

Journey to Pascha

Introduction



During Great Lent we prepare ourselves for the Great Feast of Pascha. In this unit we will be studying the events that we celebrate during Holy Week and Pascha. Included in this unit are icons, activities, and both texts and explanations of services and prayers.

The unit covers many Bible stories, but sometimes the source from which you are reading or telling the story will not be an actual Bible. When you are using another source, have a Bible at hand (or, preferably, copy the story and put the copy in the open Bible) to show that it is a Bible story. Of course, every classroom should have Bibles.

Journey to Pascha

Each session will focus on a different theme that is part of our Journey to Pascha. We will begin with the story of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, and continue with our celebration of Jesus' joyful Entrance into Jerusalem. In the following sessions, we will learn about each day of Holy Week, what Jesus taught His disciples during this time, and what happened to Jesus as He was brought to trial, put to death and buried. Finally, we will celebrate the events that led to His Resurrection from the dead.

Special Notes

Role Plays: Several lessons include role plays, and some include words said by Jesus Christ. If you, the teacher, do not want a child to take the role of Christ, use a narrator to say the words of the Lord.

Gathering for Prayer: We suggest having a gathering place for the class to pray together. You might have a candle, flowers, and the appropriate icon for the lesson. Icons are provided in the Resource Section of each lesson. You can reproduce these and put them on backing and then display them on a small stand (like a plate stand.) Of course you can use your own icons, which is why in some lessons the Resource Section lists icons as "optional."

Preparing Your Lessons: Lessons in this unit include themes, objectives, resources attached to the lesson and step-by-step procedure, as well as a list of materials. In some lessons, the Materials section will give you special notes for lesson preparation. These enable you, as you prepare by reading through the lesson and getting materials ready, to be aware of any special preparations you'll need to make.

Timing Your Lessons: Because our church schools vary widely in the time they have for teaching, we have not timed the procedural steps of these lessons specifically. You are free to adapt, shorten or expand the material, or to spread it over more than one session.

Palm Cross Activity: A great activity, suitable for older students, making a palm cross.

Resources for Every Age

The following resources can be found within the lessons of this unit, or on the Department of Christian Education website (dce.o.ca.org)

- Liturgical texts and resources for Holy Week
- Biblical texts, charts and guides to using the Bible
- Icons, graphics and coloring pages for school and home use
- Short musical settings for hymns and verses
- Brief reviews of good books for home and classroom reading
- Activities and outreach projects for families and mixed generation groups
- Information on teaching skills, ideas for classroom use, human development patterns, writing projects, etc.

Highlights of individual lessons in this unit (upper levels) include:

- **Lazarus Saturday: Jesus raises His friend from the dead.**
Mary and Martha plead with the Lord to come quickly to heal their brother Lazarus. Jesus delays his return until Lazarus is dead four days. Martha confesses her belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus says: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live..." Jesus has the power to raise the dead, and raises Lazarus. Jesus is the Resurrection and Life of all people.
- **Palm Sunday: Jesus Enters Jerusalem as a King!**
Jesus enters Jerusalem and is honored as a King. The children greet Jesus waving palms and branches, crying out "Hosanna!" The people shout their praises to Him: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" In our celebration of the feast, the palms we hold are a sign of our allegiance to Christ.
- **Holy Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday: Parables of the Bridegroom, Last Judgment and the "End"**
God has made us stewards of His world, to serve and care for it. He calls us to bear fruit by using the talents He has given us. Christ will come to judge the world, and He will come at Midnight, at an hour when we least expect Him. He will come as a Bridegroom, to take us, the Church, as His Bride. God calls us to be prepared, for only those who are ready will enter His Kingdom. The Bridegroom Matins.
- **Holy Thursday: The Supper, Anointing, and Betrayal of Christ**
A woman anoints Christ's feet with oil, as a sign of love, as well as a preparation for His burial. Jesus' enemies seek to kill Him and Judas agrees to betray his Master. Jesus shows the disciples how they must serve others, by washing the feet of His own disciples, and shares a Passover meal with them. He blesses bread and a cup of wine, saying "Do this in remembrance of Me." Jesus teaches the disciples about love, and promises to send them a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, after He is gone. The Mystical Supper
- **Holy Friday: The Trial and Crucifixion of Christ.**
Jesus takes the disciples to a place to pray and tells them that one of them shall betray Him and the others will deny Him and run away. Jesus is arrested and brought before the chief priests and scribes who sentence Him to death for equating Himself with God. He is brought before Pilate, the Roman governor, and then to Herod, to be sentenced to death and killed. Jesus is put to death on a Cross, along with two thieves. Mary, Jesus' mother, and the women followers who served Him stand by the

Cross until the end. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus take Jesus' body down from the Cross, prepare it for burial and lay Him in a new tomb. The Death & Burial of Christ.

- **Holy Saturday & Pascha: Descent into Hades & Resurrection**

Jesus died in order to give us new life! Through His death on the Cross, Jesus defeated the power of death. Having died as a man, Jesus descended to Hades, the place of death, to destroy death and bring life to those in the tombs. Jesus' Life was more powerful than death. At the moment of His death, the earth shook, the tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints were raised. By His Resurrection from the dead, Jesus, who is the Christ-God, gives new life to all who believe in Him and do His will. Although we will die, we know that "death can no longer hold men captive," for when Christ comes again, all those in the tombs will be raised from the dead. Christ the Lord of all will come to judge the living and the dead, and grant life eternal in the world to come, to all who believe in Him as King and as God. "Christ is Risen! "

Journey to Pascha • Lesson 1



Lazarus Saturday (Ages 18+)

Overview

Having Fulfilled The Forty Days - The unit of lessons called Journey to Pascha begins with Lazarus Saturday and goes to the Resurrection. In this lesson we begin with a pause to reflect on the journey to Pascha that began with the Triodion and continued through Lent. We journey to learn about ourselves and our relationship to Jesus. In looking back we determine what we have learned about ourselves, what benefits we have gained by observing the Lenten discipline and what Lazarus Saturday teaches us so that we may proceed on this Journey to Pascha.

Objectives

By the end of this Lesson, learners should be able to:

- Evaluate reasons for observing the Lenten discipline
- Note ways in which Mary and Martha's attitudes are different from each other at the time of their brother's death and Jesus' visit
- Describe how Jesus shows both His divinity and His humility in the raising of Lazarus
- Relate our baptismal pledge to a pledge we make to follow Christ on Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday

Materials

- Icon of the Raising of Lazarus
- Notebooks for Journaling
- Copies for each student of *The Feast of Palms: Saturday--Sunday* (Resource Section)
- Copies for each student of *Our Pledge* (Resource Section)
- Bibles
- Pens and paper
- Mounted chart with the words of the Lazarus Saturday/Palm Sunday Troparion, which is the Opening Prayer (keep to use at the next session)
- Mounted blank chart on which students can write words (keep to use at every session)

Two Special Notes to the Teacher/Facilitator:

It would be a great idea to plan some sort of community service project as part of this unit of study. You can find many local possibilities for such service.

We have referred to participants in this unit of study as "students" throughout the five levels, even though some participants may be well beyond school age. This seemed appropriate to us because all of us can learn more about the faith, and go deeper into it, throughout our lives.

Resources

Required Resources

[My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms \(PDF\)](#)

[The Feast of Palms: Saturday-Sunday \(PDF\)](#)

[Our Pledge\(HTML\)](#)

Optional Resources

[Icon of The Raising of Lazarus \(Image\)](#)

Procedure

1 Opening Prayer

(Have students stand.) Sing or say the Troparion together. Use the chart with the words you've provided so everyone can be sure of them.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Troparion (*Tone 1*)

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy passion,
Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God.
Like the children, with the palms of victory,
We cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death,
Hosanna in the Highest!
Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.

Make sure students understand the following words in the Troparion:

Passion: the suffering of Jesus Christ that led to His death

Vanquisher: conqueror

Ask: *What "children" is the Troparion referring to?* (The children who greeted Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, as we remember on Palm Sunday, the day after Lazarus Saturday.)

Ask: *What does the Troparion mean when it says the raising of Lazarus "confirmed the universal resurrection"?* (Jesus will raise those who love and believe in Him, as He raised Lazarus. But that coming raising will be to a life that lasts forever. This is the promise we constantly remember and thank God for in church.)

2 Scripture Activity: Attitudes

Give each student a copy of *The Feast of Palms: Saturday--Sunday*. Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 and have the groups read the part of the text entitled "Divine Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday"

together. Have the icon of the Raising of Lazarus prominently displayed nearby.

Ask the groups to discuss what differences they see between the attitudes of the sisters Mary and Martha after their brother dies and Jesus arrives. Let them share their conclusions. (*Suggested ideas: In the earlier verses, Martha needs to act, while Mary is able to be still and contemplate. Martha seeks out Jesus with many words, while Mary waits till He calls for her and then says only a few words to Him. Martha almost seems reproachful; Mary seems more peaceful, though very sad. Later, Martha is very "housewifely" in her concern about an odor coming from Lazarus' grave. Mary doesn't express such a concern.*) Look together at the icon of the Raising of Lazarus. How does it reflect a difference between the two sisters? (*Mary has her head bowed to the ground. Martha is alert, with her head up, wanting to see what's going on.*)

Discuss: *What is Jesus' attitude toward Martha? Toward Mary?* (Though Jesus commends Mary's willingness to be still and listen to His teaching (in Luke 10: 41--read this from the Bible), He loves and honors both Mary *and* Martha. Notice, for example, that He reveals to Martha that He is the Son of God in John 11:25, and gives her the opportunity to make a thrilling and decisive declaration of faith.)

Discuss: How could knowing that Jesus loves and honors these two help us as we think about our relationship with Him, when some of us are more "Martha types" and some more "Mary types"?

When you have finished, collect the copies of *The Feast of Palms: Saturday--Sunday* to use at the next session.

3 Journaling and Numbering

Tell students to consider this sentence from the Vespers of Lazarus Saturday:

We have completed the forty days which profit our souls.

Distribute notebooks for journaling, and assure students that nobody will read what they have written unless, in a few weeks, they volunteer to share their writing. Ask students to write in their journals about how the forty days of Great Lent can "profit our souls." When students finish, collect the journals and put them away.

Write these 4 phrases, describing Lenten practices, on the chalkboard:

- Lenten fasting
- Attending Lenten services
- Personal prayer
- Service to others

Invite any willing students to come up and put a number by each phrase, with "1" as the phrase which is most important to them as a Lenten practice, then 2, 3 and 4 as the second, third and fourth most important. (*You may wish to point out, before students start, that one of these practices*

may be the most important for someone not because the other practices are unimportant, but because that one practice inspires the person to engage in others. For example, someone who prays more during Lent may be inspired to do more in serving others.)

When all those who wish to put numbers up have done so, talk together about which phrase, if any, got the most "1"s and why students think it did. Let students add to the chalkboard list other phrases that are important parts of their personal Lenten practices.

4 Icon and Discussion

Look together again at the icon of the Raising of Lazarus. Discuss:

Who are the three disciples directly behind Jesus? (Peter, James, and between them, John)

How does the icon show us something true about the three men? (John is clearly younger than the other two.)

What other detail in the icon shows us a very human reaction to the event? (Two figures are about to hold their noses, expecting the odor from the grave that concerned Martha.)

What words of Jesus show His care to meet people's normal human expectations? (He shows them the glory of God by doing something they can see, understand, and remember. Then they can believe in and be comforted by the "universal resurrection" that the raising of Lazarus confirms. They can also believe in Him as the Son of God who can do, and wishes to do, these wonderful things for humankind.)

5 Discussion: Jesus and Lazarus

Read the following to the class:

In John 11: 44, after raising Lazarus, Jesus speaks just six words. He says, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Saint John Chrysostom writes that In these few words Jesus does two important things. First, He lets bystanders unbind Lazarus. To do so they must get very close to him and touch him. This gives them solid proof that the raised-up man really is Lazarus. There has been no trickery, no substitution, no deviousness. .

Second, Chrysostom writes, Jesus simply lets Lazarus go on his way, rather than parade the man around as a trophy of His divine power. Jesus doesn't use Lazarus to show off.

After reading this, ask students to stand. Write on the chalkboard:

Divine power: Jesus raises Lazarus

Divine humility: Jesus doesn't show off His power

Now ask students to imagine themselves present at the raising of Lazarus. Which would more strongly convince them that Jesus was truly the Son of God: His divine power, or His divine humility? Ask those who choose "power" to go to one side of the room; those who choose "humility" to go to the other. (Some may not wish to, or be able to, choose. They can remain at their seats.)

Ask a few on each side of the room to tell why they chose as they did.

6 Discussion: Our Pledge

Distribute copies of *Our Pledge*, written by Father Paul Lazor, from the Resource Section, and read through it together.

Read together John 11: 55. Discuss:

Why was it dangerous for people in Jesus' time to "pledge" themselves to Him?

Is it difficult, or dangerous, for us in our time to "take the branch and raise it up" as Father Paul writes, and say, "I accept Him as King and God"?

Ask students to write about some ways they will pledge themselves to Christ during Holy Week, Pascha, and beyond. Invite anyone wishing to share what they have written to do so.

7 Discussion: Why Do We Do It?

Say to the class:

*Orthodox Christians perform many physical actions that some other Christians do not. We bow, kiss icons, bless things and people with water, make the sign of the cross, and so on. On Palm Sunday we don't just hold our palms or willow branches; our prayers and hymns ask us to hold them **high**!*

Ask and discuss: *Why do you think the Church asks us to perform these physical actions? How do they or can they affect our worship and faith?* (Let students give their own answers.)

8 Wrap Up

Invite students to write, on the blank wall chart you have provided, a word or phrase from this lesson that is significant for them

9 Closing Prayer

(Have students stand.)

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Troparion (*Tone 1*)

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy passion,
Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God.
Like the children, with the palms of victory,
We cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death,
Hosanna in the Highest!
Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.

Journey to Pascha • Lesson 2



Palm Sunday (Ages 18+)

Overview

- On Palm Sunday we continue to participate in the "joyful cycle of the triumphant days of Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday" both in words and actions. We dare "to take the branch and raise it up and answer the same question addressed to us at Baptism, 'Do you accept Christ?' 'I accept Him as King and God!'" Note: Quotations from *The Feast of Palms* Resource by V. Rev. Paul Lazor p.9

Objectives

By the end of this Lesson, learners should be able to:

- Recall the story of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem
- Note ways in which the icon of the feast reflects the events of the feast
- State ways in which the events of Palm Sunday are prophesied in the Old Testament
- Consider the meaning of the liturgical color of the feast--green

Materials

- Bibles
- Icons of Jesus' Entry to Jerusalem (two are offered in Resource Section, and we suggest using both, or any of your own that clearly show children)
- Journal notebooks
- Mounted wall chart with words of the Troparion of Lazarus Saturday/Palm Sunday (from previous session)
- Mounted wall chart for students' words (from previous session)
- Copies of *The Feast of Palms: Saturday--Sunday* for each student
- Copies of *Commentary: The Entry into Jerusalem* (Resource Section) for each student
- Pens/pencils, paper
- For the "Find the Match" review game: 14 small pieces of paper.
 - On each of 7 pieces write one of these names: **chief priests, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Judas, crowd, apostles**. Fold them and put them in a basket or any open container. Mark the basket with some kind of tag or note as the "Person" basket.
 - On each of the other 7 pieces write one of these descriptions: **planned to kill Lazarus, anointer, table server, sat at supper with Jesus, thief, wanted to see Lazarus, didn't understand**. Put these in a basket/container and mark it as the "Description" basket.
 - A simple chart, with a line down the middle. Title one side "Person" and the other "Description." Number both sides from 1 to 7, leaving plenty of room for students to tape the pieces of paper on each side to match each person with the correct description.
- Scotch tape

Resources

Required Resources

[My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms \(PDF\)](#)

[The Feast of Palms: Saturday-Sunday \(PDF\)](#)

[Entry into Jerusalem \(Image\)](#)

Optional Resources

[Icon of The Entry Into Jerusalem \(Image\)](#)

[Commentary: The Entry into Jerusalem\(HTML\)](#)

[The Meaning of Icons \(Image\)](#)

Procedure

1 Opening Prayer

(Have students stand.) Sing or say the Troparion together. Refer to the word chart as needed.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Troparion (*Tone 1*)

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy passion,
Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God.
Like the children, with the palms of victory,
We cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death,
Hosanna in the Highest!
Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.

2 Review and Discussion

As a review, ask: *What would you say are the main things Jesus Christ was teaching when He raised Lazarus?* (Students may give answers about His love for people and friends, His ability to do miracles which showed that He was truly God's divine Son, etc. These answers are good. Also stress again a point from the Troparion of the feast: In raising Lazarus, Jesus Christ "confirm the universal resurrection.")

Distribute Bibles, pencils and copies of *The Feast of Palms: Saturday--Sunday* to each student. Read together the Gospel for the Matins of Palm Sunday and the Gospel for the Divine Liturgy of Palm Sunday. Then have students read the following passages from the Old Testament, and mark on their papers the places where they are referred to in the passage (answers given in parentheses):

- Psalm 8:1-2 (Out of the mouths of babes)
- Zechariah 9:9 (Tell the daughter of Zion)

- Psalm 118: 26 or 117: 26 in *Septuagint* (Blessed is he who comes)

Go over the answers together, and then ask: *Based on this exercise, what do you think is one main thing Jesus was teaching as He rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday?* (Again, answers may vary, but the main point to stress is that He was showing Himself to be the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies)

3 The Feast and the Icon

Read together the Divine Liturgy Gospel of Palm Sunday in *The Feast of Palms*. Have icons of the feast, clearly showing children, prominently displayed.

Distribute copies of *Commentary: The Entry into Jerusalem* (taken from the book The Meaning of Icons by Ouspensky and Lossky) to each student. Read it together, and note the details in the icon that it describes, especially in the third paragraph.

Ask: *What does the Commentary tell us is the reason children are featured in these icons?* (The second-last paragraph gives a good answer. The adults turned against Jesus when He did not give them what they expected. The children, in contrast, were welcoming Him with no "ulterior motive.") The paragraph before that also reminds us that Jesus did come to save Israel, just as God had promised the Savior would. But the saving was not through "physical annihilation" of enemies; rather it was "spiritual salvation."

Ask: *What words in the Troparion tell us who we are meant to be like?* (The words "like the children with the palms of victory")

4 Review

As a review of the Bible story text in *The Feast of Palms: Saturday--Sunday*, have a game of "Find the Match."

- Have the seven folded PERSON papers in one basket or container, and the seven folded DESCRIPTION papers in another. Have the papers in each basket well mixed.
- Mount the two-column chart on the wall or chalkboard, with tape nearby. Also have nearby a copy of *The Feast of Palms: Saturday--Sunday*, which students can consult at any time.
- Explain to students that the PERSON basket contains seven names of people or groups mentioned in the Palm Sunday Gospel. The DESCRIPTION basket contains papers that each describe one of those people. The class will try to match them up.
- Have everyone stand, and let one student start by taking a paper from the PERSON basket, and taping it in the PERSON column on the chart. (The paper doesn't have to be put in the #1 spot.)
- Have a second student take a paper from the DESCRIPTION basket. If the student believes it describes the PERSON on the paper taped to the chart, they should tape it

opposite the PERSON paper, in the DESCRIPTION column. If it doesn't describe that person it's not a match, and they should tape it anywhere in the DESCRIPTION column except next to that PERSON. (Again, the answer pairs don't need to be in any particular order on the chart, so long as the PERSON and DESCRIPTION papers do match.)

- Have the next student choose from the PERSON column, and put their paper opposite the DESCRIPTION column if it matches, or somewhere else in the PERSON column if it does not.
- Continue with students taking turns, till all the matches are made as follows:

Chief priests / planned to kill Lazarus

Judas / thief

Mary / anointer

Crowd / wanted to see Lazarus

Martha / table server

Apostles / didn't understand

Lazarus / sat at supper with Jesus

5 Journaling: Being Like Children

Put this question on the chalkboard:

What does it mean to be "like the children with the palms of victory" in the Troparion?

Ask students to reflect on this question in their journals.

6 Discussion: Liturgical Colors

Ask: *What color are the vestments and coverings for Palm Sunday?* (Green)

Discuss: *The colors of Lent have been dark and the colors of Holy Week will be dark. What does this "break" to a festal green tell us?* (Let students come up with answers. A central point is that even though we are coming upon Holy Week with its terrible events, Jesus' coming as King remains as the unshakable promise of true life in the Kingdom for us.)

7 Wrap Up

Invite students to write personally meaningful words from the lesson on the wall chart.

8 Closing Prayer

(Have students stand)

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Troparion (*Tone 1*)

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy passion,
Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God.
Like the children, with the palms of victory,
We cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death,
Hosanna in the Highest!
Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord.

Journey to Pascha • Lesson 3



Holy Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday (Ages 18+)

Overview

- During the first three days of Holy Week, Christ ends His discourses in Jerusalem. He speaks openly about himself and His Second Coming. Through His actions and words we learn what is expected of those who desire to enter the Kingdom.

Objectives

By the end of this Lesson, learners should be able to:

- Note the themes of the first three days of Holy Week, in particular the Parable of the Talents
- Discuss the idea of "watchfulness" as a theme of these three days
- Give examples of "readiness" to meet the Lord, as reflected in the parables and in prayers and services of the Orthodox Church

Materials

- Icon of the Wise and Foolish Maidens
- Journal notebooks
- Bibles
- Copies for each student of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms*
- Poster materials: For each group of 3-4 students, have a piece of poster board 2' by 3'. For each group or for everyone to share, have thin and thick markers in various colors, construction paper in various colors, rulers, scissors, tape and glue
- Wall chart with the words written by Prof. Veselin Kesich (in #5 of Procedure)
- Wall chart for students' words (from previous sessions)
- Pens/pencils, paper

Resources

Required Resources

[My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms \(PDF\)](#)

[The Bridegroom Services of Holy Week \(PDF\)](#)

[Icon of the Wise and Foolish Maidens](#)(Link)

Optional Resources

[Jesus the Holy Wisdom and the Parable of the Ten Wise and Foolish Virgins](#)

Procedure

1 Opening Prayer

(Have students stand.)

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O Heavenly King, the comforter, the Spirit of truth,
Who art everywhere and fillest all things,
Treasury of blessings and giver of life,
Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity,
And save our souls, O Good One.

2 Role Play and Discussion

Give each student a copy of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms*. Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4, and have the groups read the section "The Gospel Lessons and Their Themes" under the heading Great and Holy Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday on the page marked Holy Week-3 at the bottom. Then have them read the parable in Matthew 25: 14-30. Ask one or two groups to take turns role playing the Parable of the Talents. Discuss these questions afterwards:

What kind of "readiness" is a theme of this parable? *(Let students give their own responses. One central idea is that we must be ready to answer to God for what we have done with the gifts He has given all of us)*

What is Christ saying about those who waste, or fear to use, their gifts? *(Again, let students give their own answers. The "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is the result of our regrets if we don't strive to use our gifts to bring us closer to God, and closer to being the fully-alive and even glorious creatures He intends us to be. If we don't become what we could have become, and what God called us to be, our lives will never be full. Thus we create our own punishment and regret, which is well described here as weeping and gnashing of teeth)*

Look together at the icon of the Wise and Foolish Maidens. Then have groups read the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Maidens in Matthew 25:1-13. Ask:

How does Christ, personified as the "bridegroom who comes at midnight" here, fit in with the idea of using our talents? *(Have students give their ideas. One point to stress is that Christ loves us in the close, intimate way that a bridegroom loves His bride, and wants us to use our gifts. But there is an unavoidable moment when He will come again, and we have to be ready and willing for that moment of meeting when we'll show whether or not we want to be with Him. He won't force us into the Kingdom!)* As you talk about this, keep the icon of the Wise and Foolish Maidens prominently displayed.

You can give some historical background:

The wedding custom in Christ's time was for the bridegroom to come in the evening to his bride's home and take her to his own home, where festivities would follow. The bridegroom would be accompanied, in the dark evening hours, by maidens with oil lamps to light the way. They had to be ready when he came. It was all right for them to sleep a little while waiting, so long as they were prepared when he came, which might be earlier or later.

In the parable, five maidens have been wise and provided themselves with plenty of oil. Five have been careless, or lazy, or not really interested in their job of accompanying the bridegroom. They must be responsible for themselves; the five wise maidens may not have enough oil to share. The five foolish maidens must take their chances, and sadly for them, the bridegroom comes when they are away, trying to buy oil. The point is that we must prepare for Christ's coming; each of us is responsible for herself or himself.

The bridegroom's words "I do not know you" may seem harsh, but Christ is telling us that when He comes, those who love Him will be ready, just as any of us would be ready as we anticipate the arrival of someone we love. Those who don't bother to be ready are showing that they don't really love him and don't want to be with Him. They don't know Him. If we do not know Him, He cannot know us.

Look together at the black and white drawing (from the Resource section) called *Jesus the Holy Wisdom* to see another way this story is depicted in an icon. We see Jesus Christ as the font of wisdom, with the maidens and the closed doors.

When you have finished, collect the copies of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms* to use again.

3 Journaling: Talents

Ask students to write about in their journals about this question, which you can put on the chalkboard:

What talent or gift could I develop further to serve God?

4 Discussion Questions

Discuss, and put answers on the chalkboard:

What are some things in life that require extensive or significant preparation?

Why are we willing to give time and energy to preparing for these things? What "bumps along the way" might there be when we are preparing for things? (*We are willing to give time and energy to*

things we care about, or that will benefit us in some way. But the "bumps" are that we can't control events, and those events or circumstances can interrupt or cancel our plans.)

What kinds of things can we do to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ? What "bumps" might there be as we prepare for the Second Coming of Christ? *(Students can give ideas about how to prepare. In terms of "bumps" we know that life may present difficulties and hardships that could shake our faith; we have to be strong enough not to let them, and not allow them to deter us from preparing to meet and be with Our Lord)*

5 A Reading

Read together the following, from the chart you have provided:

Whenever Jesus spoke about the end of the present age, of the Last Judgment, and of his Second Coming, he spoke with an absolute certainty that these events would take place, and therefore he put stress on readiness or watchfulness. The word "watch" in Jesus' sayings and parables refers to the last days. "*Watch* therefore--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning" (Mk. 13:35.) "That day" will come suddenly; therefore "*watch* at all times" (Lk. 21:34.) "For the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt. 24:44.) *From The Passion of Christ, Veselin Kesich, SVS Press, 2004.*

Discuss: This reading mentions Jesus' "absolute certainty" about the events of the end, the Last Judgment, and the Second Coming. Ask participants whether they have met or read about people who shared this certainty. How did their certainty impact the way they lived? *(Stories of favorite saints who lived, and died, in this certainty might come to mind here. Students might also have pious family members or friends who lived in certainty.)*

6 Poster

Give each group of 3-4 students a piece of poster board. Then give each group (or have the groups share) markers, construction paper, ruler, glue, tape and scissors.

Ask each group to choose one theme from the services of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week, and make a poster telling something about it. The groups can illustrate, decorate or represent their themes in any way they decide together.

When the groups have finished, ask each to tell the others about the poster they have made--why they chose the theme they did, and how they chose to depict it.

7 Wrap Up

Invite participants to write a meaningful word from the lesson on the wall chart.

8 Closing Prayer

Hymn from the Bridegroom Services of Holy Week:

Thy Bridal Chamber I see adorned, O my Savior,
but I have no wedding garment that I may enter.
O Giver of Light, enlighten the vesture of my soul, and save me.

"Vesture" is clothing. If time permits, ask students to consider why we might ask our Savior to "enlighten the vesture of my soul." *(Let students give answers. Suggested answer: Just as we are concerned with what we wear, we need to be concerned with the way we "clothe" our souls--the way we live our spiritual lives of prayer, worship, and knowledge of God)*

Journey to Pascha • Lesson 4



Holy Thursday (Ages 18+)

Overview

The Supper, Anointing and Betrayal of Christ - "Could You Not Keep Watch?" - The main theme of great and Holy Thursday is the Lord's Supper. Jesus continues to teach and prepare the disciples for the completion of His mission, the mission of the Suffering Servant of God. Speaking of the woman who poured ointment on His head, He said, "In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial." (Matt 26.12). The trinity of events listed in the theme of this lesson lead to Christ's crucifixion and death. "With His death and the pouring out of His blood, a new covenant, that is, a new and final relationship between God and man, will be inaugurated." The passion of Christ, Kesich, p. 65

Objectives

By the end of this Lesson, learners should be able to:

- Compare and contrast the attitudes of Judas and the sinful woman toward their own sins and toward the use of money
- Examine the meanings of two hymns
- Identify statements made by various people, as a review of this and previous lessons

Materials

- Icon of The Last Supper/Mystical Supper
- Bibles
- Mounted wall chart with the words of the verses from the Matins of Holy Wednesday, in #2 of the Procedure
- Mounted wall chart for students' words (from previous sessions)
- Copies of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms* for each student
- Pens, paper, pencils
- **Special Note to the Teacher:** In the Resource Section you will find *The Betrayal and Passion of Our Lord*, which gives information about the prayers, hymns, services and teachings of this Holy Week period. Though it will not be specifically used in class, it is excellent background material for you, and you may wish to look at some of the liturgical verses with students

Resources

Required Resources

[The Mystical Supper icon](#)

[My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms \(PDF\)](#)

[The Betrayal and Passion of Our Lord \(PDF\)](#)

[Eucharistic Prayer\(HTML\)](#)

Optional Resources

Procedure

1 Opening Prayer

(Have students stand.)

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O Heavenly King, the comforter, the Spirit of truth,
Who art everywhere and fillest all things,
Treasury of blessings and giver of life,
Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity,
And save our souls, O Good One.

2 Discussion Starter

For this discussion and the rest of the lesson, have the icon of the Last Supper/Mystical Supper prominently displayed.

Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to read Matthew 26: 6-16 and John 12: 3-8 together. Then ask them to reflect on the attitudes of the woman and of Judas. How does she seem to feel about love, and about the use of money? How does Judas feel about these things? Have each group make a list of 4 adjectives describing the woman, and 4 describing Judas. Ask them to use the chart you have provided, with verses from the Matins of Holy Wednesday, as a further source of reflection.

While the sinful woman brought oil of myrrh, the disciple came to an agreement with the transgressors

She rejoiced to pour out what was very precious, he made haste to sell the One who is above price

She acknowledged Christ as Lord, he severed himself from the Master

She was set free, but Judas became the slave of the enemy.

Ask a representative of each group to write the words their group came up with on the chalkboard. Then talk about them together. Use these questions to guide the discussion:

- What adjectives, if any, do students feel are especially appropriate, and why?
- Are there some adjectives that were chosen by most of the groups ?

- Which adjective do students feel is most important in describing the woman? In describing Judas?

3 Journaling: Attitudes

Put these verses from the previous discussion on the board:

She acknowledged Christ as Lord; he severed himself from the Master.

Ask students to write in their journals about examples of these two attitudes in contemporary society. Ask them to reflect on ways they can encourage more of the attitude of "acknowledging Christ" in our society.

4 Two Hymns

Distribute copies of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms*. Have students read about Great and Holy Thursday in the column marked "Holy Week--4" at the bottom. Sing or say together the words of the hymn found there: the Eucharistic Prayer. Then ask students to look over and think about the words of that hymn and of the 9th Ode from the Canon of Saint Cosmas. (The words are below for your convenience and any notes you wish to make.)

Eucharistic Prayer (Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great)

Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God,
Accept me today as a communicant,
For I will not speak of Thy Mystery to Thine enemies,
Neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss;
But like the thief will I confess Thee:
Remember me, O lord, in Thy Kingdom.

Canon of St. Cosmas (9th ode)

Come, O faithful, Let us enjoy the Master's hospitality:
The Banquet of Immortality!
In the upper chamber with uplifted minds,
Let us receive the exalted words of the Word, Whom we magnify!

When you have finished, collect the copies of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms* to use again.

5 Reflection on a Hymn

Put this line from the Canon of Saint Cosmas on the chalkboard:

In the upper chamber with uplifted minds, let us receive the exalted words of the Word, whom we magnify.

Also put 3 Scriptural references on the chalkboard:

- Philippians 4:8-9
- Luke 11: 9-13
- Luke 12: 22-30

Divide the class into 3 groups. Ask each group to read the three passages, and then create a brief statement of how they tell us we can develop "uplifted minds" ready to hear the exalted words of Jesus, the Exalted Word of God.

Let each group read the statement they have developed.

(Groups will probably come up with similar answers. Points to stress include these: Philippians tells us to keep our minds focused on good and worthwhile things, not descending into pettiness or complaint. Luke 11 calls us to have faith that God answers heartfelt, constant prayer. Luke 12 tells us not to worry, and not to seek earthly things too much, but to seek the eternal life of God's kingdom. These points can be worked into a brief statement, worded as the groups wish.)

6 Reflection on Another Hymn

Discuss:

In the last line of the familiar hymn beginning *Of Thy Mystical Supper...* we are called to be "like the thief." How would you explain to a younger person why we are called to be like a person who had stolen and been put to death as a criminal? *(Let students give their ideas. A main point is that this thief, a despised person in the last extremity of life, was still willing to trust God. God accepts his faith with the same joy as He would accept that of any more "respectable" person.)*

7 Review

As a quick review, divide the class into groups of three or four. Tell the class that you will read words said by someone you've talked about in a previous lesson.

The groups can confer, and as soon as they are ready to name the person(s) who spoke the words, and the circumstances in which they were spoken, someone in the group should stand up. They will then get a chance to answer.

The group that answers the most questions first and correctly is the winning group. (You can keep track.) Correct answers are in parentheses. Read the following one by one, first asking each time,

"Who said"

- Take away the stone (*Jesus in front of Lazarus' tomb, preparing to raise him.*)
- You ought to have invested my money with the bankers (*The master to the servant who hid his talent in the ground*)
- Give us some of your oil (*The five unwise maidens to the five wise maidens who brought enough oil*)
- There will be an odor (*Martha at the tomb of Lazarus, concerned because he has been dead four days*)
- Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord (*The crowd greeting Jesus as He enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday*)
- I do not know you (*The bridegroom to the unwise maidens who have come too late to enter the marriage feast*)
- You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much (*The master to the servant who used his talents well and made a profit*)
- She has done a beautiful thing to me (*Jesus, speaking about the woman who anoints His feet, telling the indignant apostles not to trouble her*)
- Lord, not my feet only but my hands and my head! (*Peter, when Jesus washes the feet of Peter and all the twelve at the Last Supper*)
- How did the fig tree wither at once? (*The disciples, marveling when a fig tree withers at Jesus' command*)

8 Scripture Reflection

Read together John 14: 1-15. This passage contains many well-known verses. Ask students to choose a verse, or set of verses, that they would like to memorize, and take a few minutes now to do so. (Some may wish to write down their chosen verses.)

Anyone who wants to may share with the class the verse they chose and the reasons for choosing it.

9 Wrap Up

Invite students to put a meaningful word from the lesson on the wall chart.

10 Closing Prayer

(Have students stand)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God,
Accept me today as a communicant,
For I will not speak of Thy Mystery to Thine enemies,
Neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss;
But like the thief will I confess thee:
Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom.

Journey to Pascha • Lesson 5



Holy Friday *(Ages 18+)*

Overview

The Death and Burial of Christ - Woman, Behold Thy Son! - When Christ died on the Cross He fulfilled the Scriptures, He completed His mission. "Thus the barrier that divided humanity from God disappeared. By Christ's death the separation between the two was overcome. The new relation between them was inaugurated."

Objectives

By the end of this Lesson, learners should be able to:

- Recall the final events of the life of Christ
- Relate Old Testament prophecies to the events of Christ's Passion
- Describe the risks taken by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus

Materials

- Icon of the Crucifixion
- Notebooks for Journaling
- Copies of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms* for each student
- A recording of "The Noble Joseph" to be played during class if you wish

Resources

Required Resources

[My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms \(PDF\)](#)

Optional Resources

[Icon of The Crucifixion of the Lord \(Image\)](#)

Procedure

1 Opening Prayer

(Have students stand.)

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O Heavenly King, the comforter, the Spirit of truth,
Who art everywhere and fillest all things,
Treasury of blessings and giver of life,

Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity,
And save our souls, O Good One.

2 Great and Holy Friday

Distribute copies of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms*. Read together the section on Great and Holy Friday in the columns marked at the bottom "Holy Week--4" (last part of column) and "Holy Week--5." Discuss two questions:

Ask: *Which words of the hymn for the 15th Antiphon tell us that Jesus created the world?* (The first line, "hung the earth upon the waters" is a reference to the creation story in Genesis.)

Ask: *How did Christ "free Adam in the Jordan?"* (Jesus' baptism showed Him to be the Divine Savior when the Father spoke and the Holy Spirit "confirmed the truthfulness of His words." So Jesus restored water to what God meant it to be by stepping into it. He also "restored" Adam, Eve, and all of us by being baptized. He freed us from the bondage of death,)

Collect the copies of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms* to use again.

3 Old Testament Prophecies

Have the icon of the Crucifixion prominently displayed for this section and the rest of the class session.

As a way of seeing that many events of Jesus' passion are prophesied in the Old Testament, have students do an activity in which they pair up OT passages with the New Testament events they prophesy.

Divide the class into four groups. Give each group one or two Bibles, six small pieces of paper, six envelopes and one or two pencils. List the following Bible references on the chalkboard under the headings OT and NT.

OT	NT

• Zechariah 12:10 • Micah 5: 1 • Psalm 34: 20 • Psalm 41:9 • Psalm 69:21 • Zechariah 13: 7	• John 19: 33 • John 13: 21-26 • Mark 14: 50 • John 20: 24-25 • Matthew 26: 57 • John 19: 28
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Have 2 of the groups copy the OT references (as on the chalkboard--references only, not texts) onto the papers. Have the 2 other groups copy the NT passages. Have two teams, each made up of one OT group and one NT group. Using Bibles, the teams will look up the passages, and then pair up the ones that match--passages that describe (NT) or prophesy (OT) the same event. They should put each pair of "matching" NT/OT papers into an envelope.

For fun, you can make it a contest to see which team fills their envelopes first.

Correct pairs:

- Zechariah 12: 10 / John 20: 24-25
- Micah 5: 1 / Matthew 26: 67
- Psalm 34: 20 / John 19: 33
- Psalm 41: 9 / John 13:21-26
- Psalm 69: 21 / John 19: 28
- Zechariah 13: 7 / Mark 14: 50

4 Psalm Reflection

Distribute Bibles, and say: *Like the passages we have just looked at, Psalm 22 contains some prophecies of Christ's passion, or suffering.*

Ask students to read through the psalm on their own, and then name verses that prophesy things that happened to Christ. (*Verses 7, 8, and 14 through 18 all describe such things.*)

Ask: *We are all familiar with the first verse of this psalm, which Christ said as He was dying on the cross. Would you say that the psalm continues in this tone of abandonment?* (Let students give their ideas. Notice with them verse 10, in which the psalmist is still ready to call on God, and trust Him, even when things are terrible. Verse 26 is a good expression of this willingness to trust: "The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied." So the tone of the psalm really does change.)

5 Discussion: Responding with Silence

Read together Mark 14: 56-61 and 15: 1-5.

Tell the class that in *Go Forth*, a book about the mission of the Orthodox Church in Albania (Conciliar Press, 2009), Father Luke Veronis writes about Archbishop Anastasios, who is the spiritual father of the Albanian Orthodox, and well known for his work all across the country. Fr. Luke describes what happened when the Archbishop was told about slanderous attacks on him in some anti-Church Albanian newspapers. The Archbishop said, "Sometimes I think the best response is silence. Let us do our work, and our work will speak for itself."

Ask students about their opinions, observations and experiences of silence as a response. When is it appropriate, effective? When, if ever, is it the best or the only way to respond to something?

Ask: *Why do you think Christ responded with silence?* This is not an easy question, but it seems that Christ always answered as a way of teaching, as in Mark 12: 13-17, or as a way of encouraging compassion, as in 3: 1-5. Read these together.

(Some ideas for discussion: With Pilate and with the crowd, there was no teaching Christ could do--the crowd wanted to destroy Him, and was in no mood to hear about compassion. Pilate was obviously impressed and bewildered by Christ--we read that he was "amazed" that He did not defend Himself--but did nothing to help. Yet even here Jesus was teaching by fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah. Read together Isaiah 53:7.)

6 Journaling: Taking Risks

Read together about the actions of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus in John 19: 38-42.

Briefly discuss: What kinds of risks were these two men taking?

Ask students to write in their journals about situations in our lives today that involve risks taken for the faith.

You may wish to play a recording of *The Noble Joseph* as students are writing.

7 Wrap Up

Invite students to write a meaningful word from this lesson on the word chart.

8 Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

The noble Joseph,
When he had taken down
Thy most pure Body from the tree,
Wrapped it in fine linen,
And anointed it with spices,
And placed it in a new tomb.

Journey to Pascha • Lesson 6



Holy Saturday & Pascha (Ages 18+)

Overview

Descent into Hades and Resurrection

Objectives

By the end of this Lesson, learners should be able to:

- Describe the nature of Great and Holy Sabbath as "transforming"
- Name some elements of the services of Great and Holy Saturday and Great and Holy Pascha
- Note ways in which Christ's care for His Mother, even on the cross, is related to His love and care for all of us
- Choose meaningful words from the prayers and hymns of these services

Materials

- Bibles
- Copies of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms* for each student
- Copies of *Great and Holy Saturday* (Resource section) for each student
- Blank 5" by 7" index cards in various colors, enough for each student to have four or five
- Colored markers (thick and thin) and colored pencils for students to share
- Small decorative stickers (stars, crosses, Easter eggs, dots, etc.) for students to share
- Icons of the Crucifixion and of the Resurrection (Christ's descent into Hades)
- Mounted wall chart for students' words

Resources

Required Resources

[Great and Holy Saturday \(PDF\)](#)

[My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms \(PDF\)](#)

Optional Resources

[Icon of The Crucifixion of the Lord \(Image\)](#)

[Icon of The Resurrection of Christ \(Image\)](#)

Procedure

1 Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Do not lament me, O Mother, seeing me in the tomb,
The Son conceived in the womb without seed.
For I shall arise, And be glorified with eternal glory as God.
I shall exalt all who magnify you in faith and love.

2 Discussion Starter

Have the icon of the Crucifixion prominently displayed. Discuss these questions:

How do the words of the hymn in the Opening Prayer reflect the care Jesus had for His mother?
What promises does He make? *(He promises not only that He will rise, but also that He will exalt those people who honor her. He also assures her that He will rise, and that she should not lament as if she had truly lost Him.)*

Read together the verses that reflect another example of care Christ took for His mother, in John 19: 25-27. Note, looking at the icon, how few people stayed with Jesus at His last moments on the cross. Yet He, while in extreme agony, continued to care for others.

Discuss: How are Jesus' promises to His Mother important for us? *(Let participants give their own answers. One important point is that she is the first created human being to be raised from the dead after the Resurrection. She is an example for us, just as she has in her life been an example of true faith and dedication to Christ.)*

3 Reflection

Distribute copies of *Great and Holy Saturday*. Have the icon of the Resurrection, or The Descent of Christ into Hades, prominently displayed.

Read together the 3 sections entitled "The Transition", "Trampling Down Death by Death", and "The Icon of the Descent into Hades." Discuss:

- *How is "transformation" different from "replacement" as described here?* (To experience the transforming of sorrow into joy, we have to go through the "journey" that the services of Holy Saturday offer us. If we go to church on Friday and don't go again till the Pascha service, the sorrowful tone has simply been replaced by bright colors, flowers, and joyful music and prayers)
- *How does the icon, as described in the section "The Icon of the Descent into Hades", reflect this "transformation"?* (Christ, strong and determined in His pure colors and surrounded by light, is shown bringing that strength and light into hell to destroy it)
- *How are the verses beginning "Today Hell cries out groaning..." reflected in the icon?* (Christ tramples on the devil and on the doors and locks of Hades or hell, the devil's domain)

4 Reminder cards

Together, read "The Vesperal Liturgy of Holy Saturday" in *Great and Holy Saturday*. Then distribute copies of *My Guide to Holy Week and the Feast of Palms*. Have students read on their own the columns labeled "Holy Week--7" and "Holy Week--8." (Their copies are now theirs to keep.)

Give each student several blank 5" by 7" cards, and have thin markers, colored pencils and decorative stickers ready for everyone to share. Have them choose one or more lines from hymns and prayers contained in the pages they have just read. They can make for themselves and/or for others a few decorative "reminder" cards with lines they feel are important to remember during the Paschal season. The finished cards, of course, will be theirs to keep.

Invite students to share, if they wish to, what they have written.

5 Journaling:

Put this quotation on the chalkboard:

Christ's love does not know how to measure and divide, does not know how to spare itself.

Saint Maria of Paris (Mother Maria Skobtsova)

Ask students to write in their journals about Mother Maria's words.

Give students their journals to keep. Take a few moments for them to leaf through their journals and share with the class, if they wish to, anything they have written.

6 Wrap Up

Invite students to write a meaningful word from the lesson on the wall chart. Take a few minutes to have students, if they wish to, pick out a word or words they have written during the six sessions, and talk about why the word/s had meaning for them.

7 Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Christ is Risen from the dead,
Trampling down death by death,
And upon those in the tombs, Bestowing life.

Plan with the class members that you will share the Paschal greeting with each other and with parishioners over the weeks between Pascha and Ascension.