

# Lesson 3 - Salvation History: God Acting in the World

## *Objectives*

By the end of this lesson the student should know that:

- Explain Salvation History as the story of God's work with His People through the ages.
- Understand that Jesus Christ is the focus of Salvation History: past, present and future.
- See how the Divine Liturgy celebrates Salvation History

## *For the Catechist*

The gift of eternal life we have received, like everything else, comes to us from the Father through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is through Christ that we come to the Father. It is through Him that we come to know the whole plan of salvation that God has prepared for us. It is this entire plan that we call "Salvation History," a new term in your students' vocabulary.

Salvation History is centered on Christ, but also has a background, a period of preparation. The Gospels that speak of Christ's birth also give His genealogy, showing that He descended from Israel, the people of the Promise. Salvation History includes the present as well, the time of the Holy Spirit sent to be with us by Christ. We are part of this unfolding of God's saving plan. Salvation History also includes the future, the return of Christ in glory at the end of time, because the story of Christ is much more than His life on earth.

As we study Salvation History, whether it be the period of the Old Testament or the story of the Church, we look at it through the Person of Christ. In this way we see the events of this history, not simply as isolated occurrences, but rather as the saving plan of God, which has been opened to us in Christ.

The first aim of this lesson is to help students — who may have little contact with their own extended family — to see themselves as connected to their spiritual ancestors in God's People. This will be repeated in this year's Nativity lesson, which focuses on the Sunday of the Ancestors.

## *Materials Needed:*

*Opening Prayer:* Icon corner

*Introduction:* Easel or wall pad, markers

*Alternate:* Family heirlooms

*Guided Reading:* Student texts

*Activity A:* Worksheet A, Shawls or robes to suggest Biblical dress, large stuffed animals, Bibles

*Activity B:* Worksheet B, pencils

### 1. Opening Prayer

Remind the students that the Psalms are hymns from the Old Testament used in prayer for over 3000 years. **Pray Psalm 23** from page 11 in the student text.

### 2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson using the pages from your wall or easel pad.

*Alternate:* let each student briefly "teach" one page in the text, pages 7-11.

### 3. Introduction

Remind the students that each previous lesson has included a time-line listing certain persons or periods of time. Say: *today we are going to create a time-line including all the people and stories we remember from the Bible. First we will list all that we can remember, then we'll try to put them in the order in which they happened.*

Write the events the students recall on the board. Narratives covered in previous years include Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood, Moses and the Exodus, the Ten Commandments, Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, the life of Christ, particularly as celebrated in the Church's feasts.

Note that creation and the flood are too old to date, but that Moses lived in about the 13th century BC, the prophets lived about 700 years later (8th to 6th centuries BC) and that Christ was born 600-700 years after the prophets. Stress that God is still working for us now in the Church. We are one People of God.

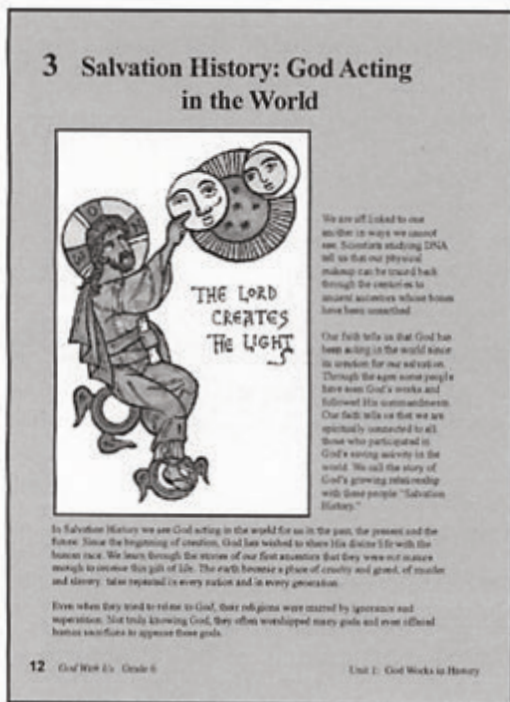
*Alternate:* Display a family "heirloom" of any kind (jewelry, icons, souvenirs, photos) that have been passed down to you. Show how they remind you that you are connected to these ancestors who lived in the past. Indicate that our country has "ancestors" to whom we are connected (e.g. Washington and Lincoln) and that our Church does also.

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### ***Background Reading (The Church):***

“While God's plan of salvation is a straight line of progress toward participation in divine life, our Tradition likewise recognizes that certain patterns recur again and again along segments of that line. The idea of a remnant community is one such pattern, as we have just seen. The mode of interpretation which focuses on such patterns is called typology. Typology presumes that God planned to share His life with us all along, but the history of God's dealing with people demonstrates that humanity has made slow progress toward recognizing and receiving this gift of divinization" (OTB 20-21).

#### 4. Guided Reading, Page 12



Direct the students **to look up in the Glossary** any words they find underlined in the lesson (*Pre-History*).

Have the students **read the first section of the text, pages 12,13 and 14**. Divide reading styles (aloud/silent; by one/all together).

Before the reading, direct the students to **indicate the three main sections of the lesson text**: Note that each section talks about one of the aims of this week's lesson.

**Write the objectives** of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad so that the page can be preserved and used for review next week.

After the reading, drill each student on the meaning of "*Salvation History*"

Questions you may ask at this time include:

- Why do you think God created us? (*to share His life with us*)
- God left us free to follow His way or not. What are some good things people have done to live a Godly life? What are some of the wrong things people do?
- What does "covenant" mean? (*an agreement*)
- What did God agree to do in His covenant with the Israelites? (*to be with them always*)
- What did they agree to do? (*to live as His people*)

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#### ***Background Reading (Our Salvation):***

"For the deification of every person and the acceptance of their salvation in time and space, the Father in His mercy gave an Eternal High Priest, who once and for always offered Himself as a sacrifice on the cross, so that each time this is liturgically remembered, we could become one body with Him. The Incarnate presence of the eternal and divine Word is a manifestation of the mystery of God. In the deified and glorified human nature of Jesus that is, His Body, the Church, through the holy Table of the Word and the paschal banquet of the Eucharist, continues to give us His salvific grace. We further pray in the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil: 'Unite all of us, who receive communion from the one bread and the one chalice, to one another for the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'" (*UCD 19*).

Salvation History took a giant step forward when God made a covenant with the Israelites on the death of Moses. "I am present in your midst. I will be your God, and you will be my people" (Exodus 20:12). It is certain that gradually through the people as they sought to know properly, worship the true God and to live a holy way of life.

Many of the great people of the Old Testament we have studied, such as Noah, David, Elijah, Joseph and Jeremiah were members of this people. John the Baptist, Jesus Himself, the Theologians and the other saints, the Apostles, and many of the first Christians were also members of this race.



**Christ in Salvation History**

We see that God's dealings with the Israelites were ultimately to prepare them for the coming of the Son of God into the world. As we see it in the Synoptic.

"To make good God speaks in parable and various ways in our existence through the prophets, to those that listen, but speaks in a way which whom he made hear of all things and through whom he passed the covenant" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

God's will was to us in Christ come in a unique way. The Son of God became one of us so that he might save us from eternal death and share with

**Highlights in Salvation History**

There have been thousands of people who played special roles in Salvation History. Many of the great figures were members of this race, some of these important periods.

**Pre-history** - From the dawn of creation, God was at work to shape the life of man on Earth. The first man, Adam, was created in the image of God and lived in the Garden of Eden. The serpent tempted him to eat the forbidden fruit, and he was expelled from Eden. His son, Cain, murdered his brother, Abel. The Flood came, and Noah's Ark saved his family and other righteous people. The Tower of Babel was destroyed, and the people were scattered. The Israelites were called out of Egypt and brought to the Promised Land. The Israelites were united as a people, and the Law was given to Moses. The Israelites were united as a people, and the Law was given to Moses.

**The Incarnation** - God worked in a special way with one particular nation, the Hebrews or Israelites. Their story began with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob's son Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt and prospered there. When the Egyptians had against the Israelites, they were led to the land of Goshen. The Israelites were united as a people, and the Law was given to Moses.

**Christ and the Apostles** - Christ worked most effectively in Christ in being people of all nations to Him. The Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles at Pentecost, and they went out to preach the Gospel to all nations. The Church was founded, and the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles at Pentecost, and they went out to preach the Gospel to all nations.

**Time of the Church** - Since the time of the Apostles, God has worked in the Church through the Holy Spirit. We will study some of the history of the Church in the next section. The Church is the Body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church.

**How to Come** - Salvation History is not complete until we have reached the end of the world. Christ's coming again, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment will happen, but pray for their duty when we say, "My Kingdom come!"

## 5. Salvation History and Our Liturgy (pp. 14-15)

in the life of the Trinity. We call the taking of our human nature "the Incarnation."

The Incarnation of Christ is the final point of Salvation History. Every Holy Liturgy Christ prepared to honor and glorify for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Church and everything that has happened afterwards was made possible by Christ. And so, when we look at the sacred history we look at it through the prism of Jesus. We look at the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.



**Salvation History and Our Liturgy**

Salvation History is what the Divine Liturgy is all about. From all of the Liturgy we give thanks for the principal events of Salvation History. The most important part in the Liturgy is the Anaphora or Offering. In it the priest says:

"You brought us out of our sins, and again regard us up when we have fallen, and help us to stand until Your Kingdom come. For all this we thank You, and Your only-begotten Son, and Your Holy Spirit, for all that we have done and that we do not know, for the merciful and hidden benefits bestowed on us" (Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom).

In this prayer we thank God for all the events of Salvation History from the period of pre-history to that which is yet to come.

As the Holy Gifts are offered, the priest remembers Christ's role in the history of our salvation. Then he thanks us offering the Holy Gifts to the Father in union with Christ.

"Remembering His name, His work, His incarnation on the third day, His

There were many great and faithful people who lived during the time of the Old Testament. But God's loving plan would not be fulfilled until the coming of Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, speaks with respect of many great Old Testament figures. Then the writer goes on to say:

Before reading the second section, "**Christ in Salvation History**," ask the students whom they think is the most important figure in Salvation History and why? Then have the students read the section to see if they were right or wrong.

Connect the idea of Incarnation with Christ's conception at the Annunciation and His birth in Bethlehem. Note how He was one of us (born, lived, ate, drank, studied, worked, died). Ask in what way He is not like us? (*never sinned, rose from the dead*).

*Ask:* What do you think is that "something better" mentioned in the quote from Hebrews? (*salvation, union with God*)

Before reading the next section, ask the students:

- Where can they read the events of Salvation History? (*the Bible*)
- Where can they hear about them and become a part of them? (*The Divine Liturgy*)

Review the five periods of Salvation History in the **sidebar on page 13**. Have the students connect the excerpts from the anaphora with these five periods:

- Which period is mentioned in the first part of the prayer? (*pre-history*)
- Which three periods are mentioned in the second prayer? (*Christ and the Apostles, the Time of the Church, The Future*)
- Reminded of all these things, what do we do? (*We offer, we share in the Gifts*)

If there is time, do the same with the **excerpt from the Liturgy of St Basil** on page 15.

## Background Reading (*The Divine Liturgy*):

"Likewise, Liturgy must be understood as an experience of the divine realities, a participation in the mystery of salvation. By the Holy Spirit, Christ God prays and acts in and through His Body, the Church. As Christians participate in the Liturgy, they experience the "Truth," "know" God by experience and participate in the life of the Trinity, which the risen Christ communicates to them in and through the Spirit.

"Our liturgical celebrations teach us the Church's Theology. Our spirituality is a living out of this sound Theology, which is experienced and manifested in sound Liturgy. All are expressions of Tradition, an ongoing life in the Spirit, an experience of the same basic reality" (*LLIII 2*).

## **6. Activity A ( Biblical Skit)**

Distribute Bibles and the Biblical skit worksheet and encourage the students to develop a skit on Noah and the Ark. Characters are to ad lib their impressions of life after almost a year on the Ark. Students should be given the freedom to imagine the worst! The Scriptural teaching is embodied in the Narrator's opening and closing remarks, which should be read verbatim.

## **7. Activity B ( Biblical Icons)**

Give each student Worksheet B, the summaries of Biblical events, and have each of them compare the summaries with the icons in Lessons 3 and 8 of their text. Have them identify the event and the various details in the icon. Then have each explain one of the icons to the group.

## **8. Time Line**

Display the time line poster. Have the students brainstorm the names of people mentioned in this lesson (*Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, the Theotokos, the students and their families*) and indicate the period in which each lived. Write in the names and dates under each appropriate heading.

## **9. Summary**

End the lesson by summarizing the lesson from the aims on page 94, from the elements in the student text on which you focused and/or any other points raised in the lesson.

## **10. Closing Prayer**

Conclude with the reading from Sirach on page 16 in the student text. Divide the students into two groups and let them read the passage antiphonally, one sentence per side.

## Eggs Again!!! - Ten Months on the Ark

*Prepare a skit on the story of Noah and the Ark, using the following characters and information. First read the passage from Genesis, then discuss the questions below. Prepare your skit using the Narrators words below to start it and finish it.*

*Characters:* Narrator, Noah, wife, sons Shem, Ham and Japeth, son's wives, animals

*Basis:* Genesis 7:24-8:12

*Time:* Ten months into the flood.

*Think about:* You have been in the ark for ten months. What would you have eaten? Where did you sleep? Who had to feed the animals and clean up after them? Who had to milk the cows and goats? Who had to collect the eggs? Who had to keep watch?

What would be on your mind as the flood ends? Would you be irritable? Nervous? Uncertain what you would do? What would be the first thing that you would do on and (see Genesis 8:20)?

### Introduction

*Narrator:* Many years ago, no one really knows when, as the Old Testament tells us, God "regretted that he had made man on the earth" (Genesis 6:6). As the story goes, God flooded the earth, but chose to save Noah and his family in order to preserve life on earth. God had Noah build an ark to house his family and the animals he saved. It rained for 40 days and nights, flooding the earth. It would be almost a year before the land was dry again.

### The Skit

### Conclusion

*Narrator:* In the New Testament we are told that, when God saved Noah and his family "through water," it "prefigured baptism" which saves us now (1 Peter 3:20-21). Noah and the others were put into the waters of the flood and taken out of it. We were put into the water of baptism and taken out of it. They had the ark to save them from the flood - we have Christ, the Savior of the world, to deliver us from the destructiveness of sin. This is the ultimate salvation, leading to eternal life.

## Biblical Icons

*Read the passage below and find the icon in your text that illustrates it. Identify the details in the icon and be prepared to describe it to your class.*

### I

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss; while a mighty wind swept over the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light;" and there was light. God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." Thus evening came and morning followed - the first day. Then God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other." (Gen 1:1-6)

### II

When the LORD saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how no desire of his heart was ever anything but evil, he regretted that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was grieved. So the LORD said, "I will wipe out from the earth the men whom I have created, and not only the men, but also the beasts and the creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I made them."

But Noah found favor with the LORD. [God] said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to all mortals on earth; the earth is full of lawlessness because of them. So I will destroy them and all life on earth. I, on my part, am about to bring the flood waters on the earth, to destroy everywhere all creatures in which there is the breath of life; everything on earth shall perish. But with you I will establish my covenant; you and your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives shall go into the ark." (Gen 6:5-8, 13, 17-18)

### III

Now Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel of the LORD appeared to him in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided, "I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned." When the LORD saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses, Moses!" He answered, "Here am I." God said, "Come no nearer; Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." "I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the LORD said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt, and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites." (Exodus 1:3-8)

## IV

In the third month after their departure from the land of Egypt, on its first day the Israelites came to the desert of Sinai. After the journey from Rephidim to the desert of Sinai, they pitched camp. When Israel was encamped here in front of the mountain, Moses went up the mountain to God. Then the LORD called to him and said, "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites: You have seen for yourselves how I treated the Egyptians, and how I bore you up on eagle wings and brought you here to myself. Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. This is what you must tell the Israelites." So Moses went and summoned the elders of the people. When he set before them all that the LORD had ordered him to tell them, the people all answered together, "Everything the LORD has said, we will do."

Then Moses brought back to the LORD the response of the people. The LORD also told him, "I am coming to you in a dense cloud, so that when the people hear me speaking with you they may always have faith in you also." ... So Moses went down to the people and told them this. ... When the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the trumpet blast and the mountain smoking, they all feared and trembled. So they took up a position much farther away, and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we shall die." Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid, for God has come to you, only to test you and put his fear upon you, lest you should sin." (Exodus 19:1-9, 25; 20:18-20)