

26—Pascha

Objectives

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

- state that everything we believe as Eastern Christians is based on our belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- recognize the important role women have in the Resurrection story
- realize that we are to live out our lives as "resurrection" people.

For the Catechists

Pascha is included in every book in the *God With Us* series because everything we believe as Eastern Christians is based on our belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ suffered and died for us to have eternal life with Him. He made our life journey worthwhile because we have something to look forward to at the end—life everlasting!

Each year the students learn about preparing for Pascha and celebrating the Resurrection, but this year help them realize that Pascha is life changing for all of us. We need to see ourselves as joyful followers of Christ who live out our life in gratitude. We need to become grateful people every day.

Our Church helps us experience the joy of Pascha through the traditions that are part of Vespers and Matins for the Resurrection. The Liturgical Study of this lesson describes some of these traditions. For this section encourage the children to share their experiences at these services. If some of them never attended, encourage them to ask their families to be at these services. Most people willingly share stories about the foods of Pascha, but they might have stories to share about the liturgical services. Enhance this lesson by bringing in CDs with choirs singing "Christ is risen!" or watch YouTube videos of services.

The goal of this lesson is to help the students experience the joy of Pascha. The best way to start is by going into the church to see the transformation for Bright Week. Help the students recognize all the ways our Church shows us the week after Pascha is Bright Week.

This unit includes "Prayers for the Journey." The goal of this section is to ask students to think about their journey and to offer prayers. These prayers could be included in the closing prayers.

Materials Needed

Opening Prayer: "Christ is risen."

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

Closing Prayer: "Christ is risen."

Pens, pencils, markers, and white paper

1. Opening Prayer

Sing "Christ is risen."

[Find this prayer in the Divine Liturgy books in your church.]

2. Introduction

Ask the students to think about how their family celebrates Pascha. Ask them to share their stories.

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 Pascha.
- Allow time to complete "Prayers for the Journey."

4. Scriptural Reflection

- Read Matthew 28:1-10
- Before reading aloud, have students make the sign of the cross. Remind them that reading Scripture is praying.
- Look at the picture showing students helping. Ask them what picture from their life could they put into this place.
- 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:
 - "The women
 - The Angels and Jesus.
 - I say "Christ is risen." I go to church.

Background Reading (Our Whole Life)

"The experience of the annual Pascha deepens our resurrection faith, and confirms us as a 'resurrection people.' To mirror the penitential period of preparation, we then extend the feast over a period of fifty days, recalling especially the glorification of the Lord at the right hand of the Father on the Ascension, and his gift of "life with us" in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the "fiftieth day." At the same time, the annual Pascha is one with the constantly repeated celebration of the Resurrection in every Divine Liturgy, so much so that we call every Sunday a "little Pascha," while the great Pascha is "this first day after the Sabbath: holy and elect, Lady and Queen, Feast of feasts, and festival above all festival, on which we bless Christ forever. (Ode 8, Paschal Canon)." The whole Paschal Feast, however, is the holy three days from Thursday evening to early Sunday morning. The whole loving action of Christ is made present again: how he gave us the Eucharist at the Mystical Supper, that we might live out constantly the story of Christ in our daily lives; how he died for us on the Cross in a terrifying deed done in darkness to manifest his supreme love for us; how he descended into the Kingdom of death" ("Pascha and Liturgy" Father David Petras).

5. From the Teaching of the Church Fathers

- one student to read the words from St. Cyril.
- Possible answers:
The twelve disciples saw Him.
To show and tell other people that you believe in the Resurrection of Christ.
I try to be grateful. (Encourage other answers.)

6. Liturgical Study

- Read the paragraphs aloud.
- Ask the students to tell what they remember about this service.

7. Closing Prayers

Sing "Christ is risen."

Supplemental Activities:

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

1. In their "Faith Books" have the students write phrases and sentences that share the Good News.
2. Make a list of ways to show how we behave as "resurrection" people. Consider offering the list of ways to be joyful and grateful for publication in the church bulletin.
3. Draw and decorate a poster that announces the Resurrection.

Background Reading (Great Fast)

"The paschal celebration is self-consciously modeled on the Jewish passover. On this day the Jews solemnly remember the event that constituted them as a nation: their liberation from the Egyptian Pharaoh and their exodus into the Promised Land under the leadership of God. Christ had given the passover a new meaning. He replaced the sacrifice of the passover lamb—commemorating the salvation of Israel from the angel of death and from slavery in Egypt—with His own self-sacrifice for the salvation of all mankind from bondage to death and sin. The parallels are astounding. In place of the lamb, Christ offered His own life upon the cross; in place of the blood of the lamb upon the lintel, the blood of Christ flowed upon the cross; instead of liberation of a chosen people from slavery to a worldly king, He accomplished the freedom from the power of slavery to sin for all humanity; and instead of the Promised Land, we were given the promise of the resurrection and life with God. The Christians began to celebrate a passover with an entirely new dimension. St. Paul can exhort his converts, Christ our passover has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast not with the old yeast, that of corruption and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor 5:7-8) (LLII 34).