

# 14 — Repentance: The Journey to Victory

## ***Objectives***

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

- recognize that we need to continue to build our relationship with God that was started at our Baptism.
- understand how prayer, fasting, and almsgiving help us grow in our relationship with God.

## ***For the Catechist***

St. Paul speaks of Baptism as a dying together with Christ. Then he tells those already baptized, "*For you have died!.... put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly. ...*" (Col 3:3, 5). If they have died in Baptism, why do they need to die again? This paradox is at the core of Christian life. Through Baptism we have truly died with Christ and transferred to a life of union with God in Christ. We, then, must strive to live the new life that has been given to us—so that the old life in us stays dead! Each day we must work on nurturing and growing in our new life in Christ.

This lesson focuses on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving as a way to grow into a deeper relationship with Christ. In the Great Fast sessions in this *God With Us* series, the students have learned about praying, fasting, and giving alms. This year they are encouraged to want to do these activities because of their new life in Christ. Also, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are tools of repentance that help them grow in their relationship with God.

Help the students realize that everything in life changes, grows or wanes continually. Personal relationships likewise change. To make the relationship stronger, the individuals become more involved with each other and work on growing together. The same is true for their relationship with God—to have it grow they must spend more time with God in prayer and cooperate with God and His plan.

## ***Materials Needed***

*Opening Prayer:* Vesper folder

*Review:* Easel or wall pad markers

*Introduction:* Chalkboard and chalk and paper and pencils

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

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

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

*Activity B:* Bible, Parable of the Prodigal Son worksheet, paper, pencils [Optional: long pieces of material that can be cut for clothing for the characters]

*Activity C:* Unit Review

*Closing Prayer:* Prayer page

## 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:

- Through Christ we have been given new life.
- Our new life in Christ is a sharing in His victory over sin and death.
- At our Baptism, we buried our old selves and renounced Satan.
- The Mysteries of Initiation—Baptism, Chrismation, and Eucharist—are the beginning of the life-long process of growing into the image and likeness of God.
- 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.

## 3. Introduction

Write the words *prayer*, *fasting*, and *almsgiving which includes doing something for others* on separate sheets of paper. Divide the group into 3 and have each group make a list of what young people their age can do for each of the categories.

After about 5 minutes, come back to the full group and share answers. Ask the students to raise their hands if something they do is mentioned. Hopefully this activity will let each other see that other people do pray and fast and give alms and help other people.

## 4. Guided Reading, Pages 69

- Ask the students to take turns reading this page aloud.
- Ask them if they ever considered that they have to continue to develop their relationship with Christ. Let them explain how this way of thinking might help them want to pray and attend liturgical service.

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## Background Reading (Repentance)

"The Lord Jesus made repentance central to His message and the way of life He was preparing for us. When asked to explain what He meant by 'repentance,' He gave the beautiful Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32). The parable is not some theologian's explanation of repentance, but rather the very words of the Son of God Himself who calls us to it. In the Parable, Jesus describes repentance as a 'coming back to life after having been dead,' a 'being found after having been lost' (Lk 15:32). The parable teaches that repentance is a process of returning to our true identity, discovering who we are as children of God growing in that relationship....

"The parable includes no idea of doing penance for awhile before being accepted grudgingly back.' This, in fact, was the son's script, promptly rejected by the loving father. In the movement of repentance, we surrender to God our Father allow Him to save us. In the loving embrace, we rediscover our identity as children of God, images of this wondrously, unbelievably loving Father in whose image we want to grow. Our spiritual growth involves precisely this" (LLIII 30-33).

## **Guided Reading, Pages 70, "Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving"**

- Read this page aloud.
- Tell the students to go back to their papers from the introduction. Add to them any other suggestions they just read and remembered as they were reading.
- Ask the students to read together St. Basil's quotation. Discuss what it means.

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

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

[Suggestions: The Gift is Jesus Christ Who we received through our Baptism; prayer will keep Christ's light shining; generosity is the result of our praying—we are living the life that Christ calls us to live.]

### **6. Icon Study**

- Have the students read the commentary on the Descent of the Holy Spirit icon.
- If possible go into your church to find this icon. Ask the students how they think the apostles and the Theotokos felt as they were waiting.
- Ask: *Are we waiting for the Lord also? (Yes, for His Second Coming)*

### **7. Vespers**

- Have the students read the information about the words of the prayers.
- Distribute the Vespers folder.
- Give each student one copy of the hymn, (see page 109 in this instructional manual). Verify the words for this hymn by checking your Church's Vespers book.
- Ask the students to tape or glue the hymn onto a new page in their Vespers folder.

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## **Background Reading (Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving)**

"Repentance never ends. It includes not only an initial turning away from sin and immorality, but a continually refined re-direction and unification of our whole being toward the very Center of our being. We are called to progressively subject our physicalness to our reason, and our reason to our 'heart/spirit,' and our spirit to the Spirit of God....

"Traditionally, the Scriptures and the Church Fathers have spoken of three powerful helps in the process of repentance. They are tools to move us to repentance, as well as being channels through which we can express a repentant life, both leading to and expressing repentance. These three tools lead one to an ever-deeper repentance, and are also expressions of repentance already existing within, the measure of each depending on the amount of spiritual growth experienced by the individual. Fasting, prayer and almsgiving are actually a 'declaration of independence,' an act of rebellion against the slavery and over-attachment to the fallen world induced by our passion. They are a definite 'NO' to being centered on ourselves, the daily rat race of modern life and the fallen world. They restore us to a proper relationship with God, others, the world and ourselves. Through them we regain our vocation as stewards (by fasting), as prophets (by prayer), and as priests (by almsgiving) as well as our freedom in being servants and children of God" (LLIII 35).

### **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: Parable of the Prodigal Son**

- Ask the student to reenact the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Encourage them to modernize the story.
- Have all students read the parable from the handout.
- Give them about 15 minutes to write or improvise their own version.
- After watching everyone's reenactment, have the students discuss the point of this parable: *What is God telling us about His love? (God is always loving us and waiting for us to love and return to Him.)*

### **10. Activity C: Unit Review**

- Divide the class in two teams based on age, height or alphabetical order.
- Using the format of a popular game show, Jeopardy!, quiz the teams using the questions on the review worksheet. Use props (buzzers) and posters to simulate your "game show."

### **11. Summary**

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

### **12. Closing Prayer**

- Gather around the icon of Jesus Christ.
- Pray the Vespers prayer from this lesson.

**PRAYER**

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin.  
 Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers,  
 And praised and glorified be Your name forever. Amen.  
 Lord, Your mercy be upon us, as we have placed our trust in You.  
 Blessed are You, O Lord, teach us Your precepts.  
 Blessed are You, O Master, make us understand Your precepts.  
 Blessed are You, O Holy One, enlighten us by Your precepts.  
 Lord, Your mercy endures forever, despise not the work of Your hands.  
 To You is due praise, to You is due a hymn.  
 Glory is due to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
 Now and ever, and forever. Amen.

**PRAYER (Melkite usage)**

Deign, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin.  
 Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our Fathers!  
 Praised and glorified is Your name for ever. Amen.  
 O Lord, let your mercy rest upon us, for we have placed our trust in You.  
 Blessed are You, O Lord: teach me Your statutes.  
 Blessed are You, O Master, grant that I may understand Your statutes.  
 Blessed are You, O Holy One: enlighten me with Your statutes.  
 Everlasting is Your love, O Lord;  
 do not turn away from the work of Your hands!  
 Indeed, praise, adoration and glory are Your due,  
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
 Now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.

## *My Personal Journal*

Name someone whom you formerly considered to be a close friend. What caused your relationship to stop?

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Communication is necessary to maintain a relationship. Today with so much technology, there are many ways to communicate. What ways do you choose to communicate with friends and why do you use this method?

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We have learned that we need to work on our relationship with Jesus. What are some ways you let Jesus know you love Him?

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Name different ways your relationship with Jesus Christ has grown since the beginning of this year.

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## **Parable of the Prodigal Son**

"Then [Jesus] said, 'A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need.

"So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, 'Father I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.'

"So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found'" (Lk 15:11-24).

**To read the rest of the story to hear the other son's reaction, turn to Luke 15:25-32.**

Reenact this story in modern terms according to the way it was seen through the eyes of the prodigal son ... or the brother... or the father.

## Unit 3 Review

### *Lesson 10:*

- 1) How did Jesus Christ, the Word of God, make the world and its people holy? *(Christ transformed us and the world by becoming one of us. He gained for us our union with God.)*
- 2) What does "God became man so that we might become God" mean? *(Jesus became a human to make it possible for humans to regain their place in heaven. Jesus transforms humanity so that we can be in union with God.)*
- 3) How does our Church help us encounter God's saving presence in our lives? *(Through the Mysteries of the Church)*

### *Lesson 11:*

- 4) To whom is Jesus leading us? *(To God)*
- 5) Why is prayer important? *(Prayer places us in the presence of God and develops our relationship with Him.)*
- 6) What does the name Jesus mean? *(It means God is the One Who saves.)*
- 7) What does the title Christ or Messiah mean? *(The Anointed One)*

### *Lesson 12:*

- 8) Jesus' love for us and His acceptance of the Cross and His suffering and death lead to Jesus' victory over what? *(Sin and Death)*
- 9) What does Jesus' death and Resurrection restore for us? *(Jesus restored for us our unity with God as was God's plan from the beginning.)*
- 10) How do we know God is with us even during our difficult times? *(We trust God and His Word. He promised to be with always.)*

### *Lesson 13:*

- 11) Who do the letters IC XC identify? *(Jesus Christ.)*
- 12) Name the seven Mysteries of the Church? *(Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Repentance, Holy Unction—Anointing, Holy Orders, Crowning in Marriage)*

### *Lesson 14:*

- 12) Name three ways we can grow in our relationship with God. *(Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving)*
- 13) How do the letters ACTS help us with our personal prayer? *(They identify an order we could use for our prayer, our conversation, with God: Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication)* [ACTS was introduced in Lesson 11, student book page 56.]