

25—The Entrance into Jerusalem

Objectives

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

- state that this Feast Day reminds us how quickly earthly honors pass—people celebrated Jesus and these same people yelled "Crucify Him."
- identify palms or other branches as a symbol of victory.
- recognize that Jesus is the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophesy in the Old Testament.

For the Catechists

This day's celebration is called the Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem. Because people took branches of palm trees to meet Jesus, we also refer to today as Palm Sunday. Churches give out palms, pussy willows or olive branches as a remembrance of Jesus's entrance. Because many of our Eastern Christian Churches are in areas that cannot grow palms, the tradition is to give pussy willows. Some Churches call this Feast "Flowering Sunday."

Many people came to see Lazarus alive and to see Jesus. Call attention to the fact that Jesus is being honored and praised for raising Lazarus from the dead. But in a few days these same people will yell "Crucify Jesus." Help the students realize how unpredictable earthly praise and honor are. This story shows us that people change their opinions quickly. For that reason, we need to stop worrying about what people want us to do. We need to focus on Jesus and follow Him. Our reward in heaven will be much better than a day of publicity and praise. This lesson might be difficult for some students to accept because peer approval is important for this age group.

Plan enough time to let the students write their own "Prayers for the Journey." In this lesson, we see Jesus traveling. Help the students realize that in His lifetime He was journeying to God also. Help them recognize the events that happened on His journey. Then ask them to reflect on events that help them on their journey. Their prayer is to thank Jesus for His miracles. They can also include a thank you for events that have helped them grow closer to Jesus.

The Liturgical Study helps students realize the importance of attending the Divine Liturgy celebrated on a Feast Day. Catechists and students need to recognize that faithful attendance in church is one way to witness to our belief in Jesus Christ. We need to look to the Saints to learn how to live out our baptismal promise.

Materials Needed

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

Icon: The Mystical Supper (*Come Bless the Lord* icon packet #10).

Closing Prayer: "Blessed be the name of the Lord" - in the Divine Liturgy books

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

Ask the students to think about how people were probably reacting after they heard that Lazarus was alive after being buried for 3 days.

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 importance of Jesus's Entrance into Jerusalem.
- Allow time to complete "Prayers for the Journey." Consider having the students share these prayer for the Closing Prayer section.

4. Scriptural Reflection

- Read Matthew 21:6-11
- Before reading aloud, have students make the sign of the cross. Remind them that reading Scripture is praying.
- Look at the picture. Ask them where they keep their pussy willows or palms in their house.
- 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:
 - "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."
 - (Answers vary.)
 - By the icon corner. We should honor and praise Jesus always.

Background Reading (Our Whole Life)

"The festival of the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem is one of the oldest feast days in the Eastern Church. Testimony regarding its celebration reaches back to the third century. From that time, we have a sermon on Palm Sunday by Bishop Methodius of Patara (Ca. 300). The celebration of this festival began in Jerusalem, and within a short period of time became a feast day for the entire Eastern Church" (LY 134).

5. From the Teaching of the Church Fathers

- Ask one student to read the words from St. Simeon.
- Possible answers:
 - At His crucifixion.
 - During the Great Fast, Philip's Fast, Apostles' Fast, Dormition Fast (These fasts are "penitential" times—we are asked to reflect on Jesus's suffering during Holy Week.)
 - Jesus could have done anything, but He chose to become one of us to save us.

6. Liturgical Study

- Read the paragraphs aloud.
- Ask the students to explain why we have so many Church services during Great and Holy Week

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. Draw a collage of all the events associated with this Feast Day. Write the scriptural passage under each of the events.
2. Recreate the story of the Entrance into Jerusalem. Then discuss the scene if it happened today. Recreate the modern version of the story.
3. Write a news story reporting this event. Include interviews with the different age groups.

Background Reading (Great Fast)

"In addition to the fifty-day period of joyful celebration after Pascha, the Church has a forty-day period of penitential preparation for Pascha, called the Great Fast (Lent). In the Eastern Churches Lent begins on the Monday after Cheesefare Sunday (always the seventh Sunday before Easter) and ends on the Friday before Lazarus Saturday, a period of exactly forty days.

"The number forty appears frequently in the Bible as a period of preparation before the entry into a mission given by God. Moses fasts on the mountain for forty days before receiving and handing over the law to the Israelites; Elijah fasts forty days before his vision of God telling him to anoint Hazael as king of Aram, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as prophet; the Israelites themselves wandered for forty years in the desert as a penance before entering the Promised Land; and Jesus fasted forty days after His baptism before beginning His public preaching (*LLII* 40).