

Lesson 7 - Joseph: Man of Endurance

Objectives

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

- Recount the main events in the life of Joseph.
- Appreciate Joseph's faith that God was working in the midst of his troubles.
- See Joseph's chastity and forgiveness as signs of godliness and manliness.
- Know why the Church sees Joseph as a kind of icon of Christ.

For the Catechist

The events of our daily life provide us with the occasion to grow in spiritual maturity, and the story of Joseph is a vivid example of this. His father's favorite, Joseph saw himself as superior to his brothers. In their jealousy they reduced him to slavery in a foreign land. Unlike many of us who dwell on the real or perceived injustices we may suffer, Joseph moved beyond them. He focused on the present rather than the past and was thereby able to save from famine his own family as well as the Egyptians.

Joseph came to see his situation as one in which God was working to fulfill the promises made to Abraham despite his brothers' treachery. And so he forgave his brothers and welcomed them to Egypt, marking the start of his family's stay there.

The Church sees Joseph as a "type" of Christ: both were betrayed by their brethren and sold to their enemies. Both were unjustly convicted as criminals. Both selflessly endured suffering without lashing out against their oppressors. Both forgave those who betrayed them and brought them to a new life.

Everyone can expect at some time in their life to be treated unjustly by others. Some of your students may already have felt the sting of rejection by one or both parents, unfair comparison with siblings, negative experiences at the hands of teachers or schoolmates. Catechists can encourage them to see the selfless endurance of Joseph as a model of true maturity in such circumstances, helping to free these young people from the curse of life-long resentments and anger.

Materials Needed:

Opening Prayer: Icon corner, student texts

Introduction: Easel or wall pad, markers, Dictionaries (*Alternate*)

Activity A: Shawls or robes to suggest Biblical dress

Activity B: Guest speaker from parish food drive or similar program

Activity C: "Holy Week Hymns" Worksheet, pencils

Activity D: Jesse Tree Worksheet, craft materials

1. Opening Prayer

Pray the selection from Psalm 105 from page 32 in the student text. Remind the students that this Psalm is a prayerful retelling of the story of Abraham whom we studied in the last session.

2. Review

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

Alternate: let each student briefly "teach" one page in the text, pages 28-31.

3. Introduction

Refer to the Unit Page to show the relationship of Joseph to the Patriarchs in this first phase of Israelite history. Note that at this stage the Israelites were simply a clan or extended family.

Discuss with the students the times they have heard others say, "It's not fair!" when someone took more than their share of a treat, cheated in a game, or got away with something for which another was punished. Ask if they have ever said this themselves.

Note that life is not "fair" and sometimes in most serious ways. A child gets sick and dies or loses a parent to chronic sickness, death or divorce. Note that sometimes people are hurt and angry throughout their life because of what happened to them as children. They never outgrow their resentment.

Note that today you will look at the story of Abraham's great-grandson, Joseph, who suffered at the hands of his brothers but grew and matured through what he endured. Joseph did not spend his time plotting revenge, but came to believe that God was working in what he was enduring and would bring good out of it.

Alternate: Distribute two or three dictionaries. Have different students look up the words *patient*, *long-suffering*, *selfless*, *enduring* and *uncomplaining*. Ask students to read the definition and suggest examples of each quality. Note that today we will learn about one of Abraham's descendants who was an example of these qualities in his life.

Background Reading (God Works in History):

"That God is with us remains the heart of revelation. He loves and liberates us now just as He did at the exodus and throughout the history of Israel. What He did then, He does again for those who, like Moses, are walking the journey of faith. He is the One who is present ? and that is enough. And so the whole fate of mankind can be said to be condensed in this story of God's people. Individuals and nations move from confusion and slavery to salvation when they come to know that God is with us" (*WEF* 15-16).

4. Guided Reading, Pages 33-35

7 Joseph: Man of Endurance



Abraham's son, Isaac, had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob grew in his love for God, as did his grandfather Abraham, and God's plan of salvation continued to unfold. When Jacob developed into a God-fearing, God-loving person, God changed his name. Jacob was to be called Israel. This is why his twelve sons and their descendants were to be called the *Israelites*.

Although Jacob dearly loved all twelve of his sons, he favored his second youngest son, Joseph. The other sons were quite jealous of Joseph for he was a talented child. He could even interpret dreams. One day, when he was seventeen, Joseph told his brothers of a dream he had.

"There we were, binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf rose to an upright position, and your sheaves formed a ring around my sheaf and bowed down to it" (Genesis 37:7).

God With Us Grade 6 Unit 2: God Works in the Old Testament 33

Ask the students what they know (have learned during the week) about **famine**. Note that people caught in a famine either have to leave their country or die. That's why Abraham tried to settle in Egypt and Joseph's brothers had to go there to buy grain.

Have the students **look up the underlined words** (*sheaves, pharaoh, anointed*) in the Glossary at the end of the book.

Have the students **read the first section of the text**, pages 33 and 34. Divide reading styles (aloud/silent; by one/all together).

Before the reading, recall that in the last lesson we saw how Abraham and Sarah had a son, Isaac. Note that today's lesson continues the story of Abraham's descendants.

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.

Discuss whether or not it is easy to be patient or to put up with hardships. Note that some people won't stand in line for more than a few minutes - others put up with difficulties for many years. Ask the students to decide which kind of person Joseph was. After the reading, drill each student on what happened to Joseph.

Questions you may ask at this time include:

- Why do you think Joseph's brothers wanted to get rid of him? (*They were jealous: he was their father's pet, he was talented, he saw them bowing to him*)
- What happens when brothers and sisters fight in a family? Or when parents prefer one child above others?
- If this happened to you, how do you think you would react?

Background Reading (Joseph in the New Testament):

"In one spectacular sweep Hebrews 11 reviews OT history and names more than a dozen men and women as specific examples [including Joseph] . . . Nearly all of the men and women mentioned suffered in some way, leaving home, losing goods, being isolated, even being killed. The whole course of the OT points toward Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith and God's whole plan of salvation, dramatic as it appears, remains incomplete: 'God had foreseen something better for us, so that without us they should not be made perfect' (11:40)" (AW 185-186).

The boys were further angered at Joseph when Jacob presented his son with a fine robe of many colors. One day, Jacob sent Joseph out to the fields to see if his brothers needed anything. When his brothers saw him coming from a distance, they said, "Here comes the dreamer. This is our chance to get rid of him." One of the brothers, Reuben, objected to killing Joseph. "Let's just throw him into the well, instead."

Meanwhile, there was a caravan of traders passing by on their way to Egypt. "How much will you give us for this fine young slave?" asked Judah, one of the brothers. One of the traders, after looking over Joseph offered twenty pieces of silver. "Sold," responded the brothers quickly. Then they took his coat of many colors, dipped it into some bloody blood, and told their father that an animal had attacked and devoured Joseph. Jacob was very much grieved over the loss of his favorite son.

Joseph in Egypt

When the traders reached Egypt, they in turn sold Joseph as a slave to the house of one of Pharaoh's officers. The officer's wife was attracted to Joseph and demanded that he commit adultery with her. Joseph replied, "How, then, could I commit so great a wrong and thus stand condemned before God?"



The Family of Abraham

Abraham and Sarah were promised descendants by God. Their son, named Isaac, grew and married a distant cousin, Rebekah, because his parents did not want him to marry a Canaanite.

Isaac and Rebekah had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Although Esau was the older, the line of God's people is descended from Jacob. Jacob married his cousin Leah for the same reason that his father had married Rebekah.

Jacob and Leah had six sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun) and one daughter (Dinah). Jacob had four more sons (Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher (two of his servants were their mothers)). Finally Jacob and Rachel, his second wife, had two more sons, Joseph and Benjamin.

Joseph was married to Asenath, an Egyptian. They had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Abraham and his first descendants are called "patriarchs" in the Bible because they were the foundation of the Israelites. In time the "twelve tribes" or clans of Israelites would be named after the sons of Jacob and Joseph.

Our Church remembers these families at marriage, during the Mystery of Crowning. The priest blesses the couple being married with these words: "Bless them, O Lord, as You blessed Abraham and Sarah. Bless them, O Lord, as You blessed Isaac and Rebekah. Bless them, O Lord, as You blessed Jacob and all the patriarchs. Bless them, O Lord, as You blessed Joseph and Asenath..." Some day the Lord may be asked to bless your married life in the blessed future.

34

Before reading the second section, "**Joseph in Egypt,**" ask the students what they thought they might have to do to survive as a slave. Would they be willing to do anything to please their masters?

Note that this lesson describes Joseph as a "man of endurance" (putting up with difficulties). Ask:

- When is endurance a sign of weakness? (*When you put up with something out of fear.*)
- When is endurance a sign of strength? (*When you don't let the small-mindedness of others get to you.*)

After reading the first two paragraphs of this passage, **ask the students what sins did the woman commit?** (*adultery, bearing false witness*) How would they describe Joseph's answer to her in their own words? What would they have done if this happened to them? *If appropriate,* take the occasion to discuss chastity and sexuality.

After reading the rest of this section, ask: **What kind of person do you think Joseph was** to be raised from slavery and prison to this important role in the government of Egypt?

Background Reading (The Remnant):

"As Christians we recognize in God's revelation a single and unified plan of salvation. Only with such belief does it become possible to bind the Old and New Testaments together and understand them as a single progressive message whose climax is Jesus Christ. God's plan is already visible in Adam and Eve, and it becomes progressively more focused in the life stories of the patriarchs and in the history of the Israelite nation descended from them.

"The history of Israel reveals periods of expansion and reduction. In Noah's family and in Abraham's, in the generation of the Exodus and in the remnant that returned from Exile, God refined His chosen people down to a small number before building them up again. The final remnant is the group of disciples gathered by Jesus to form the New Israel, the Church." (OT20)

5. Joseph Reunited with His Family Pages 35-36



as high as before. Then I will set up" (Genesis 41:21-23)

Joseph told Pharaoh that his dream was a warning from God. "God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven healthy cows are seven years, and the seven thin, dry cows that come up after them are seven years. Seven years of great abundance are now coming throughout the land of Egypt, but this will be followed by seven years of famine. No trace of the abundance will be found in the land because of the famine that follows it - so that all the people will starve for" (Genesis 41:25-31)

Joseph advised Pharaoh to take action: collect food, store it up, and preserve it in the good years as a reserve, so that the land will not perish in the famine. Because Pharaoh was so pleased with Joseph's interpretation, he placed Joseph in charge of the project. Thus Joseph became a great and powerful man in Egypt. He was a good advisor to Pharaoh. It was through his wise planning that Egypt had enough to eat when famine struck.

Joseph Reunited with His Family

Meanwhile God was at work in Canaan. Joseph's brothers were sent by their father, Jacob, to purchase grain from the plenty in Egypt. Although they did not at first recognize their brother Joseph, he recognized them, but he pretended not to know them. He gave them some grain but demanded that their youngest brother, Benjamin, who had been left at home, come with them if they wanted any more food.

When all his brothers returned, Joseph told them who he really was. "I am Joseph to you," he said. "I am your brother Joseph, whom you once sold into Egypt. But now do not be distressed, and do not reproach yourselves for having sold me here. It was really for the sake

The women kept meeting, and one day she grabbed him by his cloak so that he would stay with her. Joseph left his cloak in her hands and ran away. The woman was ashamed and anxiously accused Joseph of attacking her! Joseph was arrested and thrown into prison.

While in prison, Joseph began to explain the dream of the oxen. This reached the ears of Pharaoh, who was having many strange dreams. Joseph was called to appear before Pharaoh and to interpret the Pharaoh's dream.

"Interpretation of dreams is a gift from God," explained Joseph. Pharaoh then related his dream. "In my dream, I was standing on the bank of the Nile, when up from the Nile came seven cows, fat and well fed. They grazed on the lush grass. Piled there came seven other cows, scrawny, meek, ill fed, and gaunt. Since I have to own such ugly specimens as these on all the land of Egypt, the good, eight cows ate up the first seven fat cows. But when they had consumed them, no one could tell that they had done so, because they looked

35

of having done that God sent me here ahead of you. For in five years now the famine has been in the land, and for the next seven years it will still be. I have done this for you, so that you will not starve. So it was not only you that God who had me come here, and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his household, and ruler over the whole land of Egypt" (Genesis 45:4-8)

Joseph, who had grown to be a potent, courageous and loving person, forgave his brothers for the terrible thing they had done to him, gave them plenty of food, and invited them to bring their father so that they could all live together in Egypt. Thus the people of God, the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, were saved from poverty in Canaan and find a place of salvation continued.

Joseph knew that the injustices inflicted upon him were not fair. He did not focus on the hurt he had suffered but tried to find God in his suffering. He knew God could work for good even in the midst of his pain.

The Church Fathers saw Joseph as an image of Christ. Like Jesus, he was sold by his brothers, but he suffered all these things with patience. Joseph was able to save his family from hunger as Jesus saves the world from sin and death.

Our Worship Recalls the Old Testament

As we prepare for Christmas, we celebrate the memory of many Old Testament figures including the patriarchs Abraham, his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. This hymn is sung at Vespers on the Sunday of the Forefathers.

"O faithful, let us sing a hymn of praise to all the ancestors who preceded the Law: Abraham, the friend of God, Isaac, who was born of a promise, Jacob, and the twelve Branches of the Tribes. O Let us and forefathers of our race from Christ our God, who is glorified in His saints."

Research this topic on the Internet - Egyptian Pharaohs

36

Before reading the next section, ask the students:
Where was Joseph living as advisor to Pharaoh? (*Egypt*)
Where were Joseph's father, Jacob, and his brothers living? (*Canaan*)

Find these on the map "Power in the Near East in the 2nd Millennium B.C." (p. 168). Note how Egypt became unified and more powerful after the time of Joseph, even ruling over Canaan.

Read all but the last paragraph of this section, and ask the students why they think Joseph acted as he did. Point to the last sentence of the quotation from Genesis which gives Joseph's understanding of how his life had unfolded. Discuss how God can work to bring about good from evil. Examples might be:

- You are forced to move to a new city and leave all your friends behind. God works by giving you new opportunities or a better school which improve your chances for a better life.
- There is a fire in your house. You lose many of your favorite belongings, although your whole family is saved. God works by moving people to help you. You make several life-long friends as a result.

Stress that nobody grows up until they get past the hurts they have suffered and try to see where God is pointing them in the days ahead. Stress that this does not mean we should turn our backs when other people are hurt or in need. Joseph endured the injustices he suffered but did not hesitate to help his brothers when they were in need.

Read the last paragraph and encourage the students to see points of comparison between Joseph and Christ. Note that this is why we remember Joseph during the first days of Holy Week as we prepare to remember the long-suffering of Christ.

6. Activity A (Improvisation)

Divide the class in two groups. Ask each group to reread the story of Joseph's reunion with his family. Have one group dramatize this as the book of Genesis tells it. Have the second group dramatize it as it might have happened if Joseph was vengeful and unforgiving toward his brothers.

Discuss how the real Joseph's attitude makes him someone to admire and imitate.

**7. Activity B
(Helping the Hungry)**

Explain that, while we don't experience famine in this country, there are still many people who don't have enough to eat. If your parish sponsors a food pantry or holiday food drive or Lenten supper for the hungry, invite the person responsible to explain the program to your class and engage their participation. If your parish does not have such a program, consider inviting a representative from a program in another church or the wider community.

**8. Activity C
(Joseph in the Liturgy)**

Give each student Worksheet C, the Holy Week hymns mentioning Joseph. Direct the students to identify the quality mentioned in each hymn and tell what they think it means.

**9. Activity D
(Jesse Tree)**

Have the students complete the ornament on the Jesse Tree Worksheet (The Patriarch Joseph).

10. Time Line

Display the time line poster. Have the students brainstorm the names of people mentioned in this lesson (*Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Esau, Jacob and Leah and their sons, Joseph and Asenath and their sons*) and indicate the period in which each lived. Write in the names and dates under each appropriate heading. Reemphasize the idea that the days of the patriarchs are the first stage of the history of the Israelites.

11. Summary

End the lesson by summarizing the lesson from the aims on page 135, from the elements in the student text on which you focused and/or any other points raised in the lesson.

12. Closing Prayer

Conclude with the reading from Psalm 105 and/or the troparion from the Sunday of the Forefathers on pages 36-37 in the student text.

Holy Week Hymns

Read each hymn and identify a characteristic quality of Joseph mentioned in it. Write what you think that quality means.

- O faithful, let us follow Joseph in his chastity. Through the practice of the virtues let us live with all vigilance, and so let us come to know Him who has honored us by creating us in His own image.
- The unjust cannot be chaste, nor the just sinful! The great Joseph turned away from sin, becoming an image of purity and a true figure of Christ.

- Joseph is an image of the Master. He was thrown into a Pit and sold by his brethren, but he suffered all these things with patience, as a true figure of Christ.

- Joseph the Patriarch found another Eve in the Egyptian woman, yet he was not deceived or led into any act of wickedness: but he stood firm as adamant and was not caught by the passions of sin.

- Jacob lamented the loss of Joseph, but his noble son was seated in a chariot and honored as a king. He was not enslaved to the pleasures of Egypt, but was glorified by the One who sees the hearts of man and who grants an incorruptible crown.

- Let us now add our lamentation to that of Jacob, and let us weep with him for Joseph, his wise and glorious son who was enslaved in body but kept his soul free from bondage and became Lord over all Egypt. For to His servants, God grants an incorruptible crown.

- The serpent found the Egyptian woman like another Eve and hastened to entangle Joseph by flattery. But leaving his tunic, Joseph fled from sin, and like the first man before his disobedience, was not ashamed of his nakedness. Through his intercession, O Christ, have mercy on us.

The Patriarch Joseph

