Pascha are included in all the books in the *God With Us* series; yet, the children knew about Pascha even before they studied it—they experienced Pascha! Pascha is truly a celebration that we understand through our experiences in the Church and in our home. As members of the Byzantine Church, our Pascha experience includes church processions, the singing of "Christ Is Risen" outside the front doors of the church, and the eating of blessed food. We greet each other by saying "Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!" and we know God is with us.

The excitement of Pascha started from the moment the myrrh-bearing women found the tomb empty and were told, "He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples" (Matthew 28:6-7). The women ran to share the Good News! Since that day, we have been asked to share the Good News that we have been granted eternal life by the risen Lord.

This year the children have been learning about the many ways people witness to the Good News. This lesson helps the children realize that all of us Christians are called on to share the story of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our words and our actions are to bear witness to our belief in the risen Lord. The first effect of our bearing witness is that God be given the glory. God is given glory when His praise is taken up by more people who join with all of nature to proclaim the greatness of the Lord. The second effect is the enrichment of those with whom we share the Good News. We are called upon to fill the emptiness of people's lives by telling them about Jesus Christ.

Help the children look forward to sharing the Good News through their words and their actions. Help them realize the excitement of Pascha needs to be shared every day.

Materials Needed

Opening and Closing Prayers: Prayer page

Introduction: Note cards, pens and pencils

The Message: The New Testament, pens and pencils

Application: Pens and pencils

Icons and Pictures

Come Bless the Lord: The Descent into Hades

The Myrrh-bearing Women

Teaching Pics: Pascha (GL 17-19)

Connections

1. Opening Prayer (2 minutes)

Have the students gather before the icon and stand silently for a few seconds. Then make the sign of the cross. Sing "Christ is risen!" (Prayer page)

2. Review (4 minutes)

Lessons in this unit are not taught consecutively; therefore, review the last lesson taught.

Also ask: *List the names of the services during the Great Fast and during Great and Holy Week.* (Forgiveness Vespers, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, Akathist to the Mother of God, Commemoration of the Dead, Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete, Anointing Service, Great Thursday, Great and Holy Friday, Holy Saturday) [Discuss the services that are held in your church.]

3. Introduction (4 minutes)

Give each student a note card. Tell them they have 1 minute to list what they see in this room. (Desks, paper, books)

Now turn off the lights or close your eyes and pretend it is dark.

- *What do you see?* (Nothing)
- *If you had to walk through this room to get to church, would you want to have the lights on?* (Yes)
- *Why?* (To not bump into something, to not get hurt)

Help them realize that light protects us from problems.

Connect this idea to the concept that Jesus brought the Light into the world, and His Resurrection saves us from the darkness of eternal death. Just as we need light to keep us from bumping into things and getting hurt, we need Christ's light to keep us from doing activities that could get us hurt and cause us to sin.

Notes for the lesson:

(Use this space to write helpful hints to use each year)

The Message

4. The Myrrh-bearing Women

(8 minutes)

a) Read the first two paragraphs. Before the Scripture is read, ask the students to remain silent for a few seconds.

b) After the reading, write the answers.

c) Complete the reading on this page. Ask for three volunteers for the Scripture reading: one for the narrator, one for the angel, and one for Jesus. Read **Matthew 28:1-10**

Supplementary Activity:

Ask for volunteers to act out both Scripture readings. They may improvise words and add action.

Supplementary Activity:

Write the question for this lesson on the board or on a poster board: *What Good News do we celebrate on Pascha?* Write the following answers when they are read in the text.

1. Jesus was no longer in the tomb.
2. The angel told the women Jesus is risen.
3. The myrrh-bearing women were the first ones to be sent by Jesus to tell the Good News of His Resurrection

Background Reading:

(Pascha)

"In death, the apostle later related, Christ brought the gift of life to those who were held captive by it. 'In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison' (1 Pt 3:19). There, in the very heart of death, Christ is shown to be the Source of life. That even in death He could be the death of Death is a focus of our celebration of Pascha. At vespers on Holy Saturday evening we put these words in the mouth of Hades, 'My power has vanished. I received One who died as mortals die, but I could not hold Him. With Him and through Him I lost those over which I had ruled.' As we hear in the paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom, which is repeated every year on Pascha in the Byzantine Churches, Death 'seized a body, and lo! It discovered God! It seized earth, and, behold! It encountered heaven. It seized the visible and was overcome by the invisible'" (ID 29).

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Pascha

What Good News do we celebrate on Pascha?

The Myrrh-bearing Women

We read the Gospels to learn about the resurrection of Jesus. But none of the stories actually tell us how the resurrection happened.

Let's turn to the story about Jesus' burial to find out what happened to Jesus' body after it was taken down from the cross. The Gospel of Matthew 27:57-61 describes what Joseph of Arimathea did. Answer the questions after you read the Scripture.

In what did Joseph wrap Jesus' body?
He wrapped it in clean linen.

What was rolled across the entrance to the tomb?
A huge stone.

To make sure that no one took Jesus' body from the tomb, guards were sent to seal the tomb and to watch over it.

According to Jewish custom, Jesus' body was to be anointed before it was buried. Because it was too late on the day of the



burial and the next day was the Sabbath, the anointing could not be done until the third day. The women went to anoint Jesus even though they knew the entrance was closed by a huge stone that would be difficult to move. **Read Matthew 28:1-10** to learn what they found at the entrance.

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4. Myrrh-baring Women *(continued)*

(7 minutes)

d) Read the first two paragraphs. Let the children share their thoughts about the words the women used. Ask: *Would the words be different today than they were then?*

e) Complete the reading. Look at the icon on the first page of the lesson. Ask the students to identify the parts that are in the Scripture

Supplementary Activity:

Tell the students to read and possibly act out the four different Gospel readings about the resurrection.

Background Reading

(Celebration of Pascha)

"The principal feast of the Christian year is the feast of Passover (in Greek, Pascha—the English name 'Easter' derives from a pagan spring festival), for the resurrection of Christ stands at the center of our faith. Though we have no direct experience of the future kingdom, our faith rests upon a real event that transformed the apostles and became the foundation of the life of the Church" (LLII 34).

"The celebration of the resurrection of Christ remains the most glorious experience of the Byzantine Churches. The joy of the ointment-bearing women at discovering the empty tomb of Jesus is relived in processions, music, and gestures which tell us more about the mystery of the resurrection that a thousand books or lectures" (LLII 37).

5. The Celebration of Pascha

(6 minutes)

a) Read this section aloud or silently

b) Ask the students to share what the remember

from the Resurrection Matins and the Divine Liturgy in your parish.

c) Have the students practice saying "Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!" with enthusiasm and meaning. Divide the room to have one side greet the other or boys greet the girls or small groups greet each other.

Supplementary Activity:

Have the students go to different classrooms to offer the greeting (make arrangements in advance) or have them go to the parish center or other places where parents might be waiting. Encourage the students to share the Good News with everyone!



According to all four Gospel readings about the Resurrection, these women were the first to discover that Jesus Christ was no longer in the tomb. They were the ones to hear the angel say, "Do not be afraid!" (Matthew 28:5) Then they listened without fear to the words of the angel: "He has been raised from the dead!" (Matthew 28:7)

They also listened to Jesus who said, "Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me" (Matthew 28:10). These women were the first ones to be sent by Jesus to tell the Good News. What words do you think they said to announce Jesus' resurrection?

Maybe they used the same words we use to announce the Good News—"Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!" We are like these myrrh-bearing women every time we offer this greeting. We remember these holy women on the Second Sunday after Pascha.

In the icon of the myrrh-bearing women, we see the story from the Gospels. Imagine the surprise and overwhelming excitement the women must have felt when they saw the large stone was rolled back. Then when they entered the tomb, they saw the angel who told them "He has been raised."

The Celebration of Pascha
Our Church helps us experience the way the myrrh-bearing women felt. At the beginning of the Resurrection Matins, our church is dark. Then the priest walks from behind the icon screen with a lighted candle. With this candle, he lights the candles in the church and the ones the people are holding.

Symbolically, the light of Christ is brought into the world's darkness. A procession follows as the Good News is announced with song. Throughout the Resurrection Matins and the Divine Liturgy, the priest and the people say often "Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!"

We are like the myrrh-bearing women. We believe what we have been told, and we want to share this Good News.

The following true story helps us understand how powerful these words are. Before you begin, greet each other with the words: "Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!"

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6. A True Story

(10 minutes)

a) Divide the class into small groups and have the students read the story aloud to each other. This will give more people a chance to read.

b) When the students return to the full group, ask one student to come to the front of the room and say the greeting. Then tap another one, and continue until everyone is in front and saying "Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!"

Ask: *Did it make a difference saying it in a group? How?*

c) The man in the story was not ashamed to say the Paschal greeting even if it meant death.

Ask: Would you be willing to say it if you saw each other in the school cafeteria or at a ball game? Why? Why not?

Supplemental Activity

Ask the students to think of a time they had to defend their belief. Let them explain:

1. By telling the class.
2. By writing about it in a journal.
3. By writing a news story about it.

A True Story

**JESUS LIVES . . . WITH A NEW LIFE . . .
A LIFE OF LOVE WE CAN ALL SHARE . . . IF WE LIVE CLOSE TO HIM.**

It was not an unusually cold day as Russian winters go, that day in 1924. The Soviet government was increasing its campaign against religion, and was sponsoring many rallies and meetings to make fun of religion and the Church. Today was one of those days.

Commissar Vasil had organized this demonstration. The soldiers had their orders: they were to find two thousand people and bring them to the appointed spot so that there would be an audience. The program itself was all arranged: Dr. Burdickoff, the famous anti-religious speaker, was going to talk. His subject: Jesus' resurrection is a lie.

The people gathered and Burdickoff began to speak. For over an hour he attacked the Gospels, made fun of the Christian faith, and laughed at the Church before his captive audience. Finally he threw out a challenge. "If anyone here thinks he can prove that what I have been saying is false, I dare him to come up here now. The microphone is his."

The people stood silently, unmoving. No one would dare challenge the speaker. The poor workers could not match Burdickoff's keen mind and quick tongue, no matter how strongly they held to their faith. Besides, even if someone could out-talk the doctor, the soldiers would probably kill him on the spot.

Suddenly a murmur rose in the crowd because it seemed that someone was actually going to accept the doctor's challenge. An old man, a peasant, was making his way slowly to the speaker's platform. Even Burdickoff was stunned; he never expected that anyone would try to debate with him.

After the first momentary shock, however, he began to laugh within himself. "What can this old fool have to say. I will make him the laughing stock of the city," he thought.

By that time the man had reached the speaker's stand and looked out over the silent sea of faces: thousands of believing Christians afraid of what was to come. For several moments the old man looked out over the crowd as if he were trying to look into the eyes of each person there. At last his lips formed two words, the Pascha greeting, "Christos Voskrese!" ("Christ is risen!").

There was silence for a moment until the people realized what had happened. Then, suddenly, two thousand voices shouted back the reply, "Indeed He is risen!" Again and again the old man screamed out the greeting: "Christ is risen—Indeed He is risen!" until soldiers dragged the old man off the platform.

When the crowd saw that, they began to sing the Pascha Troparion—Christ Is Risen—over and over. The Commissar was furious: a simple old man had turned his rally into a prayer service with the Eastern Christians' Pascha chant, "Christ is risen!"

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Background Reading:

(The Family of God)

"We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. We are, therefore, as Christians, 'convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or in the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in the heights of depths, nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. 8:38). It is by Christians living out this affirmation in their lives that the world will come to believe in the possibility of its own resurrection" (FG 90-91).

"It is this Christian love in each Christian which exorcises demons, eradicates evil and heals sicknesses. It is Christian love which liberates and frees. The world does not believe such a love is possible. It is only by living such a love, witnessing to its reality and power, that the Christian will arouse and inspire the world to the conviction that its problems can be resolved. Only living love will ever convince the world that it can become a family, a family of man one day worthy of being the family of God" (FG 90).

7. Action Plan

(10 minutes)

a) Organize the students in groups to discuss the answers to the three situations. Then have them write their own answers in their books.

b) Remind the students to share their answers with their family and friends as suggested in the last part of this page.

8. Summary

(7 minutes)

a) Ask the following:

1. *Who are the myrrh-bearing women?* (The women who went to anoint Jesus' body. They were told to tell the Apostles that Jesus has been raised from the dead.)
2. *Who is Joseph of Arimathea?* (He is the one who took Jesus down from the cross and buried Him.)

b) In groups discuss why the Pascha greeting should be said often. *What does it say about our faith?* (That we believe in Jesus Christ and His Resurrection) *Why don't we say this greeting often and announce our faith? Are we embarrassed by our faith?*

9. Closing Prayer

(2 minutes)

Sing "Christ is risen!"

Action Plan
Pascha
Sometimes we do not notice ways that we can share the Good News. We think only priests and religious are responsible for telling people about Jesus. Today you are to think about ways that you can tell your friends, your family, and everyone else about the Resurrection of Jesus. Choose one of the possibilities and write what you could do.
<p>You have been asked to write a television show that would share the Good News. Describe the kind of show it would be and what time it would air.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>You are the organizer of a parade announcing the Resurrection of Jesus. Who would be in the parade? What music would be played?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>You have been hired to write a billboard and bumper stickers announcing the Good News. What would they say? What pictures would you include?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Share Your Ideas! Share your ideas that you described above with your parents and friends throughout the week. Ask them for suggestions. In this way you are sharing the Good News because you are telling them about Jesus Christ!
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**Christ is risen!
He is truly risen!**

Pascha Troparion

Christ is risen from the
dead and by His death He
has trampled upon Death;
and has given life to those
who were in the tomb

The Melkite Greek Catholic Church

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The Romanian Greek Catholic
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and to those in the graves
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The Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic
Metropolitan Province

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