

# 12 — The Cross: Christ's Way to Life

## *Objectives*

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- recognize Jesus as Victor over sin and death
- explain how Jesus restored Creation to its original plan.
- realize that through Jesus we are able to overcome our sinful deeds.
- understand that God is present in the middle of our troubles, working for good.
- realize that we need to pray and have Jesus Christ in our lives at all times.

## *For the Catechist*

Since the first book in this God With Us series, the students have been learning about the death and Resurrection of Christ. In this lesson they learn about Christ being the "New Adam." Help them realize that "with God all things are possible" if we have faith and perseverance. Students need to be reminded that they are not alone during these difficult years of broken friendships and cyber-bullying, just to mention a few of the difficulties they face. Just as they are suffering, Jesus Christ suffered injustices for our sake. Yet, Jesus Christ's love for God helped Him say no to temptation. Help the students realize that with Christ on their side, they too can endure their daily problems. They can do even more—through their trials they can become transformed into the likeness of Christ!

Pre-adolescents might not realize the extent to which Christ's victory can affect them. In the same way, they do not realize how much their own actions affect other people. This lesson asks them to think about how their interaction with each other has a definite influence on their attitude and actions. Then they can better appreciate the possibility of Christ's transforming power for their lives.

## *Materials Needed*

*Opening Prayer:* Vesper folder

*Review:* Easel or wall pad with the objectives from the last lesson

*Introduction:* Glass of water, red food dye

*Guided Reading:* student text, pens, pencils, paper, colorful 4" x 6" note cards, liturgical music (CD or tape) and a player

*Vespers:* Folders, prayer sheets, tape or glue, scissors

*Activity A:* "Journal," and Journal folders and pens or pencils

*Activity B:* My Quilt—Thin colorful markers

*Closing Prayer:* Vespers folders

## **1. Opening Prayer**

- Gather around the icon corner.
- Ask one student to choose a prayer from the Vespers folder.

## 2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson:

- Jesus is the One Who saves us from our sinfulness.
- Jesus tells us Who He is through many scriptural passages that begin with "I Am."
- Through prayer we meet Jesus and grow in our relationship with Him.

## 3. Introduction

- Have a tall glass filled with water. Add a few drops of red food coloring.
- Challenge someone to take the color out of the water to return it to clear water. After the initial response of "It can't be done!" continue the discussion about how everything we do affects someone or something. Remind them most of the time we cannot take back what has been done—just as we can't take the red color out of this water.
- Then announce loudly: *Remember that "with God all things are possible."* Announce that today we are going to learn how through Jesus Christ we can be re-created when we confess our sins and ask to be forgiven through the Mystery of Repentance.

### Alternative Activity:

- Have the students sit in a circle that includes the catechist. The catechist lightly taps the person to the right on the shoulder. Tell that person to do the same until the tap returns to the catechist. Notice if the taps change—more forceful, less forceful, etc.
- Now announce that we need to take the taps back. Ask them how does it feel to not be able to change something that was already done.
- Ask if they can think of any example that happened to them or someone else that shows sometimes we want to undo our action but we can't.
- Announce loudly: *Remember that "with God all things are possible."* Announce that today we are going to learn how through Jesus Christ we can be re-created when we confess our sins and ask to be forgiven through the Mystery of Repentance.

## 4. Guided Reading, Page 59, Conquered Death

- Ask someone to stand up front and read scriptural passage—give them the Bible to read as the other students follow in their books.
- Ask other students to continue the reading in their texts. This section continues onto the next page.

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### Background Reading (The New Adam—Christ)

"The Old Adam was the one through whom sin and death entered the world. In contrast, the New Adam, Christ, is the One through whom eternal life comes into the world. The sin of Adam is perpetuated by the sins of each of us, becoming 'the sin of the world.' Everyone is affected by this brokenness. We are scarred by the effects of others' sins; and we sin in turn, wounding ourselves and others. Only in Christ is that cycle broken. He receives the effect of the sins of others, but does not sin in turn. Even more, He becomes the source of a new life, the beginning of a new humanity. To cite St. Paul once more, 'For if, by the transgression of one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ' (Rom 6:15)" (*Inexhaustible Delights* 30).

## **Guided Reading, Pages 60, "We Need God in our Lives"**

- Ask the students to read this section.
- Divide the group into 2 and have each group read and discuss one of the scriptural passages.
- Tell them to present their ideas to the other group. Give personal examples if they can.

## **Guided Reading, Pages 60, "We Are Becoming"**

Read this section and have the entire group read aloud the words from St. Paul.

### **Supplemental Activity:**

- Distribute 4x6 notecards of different colors (construction paper cut to this size would work).
- Ask the students to read the 3 scriptural passages on this page.
- Tell them to choose one to write on their card that they should place on the mirror in their room, on the inside of their locker, or posted onto their cell phone or computer.
- Encourage them to read this verse everyday—encourage them to memorize so they can say it whenever they need it.

## **5. Ancient Wisdom for Today**

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the information and poem on this page. Have the students write their answers to the questions and share them with the class.

[Suggestions: The Grain planted is Jesus Christ; in each example we hear how something suffered but it became something better—oyster gave the pearl, slaughtered sheep became a shepherd, Christ was killed on the cross but rose from the tomb and brought us life everlasting.]

## **6. Icon Study**

- Have the students read the commentary on the Descent into Hades icon.
- If possible go into your church to find this icon. Ask the students how they think Adam and Eve must have felt when Jesus came down to save them.

## **7. Vespers**

- Have the students read the information about prokimenon.
- Distribute the Vespers folder.
- Give each student one copy of the hymn (see page 96 in this teacher manual). To save paper, this short prayer has been added twice to the bottom of that page.
- Ask the students to tape or glue this hymn onto a new page in their Vespers folder. Tell them that more prokimenon hymns will be added in future lesson.

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## **Background Reading (Life in Christ)**

"Christ, the Victor over Death, makes His new life available to us. He reaches out His hand, as in the paschal icon, but we must take it. We must, as the Scripture says, 'put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth' (Eph 4:22-24). Becoming part of the new humanity connected to the New Adam demands a 'two step program,' to use another contemporary image. First of all, we must put away the 'old self in the way that we live. This 'old self or 'old man,' to use the original phrase, is the connection with the old Adam. The way of the old Adam leads to an ongoing corruption, a disintegration of our real selves. We cannot find life on this road. And so, the Scripture says, we must 'put on the new self or 'new man' and be clothed in righteousness and holiness, the radiant garment of Christ the new Adam" (*Inexhaustible Delights* 31 -32).

## 8. Activity A: My Personal Journal

Distribute Worksheet A along with pens or pencils. Have the students complete the worksheet in silence (or you can play religious music if available) and place it in their folder. Plan accordingly, but they should need no more than 5 minutes to complete the journal entry.

## 9. Activity B (Quilt)

- Distribute "Quilt of Holes" and "My Quilt" handouts (pages 98 and 99 in this book).

Read this handout together—the catechist or the student volunteers.

- Turn to "yellow quilt" handout and ask the students to write at least one time when they let God help them and shine through their problem. They may fill in as many squares as they choose. Place this handout in their journal folder.

## 10. Summary

Review the lesson. Ask if they are any further comments or questions about today's topics.

## 11. Closing Prayer

- Gather around the icon corner.
- Pray the Prokimenon from the lesson.
- Ask the students to read the scriptural passage they chose for their note card. The same passage will be heard more than once, but they still need to read it.

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## PROKIMENON FOR TUESDAY

Your mercy, O Lord, shall follow me all the days of my life.

**Verse:** The Lord shall feed me and deprive me of nothing: He shall settle me in a springlike place.

Your mercy, O Lord, shall follow me all the days of my life.

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## *My Personal Journal*

Recall the last time you were "put down" by someone. What were your reactions?

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Recall the last time you were encouraged by another. What were your reactions?

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Recall the last time you encouraged someone. What were his or her reactions?

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As a follower of Christ, how are you expected to respond to the hurts and disappointments of daily living?

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As a follower of Christ, are you expected to help others with their hurts and disappointments?

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## Quilt of Holes

The following story might help us realize how much God wants us to live in Him.

*As I faced my Maker at the last judgment, I stood before God along with all the other souls. Before each of us laid our lives like the squares of a quilt in many piles; an angel sat before each of us sewing our quilt squares together into a tapestry that is our life.*

*But as my angel took each piece of cloth off the pile, I noticed how ragged and empty each of my squares was. They were filled with giant holes. Each square was labeled with a part of my life that had been difficult, the challenges and temptations I was faced with in every day life. I saw hardships that I endured, which were the largest holes of all.*

*I glanced around me. Nobody else had such squares. Other than a tiny hole here and there, the other tapestries were filled with rich color and the bright hues of worldly fortune. I gazed upon my own life and was disheartened.*

*My angel was sewing the ragged pieces of cloth together, threadbare and empty, like binding air. Finally the time came when each life was to be displayed, held up to the light, the scrutiny of truth. The others rose, each in turn, holding up their tapestries. So filled their lives had been. My angel nodded for me to rise.*

*My gaze dropped to the ground in shame. I hadn't had all the earthly fortunes. I had love in my life and laughter. But there had also been trials of illness and wealth and false accusations that took from me my world, as I knew it. I had to start over many times. I often struggled with the temptation to quit. I spent many nights on my knees in prayer, asking for help and guidance. I had often been held up to ridicule, which I endured painfully, each time offering it up to the Father in hopes that I would not melt within my skin beneath the judgmental gaze of those who unfairly judged me.*

*I slowly lifted the combined squares of my life to the light. An awe-filled gasp filled the air. I gazed around at the others who stared at me with wide eyes.*

*Then, I looked upon the tapestry before me. Light flooded the many holes, creating an image, the face of God. Then our Lord stood before me, with warmth and love in His eyes. He said, "Every time you gave over your life to Me, it became My life, My hardships, and My struggles. Each point of light in your life is when you stepped aside and let Me shine through, until there was more of Me than there was of you."*

	<i>My</i>	<i>Quilt</i>	