

13 — We Are Sharers in Jesus' Victory

Objectives

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

- explain that through Christ we have been given new life.
- understand our new life in Christ is a sharing in His victory over sin and death.
- state that at our Baptism, we buried our old selves and renounced Satan
- recognize the Mysteries of Initiation—Baptism, Chrismation, and Eucharist—as the beginning of the lifelong process of growing into the image and likeness of God.
- understand that through the Mysteries of the Church, we encounter Christ, the Source of our strength, Who gives us the power and the energy to live our new life in Him.

For the Catechist

Throughout our life we believe God is with us, but at certain high and low points of our life, we need reassurance of God's presence. To make perceptible God's constant presence, our Church gives us the Holy Mysteries to make the invisible become visible. The rituals of the Mysteries tell us what we believe and identify the One in Whom we trust. We believe in Jesus Christ because we trust Him Who revealed to us God's love and invited us into our new life in the Trinity.

Our Eastern Church speaks of divine energy (grace) as the flow of divine life to us. Divine energy indicates the vibrancy and life which our relationship to God engenders. Through the Holy Mysteries this energy of God is communicated to us. Help the students realize that we need to be connected to God, the source of this energy, in order to reach our full potential as human beings. We "*share in the divine nature*" (2 Peter 1:4), and God wants us to regain our image and likeness of Him. Encourage the students to want what God wants for them. For the students living in a world that rejects God's goodness and love, they might think otherwise. They might be seeking to become more like everyone else in today's world rather than Christlike. This lesson invites the students to join the winning team and gain Jesus' victory over death.

Enhancement: The video *New Life in the Trinity* presents an Eastern Christian Introduction to the Mysteries of Christian Initiation. Consider showing excerpts in class. *New Life in the Trinity*. Pittsburgh: Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of St. Josaphat in Parma, 2003. [(412)-481-9778 or www.godwithusbooks.org.]

Materials Needed

Opening Prayer: Vesper folder

Review: Easel or wall pad markers

Introduction: Small electrical appliances: curling iron, adapter for a cell phone, a small lamp.

Guided Reading: student text, pens, pencils, paper, chalk

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

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

Activity B: "Christ's Winning Team"—Felt or poster board, scissors, markers, glue

Closing Prayer: Vespers folders

1. Opening Prayer

- Gather around the icon corner and pray the "Hymns of the Vespers."

2. Review

Review the main points of the previous lesson:

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

3. Introduction

- Display a few electrical gadgets—some possibilities: curling iron, adapter for a cell phone, a small lamp.
- Ask different students to plug them into an outlet and notice what happens: They reach their potential.
- Discuss what our full potential is according to God. (*Becoming God-like, deified, divinized*)
- Tell them today's class is about how we become the person we were made to be when we are in union with Christ. Our Church gives us the Mysteries to help us encounter Christ in a visible way and to become energized by the encounter.

4. Guided Reading, Pages 64-65

- Bring in icons of Christ (Come Bless the Lord icon packet) and ask the students to find the letters IC XC. If you have other icons of Christ in the room, find Jesus' name.
- Then read aloud the first page of this lesson including the "Holy Mysteries" that continues onto the next page.
- Ask the students have they been present for the celebration of any Mysteries that they did not personally receive. Let them share the reason they believe people, many times with parties, celebrate the receiving of these Mysteries.

Guided Reading, Pages 65, "Our New Life in Christ"

- Ask if anyone ever failed at something and then tried again.
How does it feel to start again?
Do they think they became even better after they failed?
- Ask them to define what they think "a new life in Christ" means. Encourage them to remember that Adam and Eve lost Paradise for all humanity
- Have the students read aloud together the way God is present in the Mysteries.

Background Reading (The Holy Mysteries)

"Nowhere is the active presence of God in our prayer as pronounced and powerful as in those prayers we call the Holy Mysteries or Sacraments. The Mysteries are the prayer of the Church, filled with the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, that we be transformed through our incorporation into Christ and according to His will. They are the summit of the Church's liturgy, uniquely, and intimately connected to the person and work of Christ. They reveal God's love for the human race as very personal at the same time as it is universal. They truly connect each individual who receives them in faith with the cosmic act of salvation accomplished in Christ" (*Inexhaustible Delights* 3).

5. "Reflection on the Seven Mysteries"—page 66

- Ask for volunteers to read this reflection aloud.
- After the reading write two columns on the board:

A Winning Team

Christ's Winning Team

- Encourage the students to brainstorm using the reflection just read. Let them share their own stories as they make the list: *What initiation did they go through on the team? What are some articles and items used at a Christening that show the baptized person is becoming a Christian? (White dress—"put on Christ"; candle—light of Christ)* [The students have been learning about the Mysteries since Grade 1. Let them share what they remember.]

6. Icon Study

- Have the students read the commentary on the Icon Screen.
- If possible go into your church to look at your icon screen.
- Ask students to choose one of the icons on your church icon screen. Have them remain silent in front of that icon for one minute. Tell them to try to become perfectly silent and focused as they remain in the presence of the person or the event on the icon. Ask them to share how they felt.
- Now tell them to recall the details they learned about personal prayer on page 56 in their student books: ACTS. Ask them to pray in front of their icon using the following: Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.

7. Vespers

- Have the students read the information about litanies and reflect on specific individuals.
- Distribute the Vespers folder.
- Give each student one copy of the litany (see page 103 in this instructional manual).
- Ask the students to tape or glue this litany onto a new page in their Vespers folder.

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.

Background Reading (Life in Christ)

"The Latin term (*Sacrament* taken from the Latin word *sacramentum*), as its origin suggests, emphasizes the work of the recipient: the promises made, and commitment of faith. The Western practices of marriage vows or the annual renewal of the baptismal promises derive from this emphasis. The Eastern term (*Mystery* taken from the Greek word *mysterion*) rather stresses the connection with Christ that gives the holy mysteries their power. It is the hidden heart of each of these rites" (*Inexhaustible Delights* 4).

"In addition every mystery has an 'ecclesial dimension' relating it in some way to the Church. Baptism and chrismation admit us into the Church and invest us as members of the royal priesthood. The mystery of repentance (confession) allows the penitent to be forgiven and reconciled to the Church in order to receive Communion with it. The mysteries of priesthood and crowning (marriage) designate Christians to minister to the community of believers, either the Church or the domestic church, the home. Even holy oil anointing presumes the involvement of the worshiping community whence all healing flows from the presence of Christ, the Physician of both body and soul" (*LLII* 73).

9. Activity B: Christ's Winning Team

- Have the students make banners and/or posters for Christ's winning team. Encourage them to work in groups to create a colorful presentation of the Mysteries to remind the team members that God is there for them.
- Display these posters in the narthex of the church for a few weeks.

Alternative: Have the students discuss ways they can use Facebook, Twitter, or any other electronic communication to encourage friends and family to join Christ's winning team!

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 of Jesus Christ.
- Pray the Vesper prayer from the lesson.
- Sing the prayer "All you who have been baptized...."

LITANY OF SUPPLICATION

PRIEST: Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your great mercy; we pray You, hear us and have mercy.

ALL: Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!

PRIEST: We also pray for His Holiness (N), the Pope of Rome, and for our most reverend Archbishop and Metropolitan (N), for our God-loving Bishop (N), for those who serve and have served in this holy Church, for our spiritual fathers, and for all our brethren in Christ.

ALL: Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!

PRIEST: We also pray for our civil authorities and for all in the service of our country.

ALL: Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!

PRIEST: We also pray for the people here present who await Your great and abundant mercy, for those who showed us mercy, and for all Christians of the true faith.

ALL: Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!

PRIEST: For You are a merciful and gracious God, and we give glory to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever.

ALL: Amen.

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ALL: Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!

PRIEST: For You are a merciful and gracious God, and we give glory to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever.

ALL: Amen.

My Personal Journal

Some people look upon "church" as a building where people come to pray. Others see "Church" as the gathering of believers who are one in Christ. First make a list of everything that makes your house of God recognized as a "church" and as a "Church."

"church"

"Church"

Next make a list of everything your church community does to show their love for God and all people.

How would you explain your personal idea of Church?

What do you mean when you say you are a member of _____
Church? (Write the name of your church.)
