

23—We Become One with Christ

Objectives

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

- realize that the end of our journey is fullness of life in God forever.
- state that our faithfulness to living out our life in Christ causes us to be transformed.
- identify this transformation as our deification
- understand that this process will be complete only when our bodies are resurrected and transformed in the life of the world to come.

For the Catechists

Reaching our destination is the focus of this final lesson. Help the students realize that death is not the end for us—it is the beginning of the rest of our life. The reward for living out our baptismal promise to follow Christ will be great in heaven. In our Panachida service, we sing, "Now grant rest, O Lord, to the soul of your departed servant in a place of light, joy, and peace where there is no pain, sorrow, nor mourning." Our hymn sings of what we read in Revelation: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away" (21:4). Help the student realize that God promises us that our following Christ will be worth it!

Give the students an opportunity to recognize all the ways our Church helps us realize Jesus is our Light. Then help them realize that they can bring Jesus's Light to other people through their actions. "We have been given the True Light" we sing during the Liturgy, and now we need to share that Light with others.

The focus of all the lessons has been journeying. Use this final session to emphasize the need to want to be on the journey. Today's world offers so many other exciting journeys for students to try which makes it difficult for them to always want to be on the journey to God. Help them realize that this trip offers peace, happiness, blessedness, and eternal life. Help them want to be in the presence of God during their lifetime so that they want to be with Him forever.

Materials Needed

Opening Prayer: "Nicene Creed—I Believe"

Icon: Icon of the Sign (*Come Bless the Lord* icon packet #5).

Closing Prayer: "The Thanksgiving Hymn—May our Mouths be filled"

Pens, pencils, markers, and white paper

1. Opening Prayer

Chant or recite "The Thanksgiving Hymn—May our Mouths be filled"

[Find this prayer in the Divine Liturgy books in your church. This hymn is sung after we receive Holy Eucharist.]

2. Introduction

Go into the church to identify all the ways the Light of Christ shines in your church—candles, icons, eternal lamp. If it is not possible to go into church, discuss this idea in class. Ask how we can become the Light of Christ.

3. Guided Reading

- Before the reading, review last week's objectives. Then summarize this week's objectives of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad to use for review next week.
- Have students read text aloud and emphasize the idea of our transformation that will be complete in the life of the world to come.
- Allow time to complete "My Personal Journal." Encourage the students to share their responses.

4. Scriptural Reflection

- Read 1 Corinthians 15:42-44
- Before reading aloud, have students make the sign of the cross. Remind them that reading Scripture is praying.
- Look at the Resurrection icon. Ask them to picture their deceased family members as being in that icon.
- Give the students 3 minutes to answer the questions and read the passage again.
- Ask the students to work in groups of 2 and share their answers.
- Possible answers:
 - We died corruptible and raised incorruptible—dishonorable and raised glorious—weak and raised powerful—natural body and raised spiritual body
 - Maybe sometimes—at church or when praying
 - Some possibilities: pray, read Scripture, go to church.

Background Reading (Divinization)

".... The process of our divinization, begun sacramentally here and now, will reach perfection in the life of the world to come. Yet even there, it shall be in stages. The sanctified spirit in glory after death will experience a deeper sense of the divine presence, yet its journey will not be complete. Only with the resurrection of the body and its transformation in the likeness of the risen Christ will we have reached our goal. Our total being, body, soul, and spirit will share in the divine nature which transfigures us by its radiance" (*Journey* TM 285)

5. From the Teaching of the Church Fathers

- Ask one student to read the words from Motovilof.
- Possible answers:
Transfiguration icon—possibly.
He is one with the Lord.
Answers will vary. Possibilities: The Eucharist, the Consecration, the Great Entrance

6. Liturgical Study

- Read the paragraphs aloud.
- Ask the students to explain the parts of a funeral.

7. Closing Prayers

Sing or pray "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Find the words in the Divine Liturgy books of your church. This prayer is before the dismissal.

Supplemental Activities:

Review—At the end of the lesson, ask the students what they remember by using one of the following suggestions:

1. Write a 1-minute presentation about icons. Share it with the class.
2. Make a list of all the ways we can become the Light of Christ. Write short phrases or sentences that encourage people to become the Light of Christ.
3. Write a thank you note to someone who has been a Light of Christ for you. Tell them exactly what they have done to help you realize God is with you.
4. Make a one-page handout that identifies the parts of a funeral. Add Scripture and hymns from the services. Consider offering it to your priest to help explain our funeral services.

Background Reading (Divine Liturgy)

"We can never know God completely, but we can always know Him increasingly better. As He draws us to Himself, we lose our childish and faith distorting concepts of God. We grow to know Him as loving and compassionate, giving Himself to us through Jesus Christ, revealed in the "mystery of mysteries," (Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 3.1) the Divine Liturgy. Here the Church enters into the saving life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We glimpse the depth and breadth of the reality of God's love for us and His mystical union with us. While not replacing the broader relationship between God and humanity, the Liturgy becomes the transforming reality of that relationship. One may intellectually search for God, but He has already found us and united Himself to us in ways beyond our human understanding.... (LLI 16).

Unit 5 Review

Lesson 20:

- 1) What are Beatitudes? *(A guide given to us by Jesus Who tells us how to live and be blessed)*
- 2) What does sanctification mean? *(Holiness)*
- 3) What is one of the central themes of the Divine Liturgy? *(Our Holiness— Through the prayers of the Divine Liturgy, we are made whole and become holy.)*

Lesson 21:

- 4) When did the two people on the road to Emmaus recognize Jesus? *(When Jesus broke the bread)*
- 5) What is the goal of each Divine Liturgy? *(Union with God)*

Lesson 22:

- 6) Define divinization or deification. *(Sharing in the divine nature of God)*
- 7) Who reflects the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? *(Those who remain faithful to the Christian life allow the Holy Spirit to deepen their relation with Him.)*

Lesson 23:

- 8) When will we experience the fullness of life in God forever? *(At the end of our journey when our bodies are resurrected and transformed in the life of the world to come.)*
- 9) What does the gold background on the icons symbolize? *(The light from the icons shows that Christ and His Saints glow with that special light which is the very life of God.)*

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