

26 — Pascha:

Jesus Triumphs over Sin and Death

Objectives

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

- recognize how our relationship with God changes when we sin.
- realize that Christ, through His suffering, death, and resurrection, conquered sin and death.
- explain how through Christ, Paradise is regained, and humans have been granted eternal life.
- state that Pascha celebrates Christ's conquering sin and death for all of us.

For the Catechist

The Resurrection of Christ is the center of our faith, and Pascha is the principal feast of the Christian year. For that reason every book in this God With Us series includes a lesson on Pascha in the "Observances" unit. This year's focus is on how Jesus Christ becomes the new Adam who restores our eternal life with God. In this renewed relationship with Christ, we become deified or divinized as we grow in the image and likeness of God—*We Become God-Like*, the title of this book.

Pascha is the Greek word for Passover, and Christ gives the Passover a new meaning. Christ replaced the sacrifice of the passover lamb with His own self-sacrifice for the salvation of all humankind. Through His suffering, death, and resurrection, humankind has been granted eternal life with God. The relationship with God that Adam and Eve lost has been restored. In this new relationship, humans are called to do more than walk with God—they are called to become one with Him! They are called to theosis which means they are called to become sharers in God's divine nature.

Our Church celebrates Pascha in a glorious way. After we walk in a procession around our church, we wait outside of the closed church doors for our priest to announce "Christ is risen!" As we sing "Christ is risen!" we become the bearers of Good News, just as the Myrrh-bearing Women. Then the doors are opened and we walk into our church that has been transformed with the lights and candles and white altar cloths. We walk into the church as Resurrection people who greet each other with the good news—"Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!" Encourage your students to attend the Resurrection Matins that truly re-create the joy and excitement of the first Pascha morning.

Materials Needed

Opening Prayer: Vesper folder

Review: Easel or wall pad with the objectives listed

Introduction: One long white candle for each student, 3-4 foot piece of white ribbon for each one, either markers or adhesive letters, 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: "Prayer Card" handouts

Closing Prayer: Vespers folders

1. Opening Prayer

- Gather in the icon corner and distribute the Vespers folders.
- Pray the Canticle of Saint Simeon.

2. Review

Lessons in this unit are not taught consecutively; therefore, review the last lesson taught.

3. Introduction

Materials: one long white candle for each student, 3-4 foot piece of white ribbon for each one, either markers or adhesive letters, pencils [These materials can be found in a craft store.]

- Make a Pascha candle for their Pascha baskets. Have the students tie the ribbon on the candle.
- Then write PASCHA in pencil down the front of the candle. Use the markers or place the letters over the penciled letter.
- Allow the students to add other crosses or decorations.
- Tell them to keep this candle for their Pascha baskets.

Supplemental Activity: If your church delivers Pascha baskets to the homebound, offer to make smaller candles for each basket.

4. Guided Reading, Page 132, "Sin and Death"

Read this page aloud. Ask the students to share any stories about how friends their age always want more.

Guided Reading, Page 132-133, "God Is the Giver of Life"

- Read the first paragraph in this section.
 1. Ask the students to picture God breathing life into them.
 2. Ask if anyone remembers seeing an icon of God breathing into Adam? (*Lesson 3, page 15, in the student book*) Turn to that icon and ask them to picture themselves receiving divine life.
- Have the students continue the reading in this section and read the scriptural passage aloud together.

Guided Reading, Page 133, "The New Adam"

Read this section and have the students read the scriptural passage aloud together.

Guided Reading, Page 133, "Pascha"

After reading this section aloud, ask the students to share what they remember about the church services celebrating Pascha. [Each church tradition varies but encourage them to talk about the white vestments and altar linen, the candles, and the greetings—Christ is risen!] Emphasize how these traditions announce the joy of Pascha. [Refer to the reading below.]

Background Reading (The Mystery of God's Self-Emptying)

"The celebration of the resurrection of Christ remains the most glorious experience of the Byzantine Churches. The joy of the ointment-bearing women at discovering the empty tomb of Jesus is relived in processions, music, and gestures which tell us more about the mystery of the resurrection than a thousand books or lectures" (*LLII 37*).

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: *We should love everyone; a fitting gift is to offer all our words, actions, and deeds—our whole life to God.*]

6. Icon Study

- Have the students read the commentary on the Myrrh-bearing Women icon.

7. Vespers

- Distribute the Vespers folder.
- Give each student one copy of the prayer from Vespers (see page 193).
- Ask the students to tape or glue this prayer 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.

9. Activity B:

On 195-196 are small prayer cards. Consider printing off the one for your Church, and ask the students to become greeters for next Sunday. Have them give out the prayer cards and say "Christ is risen" to everyone. Tell them they are like the myrrh-bearing women. Ask them to discuss the differences. (*The myrrh-bearing women were announcing the news to people who were hearing it for the first time.*)

10. Summary

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

11. Closing Prayer

Gather in the icon corner and pray the Sunday Evening Vesper Prayer.

Background Reading (The Gift of Life)

"In death, the apostle later related, Christ brought the gift of life to those who were held captive by it. 'In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison' (1 Pt 3:19). There, in the very heart of death, Christ is shown to be the Source of life. That even in death He could be the death of Death is a focus of our celebration of Pascha. At vespers on Holy Saturday evening we put these words in the mouth of Hades, 'My power has vanished. I received One who died as mortals die, but I could not hold Him. With Him and through Him I lost those over which I had ruled.' As we hear in the paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom, which is repeated every year on Pascha in the Byzantine Churches, Death 'seized a body, and lo! It discovered God! It seized earth, and, behold! It encountered heaven. It seized the visible and was overcome by the invisible'" (ID 29).

Vespers

Pascha - Sunday Evening Vespers

(Tone 2) Come, let us adore God the Word, who was born of the Father before all ages, and was incarnate of the Virgin Mary; for of his own free will He suffered the Cross and submitted himself to burial, and arose from the dead to save me, a sinful one.

Christ our Savior cancelled the decree that was written against us by nailing it to the Cross, and He abolished the dominion of Death. Let us glorify his Resurrection on the third day.

Let us, together with the archangels, sing of Christ's Resurrection; for He is the Redeemer and Savior of our souls. He will come again in awesome glory and mighty power to judge the world which He has fashioned.

Although You died and were buried, the angel yet declared You as Master. He said to the women: Come and see where the Lord was placed; for He is risen as He foretold, because He is almighty. Therefore, we worship You, the only Immortal One, and we beseech You to have mercy on us, O Giver of life.

O Christ, You have abolished the curse of the tree by your Cross; You have destroyed the power of Death by your burial, and You enlightened the human race by your Resurrection. Therefore, we cry out to You: O God and Benefactor, glory to You!

O Lord, the gates of Death opened before You in fear, and the gatekeepers of Hades were filled with dread at the sight of You. You smashed the gates of brass and crushed the posts of iron. Then You burst our chains asunder and led us out from the darkness, and away from the shadow of death. When the Forerunner saw the One who is our enlightenment, the One who has brought light to all, coming to be baptized, his heart rejoiced and his hand trembled. He pointed Him out to the people and said: This is the Savior of Israel who delivered us from corruption. O Christ our God, O Sinless One, glory to You!

My Personal Journal

We are in charge of sharing the Good News of Christ's Resurrection today just as the myrrh-bearing women did in their day. What are some ways you could use to tell the world? [E-mail, Facebook, Twitter, news articles, school announcements, billboards] Write as many of these as you want and consider sending them out from your computer.

**Christ is risen!
He is truly risen!**

Pascha Troparion

Christ is risen from the dead and by His death He has trampled upon Death; and has given life to those who were in the tomb.

Melkite Greek Catholic Church

**Christ is risen!
Indeed He is risen!**

Pascha Troparion

Christ is risen from the dead! By death He trampled Death; and to those in the tombs He granted life.

Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic
Metropolitan Province

**Christ is risen!
He is truly risen!**

Pascha Troparion

Christ has risen from the dead trampling down Death with death and granting life to those in the graves.

Romanian Greek Catholic Diocese
of Canton

**Christ is risen!
Truly He is risen!**

Pascha Troparion

Christ is risen from the dead. By death He conquered Death, and to those in the grave He granted life

Ukrainian Catholic Diocese
of Saint Josaphat

Christ is risen!
Truly He is risen!

Pascha Troparion

Christ is risen from
the dead. By death
He conquered Death,
and to those in the
grave He granted life.

Ukrainian Catholic Synod