

Diocese of South-West America  
Sunday School

# 4th Grade God's Story



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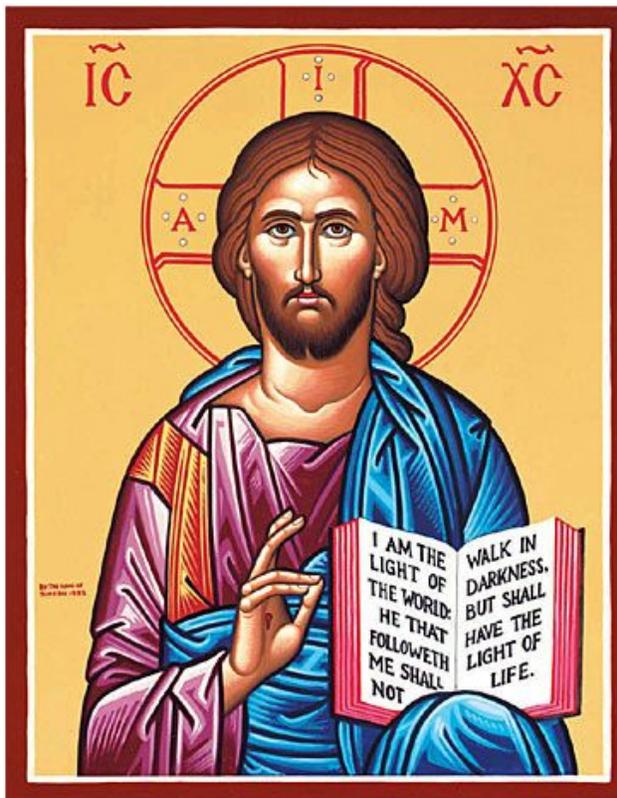
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## LESSON 1 - HOLY SCRIPTURE

**Objective: Students will identify that the Holy Scripture is the written Word of God and will list the different sections of the Bible.**

The Holy Bible is one of the greatest gifts from God. It helps us to understand our faith! It is written so long ago. It provides us with truth. The writers of the Holy Bible, which include prophets, kings, and disciples, were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Bible is a collection of separate letters and books that were **canonized**, or approved, by the Church. They are organized into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

It is through God's grace that we were allowed to have the Holy Bible. St. John Chrysostom tells us, "The Holy Scriptures lead us to God and open the path to the knowledge of God." As we pray, we should ask the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom to understand God's message.



**Iconography** is one of the ways we understand the Holy Scriptures. An example of an icon is on your left. The word of God beautifully paints a story that we can see in an icon. We usually see icons of Christ and many Holy Fathers holding the Holy Gospel. Similarly, all our Holy Fathers devoted their lives to be like Christ through the Holy Scriptures. This just shows us how important the Holy Scriptures are to us as Orthodox Christians.

Before we dive into the different parts of the Bible, recognize that the Orthodox Study Bible is different from other Bibles

that you may have come across. For one, it has a few more books in the Old Testament than other Holy Bibles. A council of Jewish rabbis issued a law (A.D. 90) for their Bible that kept all books written in Hebrew and therefore, any books written in Greek were removed. Years later other Christian groups began using Hebrew translated Bibles that have 39 books in the Old Testament. However, our Church teaches that there are 46

books in the Old Testament based on the Syriac translation and we use them in our liturgical life. Another apparent difference is that the Psalms are numbered differently in the Orthodox Study Bible than some other Bibles. This is because the chapters are numbered differently due to the different translations of Greek, Syriac and Hebrew.

## **Old Testament**

The first part of the Holy Scriptures contains the history of God's dealings with man before the birth of Christ. It has books of law, history, wisdom, and prophetic books.

### **Books of Moses**

The first five books are also called the Books of the Law or Pentateuch (*penta* means five in Greek), written by Moses.

- *Genesis*, means beginning, and tells us about the beginning of God's creation, starting with Adam and Eve.
- *Exodus*, which means "exit" or "departure," refers to the journey of the Hebrews out from slavery in Egypt
- *Leviticus* is a book detailing worship as led by the priests from the Levi tribe
- *Numbers* tells us about the account of the census or numbering of the people of Israel
- *Deuteronomy* means "second law", since it gives a detailed listing of the additional law as given by God through Moses.

In the **Books of History** we see the stories of the judges, priests, prophets and kings who led the Israelites after they returned from slavery in Egypt.

- The 16 books of History: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Kingdoms (1 & 2 Samuel), 3 and 4 Kingdoms (1 and 2 Kings), 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, and 1 and 2 Maccabees

In the **Books of Wisdom**, there are a number of poems and moral instructions.

- The 7 books of wisdom: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Sirach.

The **Books of Prophecy** are the announcements on the will of God to man. These books are written by prophets. The coming of Messiah is foretold in many of the these books.

- The 18 books of Prophecy: Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Epistle of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

## History of the Old Testament

Before Jesus Christ was born (around 285 - 247 B.C.) there was already a book called the **Septuagint** (means 70 in Greek) which contained all the Holy Books we now know as the Old Testament. The Syriac Peshitta version also contained all the Holy Books and was similar in content to the Septuagint. Our Church considers the Syriac Peshitta version as it's Bible.

## New Testament

The New Testament of the Holy Scriptures reveal how God works through Jesus Christ in order to save the human race. The Church accepts and states that there are 27 books in the New Testament, starting with the Gospel of St. Matthew and ending with Revelations.

## The Four Gospels

The New Testament begins with four Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. All four of these holy figures lived and walked with Jesus Christ during his lifetime, learning directly from Christ. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all recorded what they learned from Jesus Christ, beginning with his birth all the way to his death. When four people tell very similar stories, the stories can overlap, which is why the first three Gospels are called "**Synoptic**" Gospels. The first three Gospels contain similar stories but are just written from different points of view. However, the Gospel of John is known as the Theological Gospel, as it really shows how Jesus is God and Savior.

The '**Acts of the Apostles**' speaks mainly about the accomplishments of the apostles and the history of the early Church. We see stories of Pentecost, martyrdom of St. Stephen, and the conversion of St. Paul in this book.

There are **14 epistles** of St. Paul including Hebrews and **7 general epistles** written by the disciples of Jesus. These epistles are letters that are sent to certain regions.

- Pauline Epistles - Romans, Philippians, I Timothy, II Timothy, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Colossians, Titus, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, Philemon, Galatians, Ephesians, Hebrews
- Universal Epistles- I John, II John, III John, I Peter, II Peter, James, Jude

The last book of the New Testament is "The **Revelation of Jesus Christ**", or Revelations. This was written by St. John the Theologian while he was on the island of Patmos. Revelations speaks prophetically both to current and future events, to

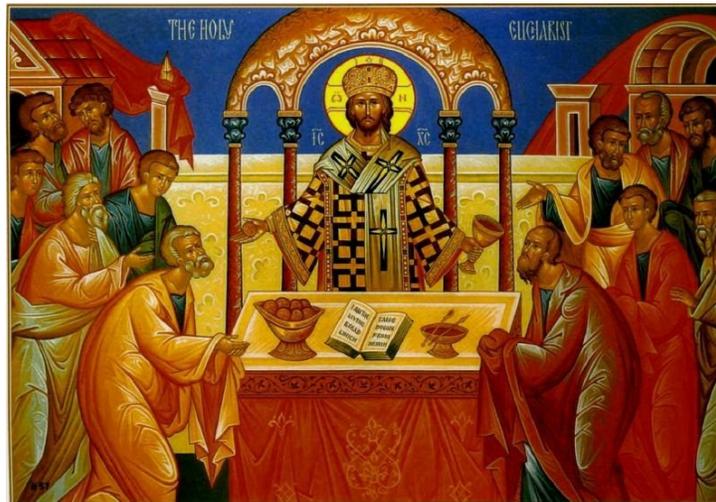
judgement and salvation, and ends with the glorious New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.

## Holy Scriptures and Worship

The Holy Scriptures has an important part in our worship. Everything we read and do is based of what was taught to us in the Holy Scriptures. A lot of our prayers are filled with Scripture so that we can think about its meaning. Some of the prayers that use biblical verses are:

- *Our Father, who art in heaven...*
  - The most basic prayer our Lord had taught the disciples from Matthew 6:9-13
- *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty  
by whose glory, the heaven and earth are full,  
Hosanna in the highest!*
  - This is was sung in the presence of the Lord by the six winged seraphs from **Isaiah 6:3**
- **Psalms 51, 91, and 121 OSB**
  - We use these psalms very often in our prayers especially in our morning and evening prayers

We can see how there is a lot of depth to the Holy Bible. The Holy Bible was a great gift to us from God and we are able to learn from the Scriptures to become better children of God. By studying and learning the Holy Bible, we can learn what God and holy leaders of our Church have to teach us.



## Lesson 2 - Reading the Bible

**Objective: Students will discuss the importance of reading the Holy Scriptures and being obedient to God's commands in the Holy Bible.**

Over many centuries, God inspired people to write books of His Word. This is the Holy Scriptures, which is more commonly known as the Holy Bible. The Word became a person in Jesus Christ, and He also used Scriptures to teach us how to become a Christian. After the Resurrection, His disciples wrote more about Jesus and the teachings He gave to them, and this is what we know as the New Testament.

So, the Old Testament is about Jesus!

It is the history of the God's people and includes the Ten Commandments. All the writings of the prophets about a Messiah (the promised One who will save the people of God) refer to Jesus, and the Passover lamb is a symbol of Christ.

We better are able to better understand many Old Testament stories when we are aware of prefiguration (or shadowing) of Jesus Christ and figures and events of the New Testament. This is also known as typology.

For example, the story of Jonah and the whale prefigured Jesus Christ as He died (on the Cross) and rose again after 3-days (the same length that Jonah was in the whale). This is why our Church observes the Nineveh Fast before the Great Lent.

The burning bush is a shadowing of St. Mary, the Mother of God. Just like the bush contained God as He spoke but did not burn, St. Mary was able to hold God within her womb within burning or otherwise changing.



We grow as Christians when we obey what we read in the Bible and listen to the teachings of the Church. We enter into a personal conversation with God whenever we read the Scriptures. As St. Tikhon said, “Whenever you read the Gospel, Christ Himself is speaking to you. And while you read, you are praying and talking to Him”.

Four things to remember when we read the Holy Scriptures:

1) The Holy Scriptures is inspired by God and is truth, and we must read the Scriptures with obedience. Obedience means to listen to what is being told to us. If we do not understand something we read, we should be patient and ask our teachers or priest for help. We should never make up our own explanation!

2) Saints in the Church wrote the Old and New Testament Scriptures that we call the Holy Scriptures, and the Scripture is used by the Church to teach about Jesus. It is impossible to understand Jesus without the Church and the Scripture. A good example is when St. Philip helped explain to the Ethiopian in **Acts 8:26-40**. This is why we believe the Holy Qurbana is the real Body and Blood of Christ. Why? Because the Scripture (**St. John 6**) says so! The Church teaches us this Truth.

3) The Scripture is about Jesus Christ including the stories in the Old Testament – every page is about Jesus Christ and who He is as a person. We should never think that the New Testament is about Jesus and the Old Testament about God. Jesus is God, and He became a person to save us.

4) According to St. Mark the Monk, “He who is humble in his thoughts and engaged in spiritual work, when he reads the Holy Scriptures, will apply everything to himself and not his neighbor”. We should always read and listen to the Holy Scripture and ask, “what does it mean for me?”.

*Adapted from “How to Read the Bible”, by Right Reverend KALLISTOS, and material from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.*

## LESSON 3 - OUR LITURGICAL CALENDAR

***Objective: Students will relate important Liturgical events with the life of Christ.***

Just like we use calendars to remind ourselves of certain events in our lives such as birthdays and anniversaries, the Church has its own calendar which **commemorates**, or remembers, many important dates. Some of the most important dates for us as Orthodox Christians are the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. In addition to these special days, there are other holy days where we remember St. Mary, the Mother of God, and the Holy Saints.

### **Liturgical Year of the Church**

The liturgical year of the Church begins with the Feast of Purification, which is usually the first Sunday after October 29th. Feast days are either fixed (i.e., happen on the same day each year), or movable. The major fixed feasts are as follows -

- Feast of Nativity of our Lord (Yeldo) - Birth of Jesus Christ (December 25th)
- Feast of Theophany of our Lord (Danaha) - Baptism of Jesus Christ (January 6th)
- Feast of Lord's Temple Entry (May altho) - (February 2nd)
- Feast of the Annunciation to Mary (Suboro) - (March 25th)
- Feast of Transfiguration - (August 6th)
- Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God (Sunoyo) - (August 15th )
- Feast of the discovery of our Lord's Cross - (September 14th)

Holy Week and the most important Feast, the Resurrection of our Lord, are movable feasts and the day changes from year to year.

### **Fasts**

Just like a doctor prescribes medicine for their patients, the Church prescribes spiritual medicine in the form of fasting. Fasting lets us prepare ourselves to become more like Christ through prayer, sacrifices and observing the lenten discipline. Through fasting, we find our need for God. The main fasting periods for our church are:

- Dormition Fast
- Nativity Fast
- Nineveh Fast
- Great Lent
- Holy Apostles Fast
- Wednesday and Fridays are fasting days (when not in a Fast-free period)

- Wednesday- Originally set apart to remember the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot. Today, it also commemorates the Theotokos
- Friday- Remembering Jesus Christ's Crucifixion

## Major Feasts

The most important feast of our Church is Easter, or the Resurrection of our Lord. This is on a different day every year because the date of this feast is determined by the rule given by Council of Nicaea (AD 325). According to the Council, Easter should be commemorated on the Sunday following the full moon after the spring equinox. Many other feasts depend on the date of Easter, which is why they are not fixed to a date as well.

Some examples are:

- Palm Sunday
  - Jesus Christ's' triumphal entry into Jerusalem
- Feast of the Resurrection (Easter)
  - Jesus Christ raised from the dead defeating death
- Feast of Ascension
  - Jesus Christ ascends or raises into Heaven (forty days after Easter)
- Feast of Pentecost
  - The Holy Spirit comes down upon the Holy Apostles (fifty days after Easter)

Some other Orthodox Churches have different dates of Easter because they follow the Julian Calendar, made by Julius Caesar. We follow the Gregorian Calendar which was made by Pope Gregory XIII. Both these calendars are very similar, but when it comes to determining Easter, they have a different way of figuring it out.

## Saints of the Church

The anniversaries of the apostles, martyrs, saints, and other Church Fathers are also celebrated as Feast days. Just like we celebrate important days in our own families' lives, we celebrate days that commemorate our family in Christ. We remember these saints because they are our role models. They are wonderful examples of God-fearing people and we should try to be like them. By celebrating their lives, we can see what it takes to be Christ-like.

- Remembrance of Stephen, the first Martyr - 8th of January
- Remembrance of 40 Martyrs - 9th of March
- Remembrance of St. George - 23rd of April
- Remembrance of St. Peter and St. Paul - 29th of June

- Remembrance of 12 Apostles - 30th of June
- Remembrance of St. Thomas the Apostle - 3rd of July
- Martyrdom of John the Baptist - 29th of August
- Remembrance of Mar Gregorios of Parumala - 2nd of November
- Remembrance of Mar Yakoob Burdana - 28th of November
- Martyrdom of St. Thomas - 21st of December



### Role of Holy Qurbana

Holy Qurbana is the most important part of the celebration of a feast. We receive Holy Communion during Holy Qurbana to grow closer to God. During the feasts of saints, we remember them in our prayers and we ask them to pray to God for us (their **intercession**).

Similarly, we should pray for them and their departed souls.

All feasts days are days filled with joy! We should celebrate knowing that this event or saint was used to glorify our God.

One of the most joyous feasts we celebrate is the Feast of Resurrection. During this feast, we celebrate how Jesus Christ resurrected or rose from the dead defeating death.

The liturgical calendar is filled with occasions that are dedicated to holy people of the Church or important events in the life of Christ. The calendar and each liturgical feast helps us to see how we continue to remember Christ in all His glory.

## LESSON 4 - GOD CHOOSES HIS PEOPLE

**Objective: Students will retell the stories of Abraham and Joseph and how they were faithful to God.**

God chose His people because they honored Him and followed His commands even though it got hard sometimes. Read along to hear stories of the faithful men of God.

### Abraham (Genesis, chapters 12-25)

One such person is Abraham. One day, God commanded Abraham to leave his family's land. Abraham obeyed God's command and set out to the land of Canaan, the promised land, with his wife, Sarai and his nephew, Lot. God promises that if Abraham obeys Him and follows Him, God will bless Abraham and Abraham stayed faithful to God (**Genesis 17:1**).



### Hospitality of Abraham

One day, Abraham sat in front of his tent and saw three men standing there. They were angels, but Abraham did not know. These three angels were God Himself who came as the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Abraham ran out and gave them a warm welcome. While they were eating, the angels told Abraham that his wife Sarah would have a son. To follow through with His promise, God gave Abraham and Sarah a son named Isaac when Abraham was one hundred years old.

### God tests Abraham's faith

God commanded Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Moriah as sacrifice to God. Obediently, Abraham listened because he loved God so much (**Gen 22:7-8**). Abraham built an altar, tied up Isaac and laid him down. Then, Abraham took his knife to kill his son, as God had told him to do. Suddenly, he heard a voice telling him stop what he's doing



and spare his son (**Gen 22:12**). When Abraham looked around, he saw a ram and Abraham sacrificed the ram instead of his son. Since Abraham, the “Father of the faithful,” did not hesitate to sacrifice his only son and trusted God fully, God filled his life with blessings (**Gen. 22:18**).

### **Joseph (Genesis, chapters 37-50)**

Another one of God’s chosen people that we read about in the Bible is Joseph. Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob. He grew up living and being loyal to God. Jacob loved Joseph the most, which caused Joseph’s brothers to be jealous of him. Once, Joseph had a dream, in which he and his brothers were tying bundles of grain in the field. In the dream, Joseph’s bundle stood upright, while the bundles of his brothers gathered round it and bowed before it. Joseph also had another dream where the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed to him. Joseph told his brothers about these dreams, which caused them to hate him even more.

One day, Jacob sent Joseph to bring him news about his brothers who had went to look after the sheep. Joseph did not know when he went to find his brothers that they were all planning on killing him! Reuben was the only brother who was against killing him. When Joseph approached his brothers, they took Joseph’s colorful robe and put him into an empty pit. The brothers sold Joseph to some traders, who took Joseph to Egypt. Joseph’s brothers dipped his robe in a goat's blood and took it to Jacob. Jacob became extremely sad because he thought his son was dead.

### **Joseph in prison in Egypt**

When the traders reached Egypt, they sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of King Pharaoh. Joseph spent his days relying on God. Joseph's master made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of everything that he had. However, the wife of Potiphar was a wicked woman who lied about Joseph to her husband. He believed her dishonest words and put Joseph in prison.

### **Pharaoh and his Dreams**

Two years later, while Joseph was still in prison, King Pharaoh had a dream. Seven fine looking and fat cows came out of the river Nile; after them seven skinny cows came up and ate up the first seven cows. Later he saw another dream. There were seven plump and good heads of grain on one stalk. Then seven thin heads of grain sprang up and swallowed up the seven plump ones. The Pharaoh could not understand his dream and he wanted to figure out the meaning behind them. He learned that Joseph, who was in prison, was skilled at interpreting dreams. Joseph explained that both dreams meant the same thing. The seven fat cows and seven good heads of grain are seven years of plenty. The seven lean cows and seven empty heads are seven years of famine. He

explained to Pharaoh that the dream meant that after the seven years of prosperity, there would be seven years of famine.

### Joseph becomes Pharaoh's minister

Pharaoh was happy that Joseph interpreted his dream and so he made Joseph overseer of Egypt. Joseph collected grain during the years of prosperity. When seven years were over, the famine started. People from different countries came to buy grain. In fact, Joseph's brothers came to him for grain but did not know that it was Joseph. His dream of his brothers bowing down to him came to be true!

Though Joseph had recognized his brothers, he pretended to treat them like he didn't know them. Joseph asked them to go and bring back Benjamin, his youngest brother. The brothers' sacks were filled with grain and money.

When they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, Jacob asked them to go back to Egypt. Jacob did not want to send Benjamin with his brothers to Egypt, but had to in order to buy more grain. They visited Joseph and he invited them to eat with him. It was then they realized that Joseph was their own brother.

When Pharaoh found out what had happened with Joseph's brothers, he told Joseph to bring his father and all his family to Egypt and settle down there. Joseph's brothers went back to Jacob and told him everything. As Pharaoh had asked, Jacob and his children set out to Egypt. On the way, Jacob offered sacrifices to God in thankfulness at Beersheba. God told Jacob to not be afraid of this journey to Egypt (**Gen. 46:3-4**). So, Jacob came to Egypt with his entire family. When Joseph saw his father, he embraced him and wept. The people of Israel lived there and grew in great numbers.

Through these Bible stories of Abraham and Joseph, we are given examples of God's chosen people. Throughout their difficult times, they stayed faithful to God. They did what God asked them to do and they trusted that God would protect them and bless them. We must also have that same faith as we live our lives.



## Lesson 5 - God Delivers His People

***Objective: Students will retell the story of Moses and the Israelites.***

### **The birth of Moses**

A son was born to Amram and his wife, Levi. The child's mother hid him for three months as the pharaohs of Egypt ordered to kill all the male children of Israelite families. To save the baby boy's life, his mother placed him in a basket and sent the basket along the riverbank. After a while, the daughter of Pharaoh came down to the river to take a bath. She saw the basket and found a baby inside. The princess felt bad and asked a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. When he grew up, the princess took him as her own son. She called him Moses, which means 'drawn out of water'. Moses enjoyed everything that came with the palace, but he also feared God. He had a special love for his own people and especially for Israelites who suffered.

### **Moses flees to Midian**

One day, Moses saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite and so he killed the Egyptian. The next day, Moses saw two Hebrew men fighting and tried to calm the fight until one of the Israelites asked him "Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses was afraid because he knew everyone saw what he did the day before. Hearing this, Pharaoh wanted to kill Moses. So Moses escaped to the land of Midian in Arabia where he lived with the priest, Jethro, and married his daughter, Zipporah. While tending the flock of Jethro, Moses used to pray for those who were suffering in Egypt. God made Moses the leader to free the Israelites from their hard times of suffering.

### **Moses And The Exodus (Exodus, chapters 3-14)**

The people of Israel wanted to be free from slavery. They believed that God would lead them to Canaan, the Promised Land. They remembered the words of Jacob on his deathbed, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and will bring you again to the land of your fathers" (**Gen. 48:21**). They waited for that day.

### **God commands Moses**

God heard the cry of Israel and He sent Moses to lead them out of slavery. While Moses was looking after his sheep on Mount Horeb, God appeared to him through a burning bush that was not consumed. God called Moses out of the bush and says, "Moses, Moses! Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." To make Moses believe that God had sent him, God ordered Moses to put his staff on the ground. It suddenly turned into a snake and when

Moses grabbed the snake by the tail, it became a staff again. Moses believed and went to deliver the people of Israel.

Moses went with his brother Aaron to Pharaoh and told him that they have come to free the people of Israel, but the Pharaoh did not believe. In order to convince him, God sent plagues on Egypt. In this instance, plagues are events that cause distress to the people. After each plague Pharaoh repented, but when the plagues were over, he would go back on his word. The ten plagues were:

1. The Nile River turned into blood.
2. The land was filled with frogs.
3. The dust of the earth became gnats.
4. The land was filled with swarms of flies.
5. All the cattle died.
6. Boils came upon the Egyptians.
7. Hail rained on Egypt.
8. The land was filled with locusts.
9. Darkness for three days.
10. All the firstborn sons in Egypt were killed.

### **Establishment of the Passover**

After the 10th plague came, Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to go. It was with this plague that God put into place Passover. During Passover, God commanded every family to kill a lamb and use the blood of the lamb, to make the sign of the cross on the doorposts. God would “pass over” any house marked with this and any house unmarked would have the firstborn killed. If we look to the New Testament, we see a connection with Jesus - Christ was killed as the Sacrificial Lamb and that saved everyone who believed from death.

### **Crossing of the Red Sea**

Under the guidance of Moses, the Israelites were free to leave. However, when Pharaoh heard that the people had fled, he had a change of heart and he followed them with his army. As soon as the Israelites reached the shore of the Red Sea, they noticed that the Egyptian army was behind them. With nowhere to go, God commanded Moses to lift up his staff and stretch his hands over the sea. Suddenly, the sea divided into two allowing the Israelites to pass.

The people of Israel walked on dry ground and quickly reached the other side. When Pharaoh and his army were in the middle of the sea floor, Moses stretched out his hands

over the sea and suddenly the waters were brought back together drowning Pharaoh's army. God delivered His people and they praised Him with songs.



### **Moses and the Israelites**

After crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites were not “saved” immediately. They had to face the difficult conditions of the desert before crossing to the Promised Land. They first came to a place called Marah where the water was too bitter to drink. The people were angry with Moses, so he prayed to God. God showed him a tree, and when he threw it into the water, the water became sweet.

While people were traveling through the desert, which was between Elim and Sinai, they complained to Moses and Aaron about the shortage of food. Moses then prayed to God and He gave them bread from heaven calling it manna. They could gather manna in the morning and quails in the evening.

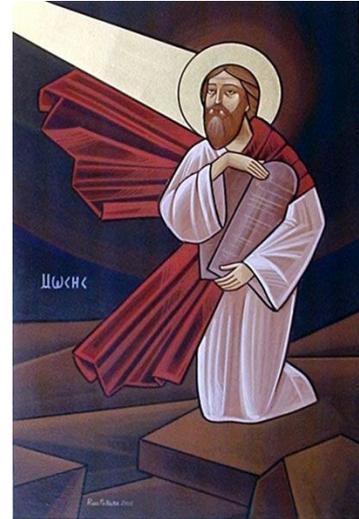
The people of Israel moved further and camped at Rephidim. But there was no water for them to drink. They found fault with Moses and asked "why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" Moses prayed to God and God commanded Moses to strike the rock at Horeb. As soon as he struck the rock, the water gushed forth.

The troubles the Israelites faced after the Red Sea can be seen as our struggle after Holy Baptism. After we are Baptized, we are not completely saved. It is a process. For the rest of our lives we have to work on this relationship with God. It is similar to playing any sport. The more you play, the better you become at that particular skill. In the same way, we have to continue to practice our love for God so that we may become more like

Christ. The struggle will not be easy, but God will be with us every step of the way just as he was with Moses and the Israelites.

### **Moses receives Commandments from God**

The Israelites reached Sinai three months after they had started from Egypt. God called Moses to the mountain. There, God came down and the mountains shook. It was then that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments for the people. God saved the Israelites and brought them out of Egypt. He gave them these commandments through His love and mercy. These are the ten commandments given by God.



1. I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's.

Just as God chose Moses to help free the people of Israel, the presence of God guides and protects the Church throughout ages. God's love and mercy is always constant. If we choose to follow God and obey what He asks us to do, He will surely bless us.

## Lesson 6 - God Guides His People (Judges and Kings)

**Objective: Students will recognize how God used judges and kings to lead His people.**

The people of Israel were led to the Promised Land, Canaan. They had settled there for about 300 years and after the death of Joshua, they started turning away from God. God loved those who were obedient and punished those who disobeyed.



### **Judge Deborah (Judges Ch 4-5)**

The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of God. Because of that, God punished them by sending enemies against them. One of the enemies was King Jabin of Canaan. He used the Israelites as slaves. The people cried out to God and He heard their voices. He called on a woman to deliver Israel, the prophetess Deborah, who chose to listen to God and lead the people as a Judge.

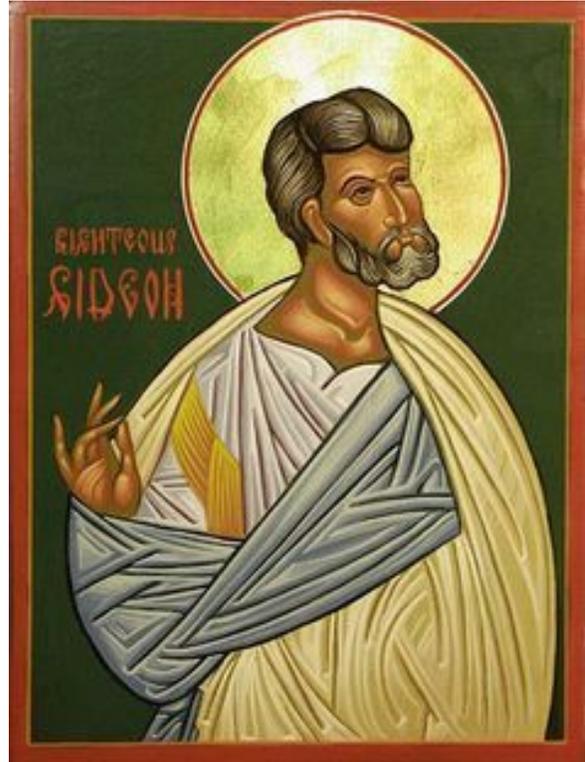
According to God's command, Deborah called a man named Barak and told him that he should go and fight against Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army. Barak replied "If you will go with me, I will go." Barak and Deborah together set out for war.

Both Deborah and Barak met the enemy, Sisera, at Mount Tabor. Seeing that the Israelites defeated his army, Sisera fled for his life. He went into the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber. She hid Sisera there. As he was lying fast asleep, she drove a tent peg into his temple and he died. When Barak came in search of Sisera, he saw him dead in the tent. Both Barak and Deborah praised God. Deborah chose to be guided by God so that the Israelites might be saved from God's punishments.

## Judge Gideon (Judges Ch 6)

After a time of peace, the Israelites disobeyed God again. God sent the Midianites to invade Israel and destroy everything. Hearing the prayers of the Israelites, God appointed Gideon of Ophrah as judge over the people.

One day, an angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and told him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty one of the armies!" Then Gideon asked, "If the Lord is with us, why then have these evils come upon us?" The angel assured Gideon but Gideon wanted a sign from God. He brought food before the angel, and placed meat and unleavened cakes on the rock and poured broth over it. The angel touched them with the tip of his staff, and fire sprang out and consumed the bread and meat. That night God asked Gideon to destroy the altar of Baal. He did as he was asked.



Then the Midianites together with Amalekites invaded Israel. Gideon gathered an army and he wanted to test whether God was with him. He spread a fleece of wool on the ground and prayed to God, "If there is dew on the fleece alone and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you shall deliver Israel by my hand." In the morning the fleece alone was wet and the ground was dry. The next night he prayed to God, "Let it be dry only on the fleece and on all the ground let there be dew." God did so in that night and Gideon was sure that God had chosen him.

As God commanded, Gideon selected three hundred men out of the army of Israel. He invaded the Midianites with his small army in the night. The small army of 300 soldiers blew the trumpets and smashed jars. There was confusion in the camp of enemies and they began to fight against one another. In this way the people of Israel were delivered from Midianites by the power of God.

## **Samson (Judges, chapters 13-16)**

The people of Israel drifted away from God once again. During this time, in the land of Zorah, there was a man named Manoah. Manoah's wife gave birth to a male child named Samson. He grew up strong and was filled with the Spirit of God.

When Samson was young, he decided to marry a Philistine woman. One day, Samson went with his parents to that woman's house. On the way through the vineyards, a young lion roared against him. The Spirit of the Lord came on Samson and Samson tore the lion to pieces. After a few days, Samson returned on the same path and saw the dead body of the lion. Inside that body, he found a swarm of bees with honey in the mouth of the lion. He took the honey, ate it and gave it to his parents.

Samson arranged a feast in his wife's house. He asked thirty young Philistines a riddle, "What meat comes forth from the eater, and from the strong sweetness?" If they could tell Samson the answer within seven days, he promised to reward them. After seven days, the young philistines could not figure out the riddle, so they asked Samson's wife. She got the answer from Samson and told them secretly.

On the seventh day, the young men answered the riddle to Samson, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Then Samson understood that his wife had tricked him. He went back home very angry.

Samson married another woman from Sorek whose name was Delilah. Through her, many Philistines wanted to know the source of Samson's strength because they wanted to overpower him. Samson's love for her for a time proved to be stronger than his call from God to deliver Israel. After asking many times, Samson told Delilah that his strength came from his hair. He had never yet cut his hair--it was a gift from God. Delilah received eleven hundred pieces of silver for telling the Philistine leaders Samson's secret. While Samson slept on her lap, she called for a man to shave off the seven locks of his head. When Samson woke up, he did not know that his strength had left him. Loving her so much eventually brought him down to having no strength.

The Philistines took advantage of him by taking out his eyes and putting him in prison. They brought him into the temple of their god, Dagon and all the Philistines shouted for joy and mocked him. Samson prayed to God to give him strength once more. The power of God came upon him again and Samson pulled down the pillar and the temple fell upon the people. Three thousand Philistines were killed that day along with Samson.

Samson was judge over Israel for twenty years. He was the mightiest of all Judges. He did various deeds of power while the spirit of God was in him. When his hair was cut, he lost his power. But when he repented, he got the power back. The Holy Spirit abides in us and makes us strong. Because of our sins we will lose the power of the Holy Spirit. We can get it back through real repentance and God's forgiving grace.

The Israelites went through periods of disobedience and obedience. Through all of this, God continued to be faithful. He continued to be loving towards his people showing mercy to those who continued in obedience. It was through these Judges that God brought Israelites back and thus obey the will of God. All of the Judges, out of their own will decided to save the people of Israel with the help of God.

## Lesson 7 - God Guides His People (Prophets)

***Objective: Students will examine, through the lives of the prophets, what it means to obey God's word.***

The Lord had an agreement with His people where He promised to always protect and provide for them. When the people did not listen, He used Prophets to remind them of His promise. It was through the messengers of God, the prophets, that God expressed His grief and anger. Prophets guided people toward the will of God and advised people to repent of their sins.

### **Samuel And Saul (1 Samuel, chapters 8-16)**

There was a man named Elkanah in the hill country of Ephraim. His wife Hannah had no children and prayed to God earnestly for a son. She promised that she would dedicate him for the work of God. God heard Hannah's prayer and she had a son the next year named Samuel. As he grew up, he followed the Lord and eventually became the Judge of Israel. Many older people came up to Samuel and told him that they would like to have a king. Samuel prayed to God and God permitted him to choose a king for Israel. God chose Saul to be the first king of Israel.

One day Samuel told Saul of the Lord's commandment to punish Amalek for their bad ways. Although God's command was to destroy everything, Saul did not destroy the best of sheep and cattle. God was angry with Saul as he disobeyed God's words. God told Samuel that night, "I repent that I have made Saul king". Samuel prayed for Saul that night with tears. In the morning, Samuel went to Saul and informed that God had rejected him from being king because he had rejected the word of the Lord.

### **David, the Shepherd King (1 Samuel, chapters 16-30)**

David became the king of Israel after Saul. Samuel anointed David. David grew up as a clever, good looking, and active young man. When he was a boy, he looked after the sheep of his father, Jesse.

One day, a Philistine champion named Goliath challenged the Israelites. However, no Israelite was brave enough to accept the challenge. David had gone to the battlefield one day to meet his brothers. He came across Goliath and he accepted his challenge. He was sure that God would be with him.

David struck the Philistine with a sling and a stone and killed Goliath with his sword. As the champion fell, the Philistines fled. When victorious David came to the city, people praised David more. So, Saul was very angry and became jealous of David.

On many occasions, Saul tried to kill David, but David escaped every time because he had his trust in God. Saul followed David even with his army. David got opportunities to kill Saul, but he never wanted to kill the anointed one of God.

After the death of Saul, David became the King of Israel. He spent much of his time in communion with God and wrote nearly half of the 150 psalms in the Book of Psalms of the Holy Bible. It was his desire to build a temple for the worship of God. He sang, "I will not enter my house or get into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob" (**Ps. 132:3-5**).



David was a mighty king of Israel, and he defeated all his enemies. He built the city of Jerusalem and made it his capital. David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, in a great procession. David walked before the ark and danced in great gladness. The humility of David's heart is evident.

On the other hand, Saul was unable to fully trust in the Lord and the strength of the Lord. Therefore, Saul became filled with bitterness and jealousy.

We can look at the lives of Saul and David and see how when we choose to follow and obey God and His will, we will be blessed and filled with joy.

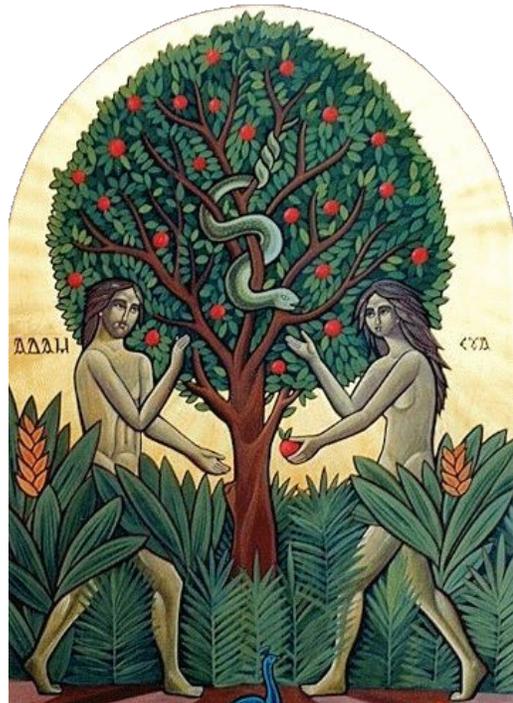
We can also read about other prophets such as Jeremiah, Amos, Jonah and Isaiah and see how their lives were pleasing to God.

## Lesson 8 - God Saves His People

**Objective: Students will discuss how God saved us from death.**

God created man and woman in His own image and blessed them. God wished that man should live a happy life on this earth, but man chose to disobey God's commandment. This disobedience separated man from the Creator. This sequence of events is known as the "Fall of Man". As a result, we as human beings face the consequences of the Fall. These are some of the consequences:

- Man must face death.
- We are not responsible for Adam's sin but for our own sin.
- We are separated from God.
- We fall into temptation because of the Fall but there is always potential in us to do good because we are His creation.
- Since we were separated from God, we have to work for the Garden of Eden so that we may become united with God.
- Our desires, can be used in a good way or bad.



### Noah and the Ark

Men began to multiply on earth, and so evil also multiplied among men. God punished man for his disobedience by sending a terrible flood. There was a man named Noah, who was a righteous man who found the Holy Spirit. God told Noah to make an ark and protect his family from the flood. Noah obeyed all that God commanded him. Noah, his wife, his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth, his sons' wives and a pair of all living beings entered into the ark. All men outside the ark and the other creatures perished in the flood. Noah and his family were protected by God. When the flood was over, Noah built an altar and offered burnt offerings to God. God was pleased with Noah and blessed him abundantly.

### Babel tower

After the great flood, Noah's family spread into different parts of the earth. The whole world had one language and settled in the place called Shinar. The people of that city

decided to build a tower that would reach the heavens so that they could all live in one place. They wanted to be famous and united, but God confused their language, so that they might not understand each other. They were not able to finish the tower and called it Babel, which meant confusion.

### **Wickedness at Sodom and Gomorrah**

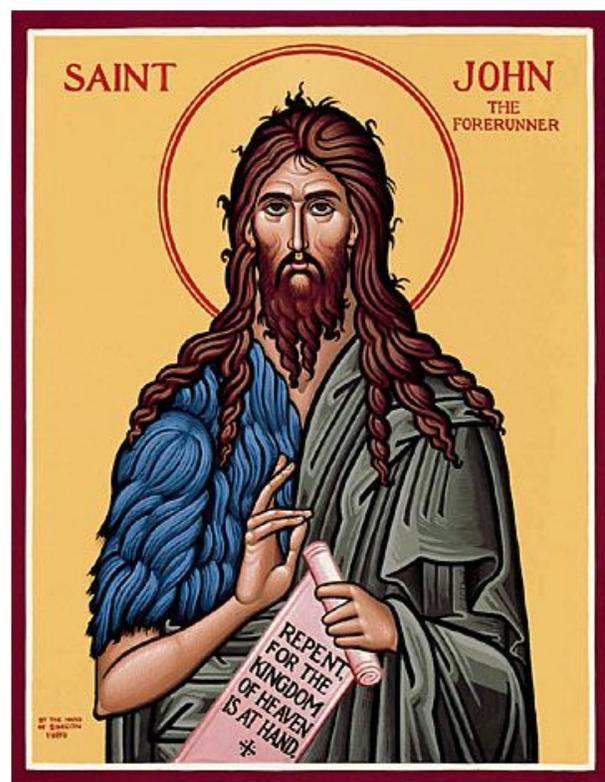
Evil was spreading all over the earth, and as a punishment, God decided to destroy two very wicked cities, namely Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham asked God not to destroy the place if there were fifty righteous men. But there were not even ten. So the angels brought Abraham's nephew Lot and his family out of the town and then burned Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot and his family were commanded, not to look back; but Lot's wife disobeyed by looking back to the town and she became a pillar of salt. God had protected and preserved the good and the just people from disasters and sufferings when they followed His instructions.

### **John the Baptist**

Fast forward many, many years and we see in the New Testament the story of a priest named Zachariah and his wife, Elizabeth. They were both faithful people of God. They had no children and they were very old. One day, when Zachariah was in the temple, the angel, Gabriel, appeared and told him that a son would be born to him. Later, they had a child named John.

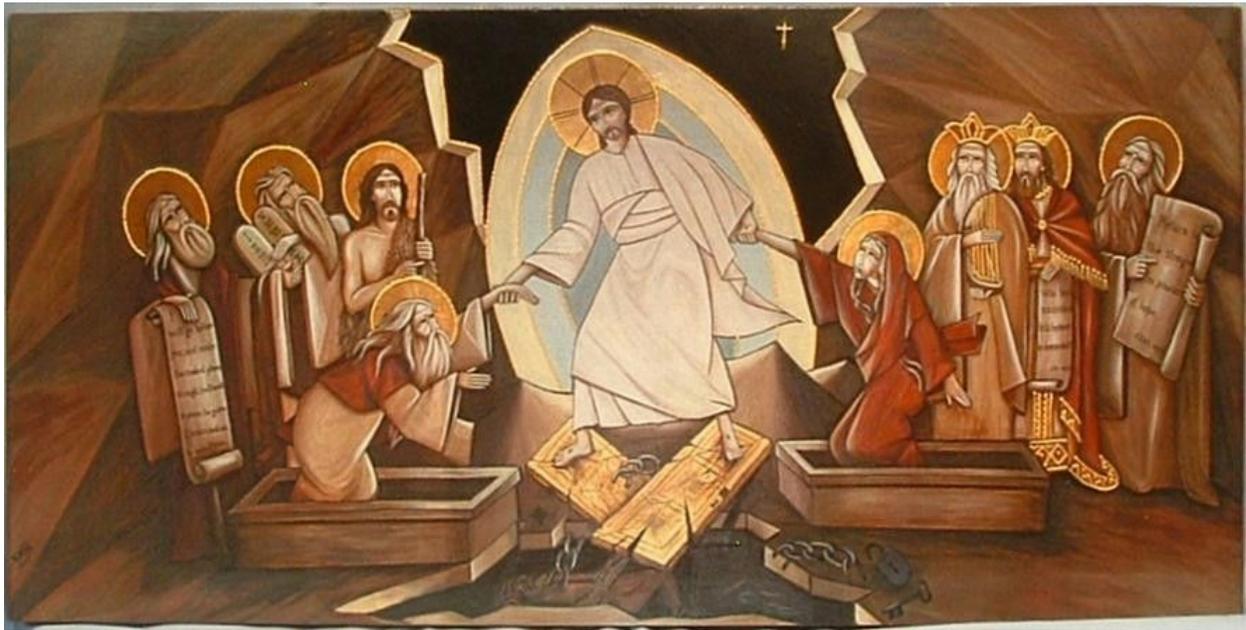
John is also known as the forerunner because he came to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, our Savior. As St. John the Baptist grew up, he went to the desert and lived there and devoted himself to God. He lived a simple life. Eventually, St. John the Baptist came to the desert of Judea and started preaching. He baptized people who came from far places to "repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

It was St. John the Baptist who completed the prophecy about the coming of the Messiah. John told them, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will



baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (**Matthew 3:11**). When John saw Jesus coming to him, he introduced Jesus to the people saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (**Jn. 1:29**).

St. John the Baptist talks about the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was through Christ, that we are saved from Adam's disobedience to God. Christ showed us that death is not forever anymore. Although we have fallen into sin since the beginning of time, Christ came to Earth to save His people and we can be happy in the fact that Christ overcame death! Christ came so that we might have a new life in Him.



## Lesson 9 - Christ the Teacher

**Objective: Students will identify Christ as the Greatest Teacher.**

### Baptism of Christ

The Feast of Theophany is when we remember Jesus Christ being baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan River. At first, John thought he was unworthy to baptize Jesus Christ, but Christ told him "Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." John baptized Jesus Christ, and as soon as He came up out of the water, heaven was opened to Him and the Spirit of God came down as a dove on Jesus. They heard a voice from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (**Matthew 3:17**).

Just as Christ was baptized with the water and the Holy Spirit, we too enter the Church through Baptism in the same way. Jesus Christ did not need to be baptized because he was not a sinner, but he willingly took on the sins of the world. Those who were baptized have put on Christ in order to follow the teachings of our Greatest Teacher.



### His Ministry

Jesus was often called, "Rabbi," which means teacher, and traveled over different parts of Palestine. Even at the age of 12, he proved to be a good teacher in the Temple, listening and asking questions. As He grew up, Jesus Christ started teaching to those in the community. Since He was the Son of God, Jesus taught them how to inherit the

Kingdom of God through parables, which are simple stories used to teach a lesson. Parables allowed everyone to understand what Jesus was trying to teach.

Just as He taught people then, we must continue to learn from His teachings. We are all His students who want to love God and know Him so that we can live according to His Holy Word. Through these parables, not only do we hear the Truth from parables, but we are called to enter the Kingdom by putting them in to practice in our own lives.

## The Kingdom of God

The main theme of Jesus' teaching is the Kingdom of God. What do you think the "Kingdom of God" is? It is when perfect love and God's will are fulfilled. How do we



reach the "Kingdom of God?" Through Jesus Christ, our Great Teacher. He came into this world so that we would be saved. He taught us the ways while He was on earth, to grant us eternal life and bring us into the Kingdom of God.

The idea of the Kingdom of God was made clear through a number of parables. Through the parable of the hidden treasure, Jesus explains that the Kingdom of God is like a treasure in the field. When we find the treasure, we are filled with so much joy, that we would buy the whole field to protect it!

Jesus said that the Kingdom of heaven is like a **mustard seed**, which is the smallest of all seeds. But it grows as the biggest of all plants, enough for it to become a tree that nests birds. Similarly, the Kingdom of God grows from a small beginning, but can bloom into something that has a bigger importance in life.

The Kingdom of God has come through Jesus Christ. Moreover, every Christian who has been baptized is a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The fulfillment of the kingdom will be brought about with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. By learning from our Greatest Teacher and keeping His commandments, we will be able to enter His Kingdom.

## Lesson 10 - We Grow as We Worship God

**Objective: Students will examine how worship brings us closer to God.**

When we see the beauty of the world God has made, we should praise, thank, and worship Him. This is what God had wanted from His children – to be happy and be with Him forever. Worship should be seen as what we do when we are happy, and not something that God forces us to do. God loves His children, and does not force us to do anything!

We worship the One God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is three persons – individual and separate .. but He is One God. This is what we sing in the Holy Qurbana in the first hymn i.e., “*Thou art One of Persons three, Holy Trinity! Worshipped equal praised the same*” (Maneesa of Mar Severus).



The Father is the Creator of everything we see and cannot see. He is also called the first person of the Holy Trinity.

The Son is Jesus, the Word of God, who taught us how to live God’s way. He died for us to save us from death. He is also called the second person of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity and during the Feast of Pentecost we, as a Church, sing and remember everything the Holy Spirit does for us. He is inside us and helps us to love God and one another. It was the Holy Spirit who came upon the Virgin St. Mary and is the one who gave the Apostles and Prophets the strength to speak God's Word.

The most important way we worship God is through the Holy Qurbana. We praise and worship God, and also receive Jesus Christ Himself through Holy Communion. We receive Jesus Christ: God blesses the bread and wine and makes them the real Body and Blood of Christ. We cannot explain this Mystery but know that during Holy Qurbana it is the Holy Spirit that comes and makes this miracle happen!

We listen to the Epistle and Gospel readings, which teach us about Christ and guide us in living a Christian life. We hear the Gospel sermon usually from the priest, deacon or Bishop after hearing the words from the Gospel. This part of the Holy Qurbana is called the Liturgy of the Word.

We then offer the gifts of bread and wine to God (through the hands of the priest or Bishop – do you remember hearing this prayer that is said at Church?) and God makes them the Body and Blood of Christ. We then receive the Holy Communion and are joined to Christ and to each other. Christ forgives us and helps us to forgive others. We then thank God and promise to be His light in the world. This part of the Holy Qurbana is called the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

As we partake in the prayers and Sacraments of the Church, we grow closer to God. The more we are with Him in worship, the more we are able to be in communion with Him and love Him. Remember this every time we come to Church. Attending Church is one way in which we draw near to Christ, which is what God wants from us. God wants us to become closer to Him and to love Him.

*Adapted from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America using material that was authorized for educational use only.*

## Lesson 11 - We Grow Through Prayer and Fasting

***Objective: Students will examine how prayer and fasting brings us closer to God.***

We are blessed to have the air we breathe and the food we eat in order to grow physically. But what about our spiritual needs? Just as air and food are necessary for growth of our body, fasting and prayer are necessary for our spiritual growth. Through prayer and fasting, we are able to control our body and mind to focus only on God.

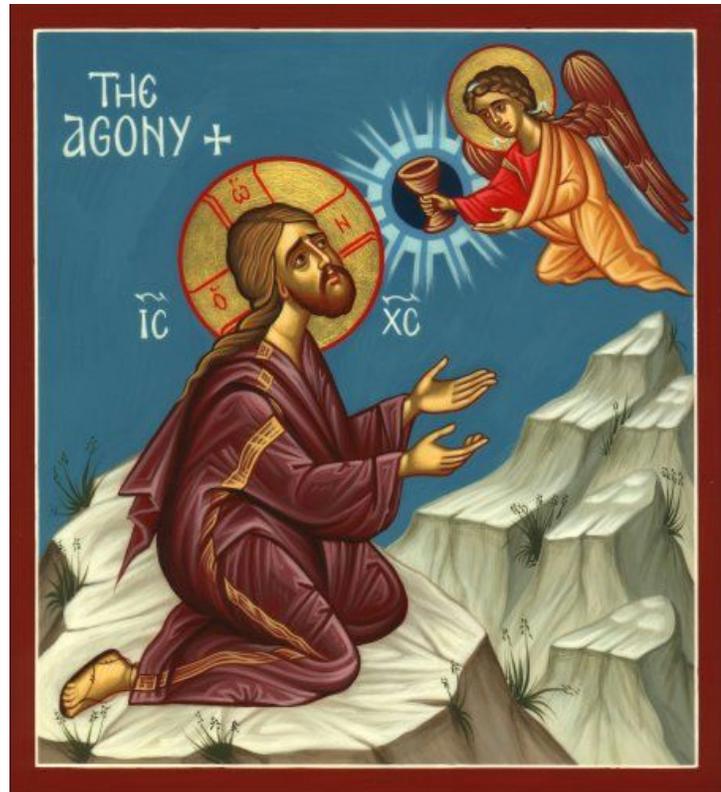
### **Prayer**

Our Greatest Teacher, Jesus Christ, spent much of His time in prayer and fasting. He taught His disciples how to pray with the Lord's Prayer. When we pray, we communicate with God by thanking Him, praising Him, and asking for His help. Jesus prayed both by Himself and with His disciples. Through His example, we must also pray alone and with others. God always answers our prayers, even if He does not give the answer we expect or want. When we do not get something we ask for from Him, remember He may have other plans for us.

In **Psalm 118:164 OSB** we read, "...seven times a day I praise Thee." Our Church's tradition of praying seven times a day is taken from this. We should be in constant prayer with God, because when we are, we are being one with God.

### **Fasting**

Jesus Christ began His public ministry after fasting for 40 days in the desert. Jesus Christ fasted in order to show that is possible for us, as humans, to fast. When we fast,



we do not eat certain foods at certain times or be more disciplined. But fasting is more than just food – we must pray even more and also control everything we say and do also. As St. John Chrysostom says, “The fast should be kept not by the mouth alone but also by the eye, the ear, the feet, the hands and all the members of the body.” We should fast from doing and saying wrong things. We should fast from what we look at or what we think. **Fasting** is controlling what we want to do and also making an extra effort to do what God wants us to do! When we don’t have the foods we are blessed with, we appreciate the Creator who allowed us to have all things.

During fasting periods, it is also important to pray and do good deeds besides fast. We should devote more time in prayer and reading of the Scriptures. In addition, we should attempt to help those in need because we are called to “love our neighbors as our own.” Practice of love becomes more important during periods of fasting. What we do during fasting periods is not limited only to that fast. Our increased focus on God should be reflected in our daily lives, whether it be a fasting period or not!

Our Church instructs us to observe fasting on Lent days to prepare for a particular feast. They are:

- Lent before Nativity - (25 days) December 1 -25 - Fast before the birth of Jesus Christ
- Lent of Nineveh - (3 days) - Fast before the Great Lent which is based on the story of Jonah but foretells us what happened to Christ.
- The Great Lent - (50 days) - Fast in preparation of the Holy Week and ending with the Resurrection of our Lord
- Lent of Apostles - (13 days) June 16-29- Fasting honoring the Holy Apostles after Pentecost
- Lent before the Dormition of the Theotokos or St. Mary, Mother of God -(15 days) August 1-15 - Fasting commemorating the falling asleep of the Mother of God, St. Mary

During the week, Wednesdays and Fridays are fasting days. We fast on Wednesday to remember the Theotokos besides the betrayal by Judas Iscariot and every Friday to remember how Christ died on the Cross. In addition, any time we receive Holy Communion, we fast in order to prepare ourselves to receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

### **Prayer Rope**

When we pray, we get distracted, and that is natural! We lose focus on God, which is perfectly normal. However, we must constantly train ourselves to re-focus on God, and

prayer ropes can help us with that. Many prayer ropes are made with 33 knots, and as we pray we should say a prayer using every knot. With a prayer rope, we are able to pray without ceasing because if our mind gets distracted, we have something to physically remind us to pray again. In the icon of St. Seraphim of Sarov, we see this Holy Father holding a prayer rope as he prays.

### **The Jesus Prayer**

With the prayer rope, we commonly use a simple prayer called the Jesus Prayer which was taught by our Holy Fathers.

*“O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God  
Have mercy on me, a sinner!”*

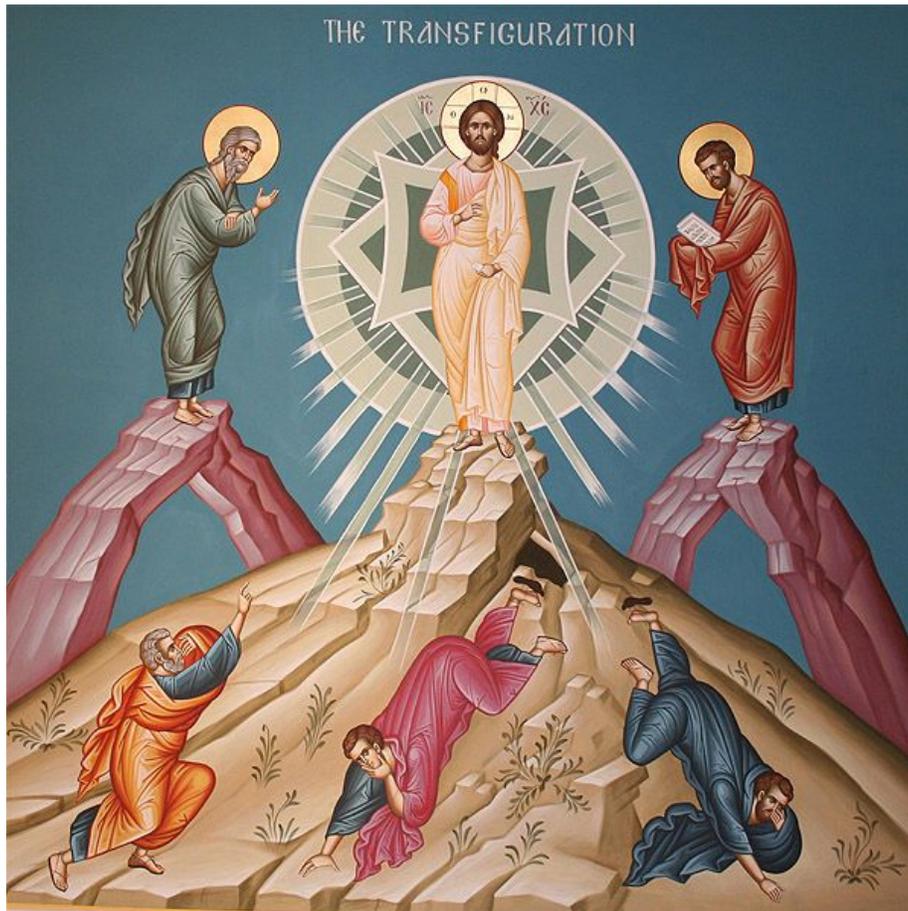
You might be surprised how small this prayer is, but there is a lot of meaning behind it. Many Holy Fathers say that prayer is just as important as breathing. We are nothing without God and this small prayer constantly reminds us of our Creator. As we repeat prayers, we tend to understand a deeper meaning, which is also why we repeat a lot of prayers in church. As said by St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, we were given the Grace of the Holy Spirit at our baptism, but this Grace can become smaller as we grow up. Repeating this prayer allows us to reignite this Grace, starting a fire that burns for God within us. Eventually, it becomes bigger and burns away any temptations we may face.



In the previous lesson, we learned about the importance of worship in becoming closer to God. In addition to worship, it is important that we pray and fast so that our bodies, minds and souls can all focus on Christ, so as to hear Him and draw near to Him.

## Lesson 12 - The Transfiguration of Our Lord

**Objective: Students will understand the significance of the Transfiguration of our Lord.**



When we pray before God, we are also in the presence of God. With prayer, worship, and sacraments, God **transfigures** (transforms) us into something that is Holy.

### **The Transfiguration**

In prayer, we experience the presence of God with us. We talk to God and listen to His words in prayer. Jesus Christ spent a lot of His time in communion with God the Father. During the day, He would preach, teach, and heal the sick. At night, He would retire to quiet places for prayer.

One day, Jesus went up to Mount Tabor. He took with Him, Peter, John, and James. As He was praying, Jesus transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and His garments became white as light. The disciples saw Moses and Elijah talking to Jesus.

Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke to Jesus about His coming death in Jerusalem. Suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them. They heard a voice from the cloud, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him!" (**Mt. 17:5**). The disciples were afraid and fell on their faces. Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." When they raised their heads, they saw Jesus only.

We celebrate the feast of Transfiguration by commemorating this event on August 6th. In the Transfiguration, the apostles see all the glory seen with the Kingdom of God through Christ. The Transfiguration of Christ proves to us that we are able to be transformed by the glory of God.

We know that iconography allows us to understand the Holy Scriptures. Look at the icon of the Transfiguration. What do you first see? We are drawn to look at Christ who is clothed in glory and majesty. Surrounding Him is also a beautiful white light. What we see here is the presence of the Holy Trinity. The white light is the Holy Spirit and God the Father proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Right next to Jesus Christ on both sides we see the Holy Fathers, Moses and Elijah. Moses stands to the left carefully holding the Ten Commandments or the Law. Elijah stands to the right of Jesus Christ representing all the prophets who told of the coming of the Messiah. Both these Holy Fathers are saints in the church that we ask for their intercession. Their presence in the Transfigurations shows how the presence of departed are real. The Holy Apostles, Peter, James, and John at the bottom are seen in a confusion. Some prostrate, or bow down and others cover their eyes because the Glory of God is so great.

It was after this event, that Christ would soon suffer on the Cross for the sake of us. This feast point us toward the Glorious Second Coming and the promise of the Kingdom of God where all creation will be transfigured and filled with the light. This feast is important for all of us because this was where Christ was shown as God who was going to die for our sins.

## Lesson 13 - The Death and Resurrection of Our Lord

***Objective: Students will walk through the hours of Christ's Death and learn of the joy of His Resurrection.***

### **Crucifixion (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19)**

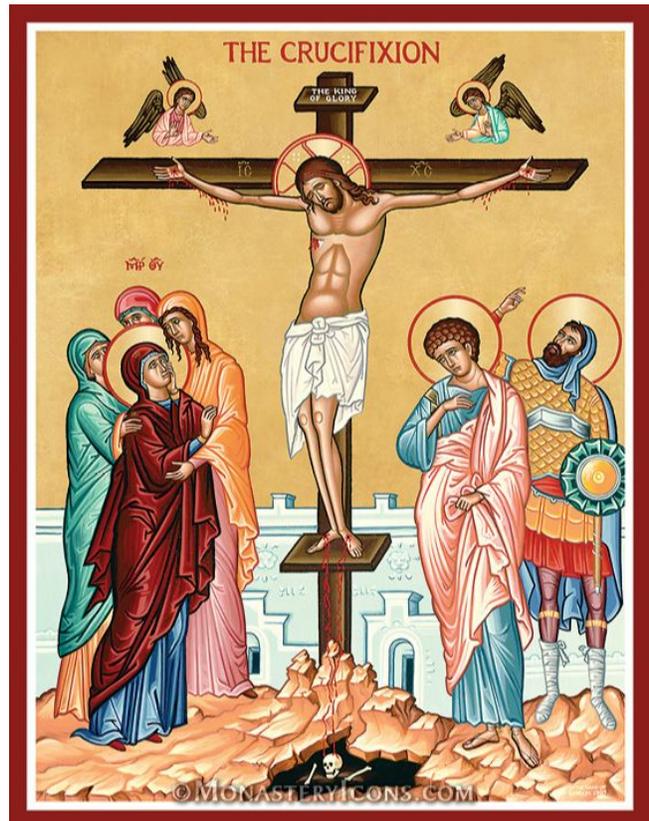
After we celebrate Christ's joyous entry in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, we see that the Church is not as bright and joyous as before. With the curtains changed to black, we are filled with sadness because of the suffering Christ is about to face. On Holy Friday, we follow Christ to the Cross remembering what happened at every hour through the Gospels.

#### **6 AM - 9 AM**

During this time, we follow the trial of Jesus Christ. Leading up to this, the Jewish high priests wanted to put Jesus Christ to death because many people loved and followed Him. He was seized, and the chief priests brought false testimony against Jesus in order to put Him to death. They bound Jesus and sent Him to Pilate, the Roman Governor. Seeing that Christ was from Galilee, Pilate sent Him to King Herod. However, King Herod sent Jesus Christ back to Pilate because he did not find any fault in Jesus.

#### **3rd Hour (9 AM)**

After the trial, we hear the decision of Christ's fate. Since Pilate could not find a fault in Jesus Christ, he knew of the practice of releasing one prisoner on festival days. He asked the crowd whether to release Jesus Christ or Barabbas, a murderer. The people cried out, "Barabbas", and they shouted and asked Pilate to crucify Jesus. Then Pilate took water, washed his hands, and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood." Pilate let Jesus to be crucified (**Matthew 27**).



### **(9 AM-12 PM)**

During this time, the soldiers put a big cross on Jesus Christ and made Him carry it. He was given a crown of thorns and many people made fun of him. A large crowd of people followed Him and the soldiers took Him to a hill called Golgotha, which means Place of the Skull. It is at this point in Church that the priest and the altar servers walk around the church carrying the Cross. The altar servers hold unlit candles showing how the “Light of the World” is walking toward His death. Also, the joyous sound of the bells and the fans (marbasas) are now silent because we are full of sorrow or sadness. We are walking with Jesus Christ as He carries His cross.

### **6th Hour (12 PM)**

At this point, we are with Jesus Christ as He was crucified there in between two robbers. On the cross, Jesus prayed to God, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (**Lk. 23:34**). It was 12 o'clock when the sun stopped shining and darkness covered the world. The curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, the rocks split, and tombs were opened.

### **9th Hour (3 PM)**

Those who stood around the cross were frightened. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (**Luke 23:46**). And having said this, He breathed His last. During this part of Holy Friday, we prostrate, or kneel down and kiss the Cross. The Church is filled with a lot of incense, denoting sadness. It is during this time that we experience the passion, crucifixion and death of our Lord and Savior and we pray with more fervor. Jesus Christ suffered and died on the Cross in order that we might live. Christ saved us from death.

### **(3 PM- 6PM)**

After Jesus died on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took Jesus' body from the cross. They bound Him in linen cloths with spices and laid Him in a new tomb where no one had ever been buried. They rolled a big stone and closed the door of the tomb. Throughout the whole service of Holy Friday, we are filled with sorrow that our Lord died. However, we have hope because we know that the Lord resurrected on the Third Day as He said.

## Resurrection

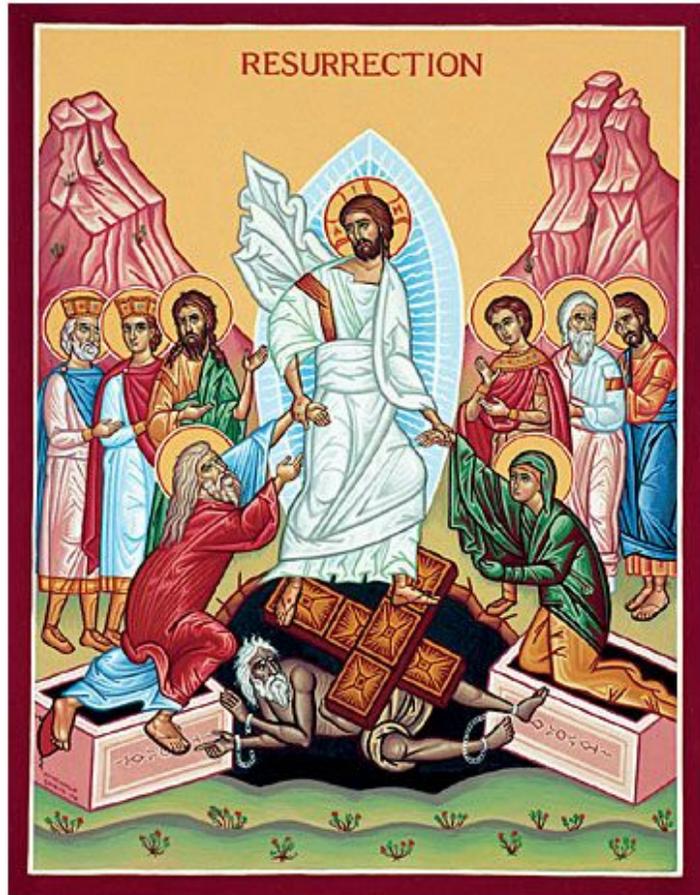
The greatest of all feasts is the Feast of the Resurrection. If this feast did not exist, we would not be Christians!

Early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene with the other Mary went to the tomb. There was a great earthquake, and an angel came down from heaven, rolled away the stone and sat on it. The angel said, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen just as He said" (Mtt. 28:5-6).

They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell the disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Rejoice!" The women worshipped Jesus, and went and told the disciples what they saw. John and Peter came to the tomb running. They went inside and saw the linen lying there. The tomb was empty.

Coming to Church and Holy Qurbana, the black curtains are now red. There are bright flowers that decorate the church. Compared to Holy Friday, the Church now shines with joy. These changes make us feel happy inside. Before Holy Qurbana begins, the priest proclaims with joy, the Good News of the Resurrection. At this moment, we should be filled with gladness. Our Lord and Master has risen from the dead! With joy, you will hear many people shout, "*Christ is Risen!*" and in response, "*Indeed, He is Risen!*"

It was through the Resurrection, the Holy Apostles spread the Good News. In the Feast of the Resurrection, we realize that death has no power over us. Jesus Christ willingly died for us and raised from the dead. Christ freed us from being slaves to sin and instead allowed us to have eternal life. Out of joy for this, we should love one another because that is the foundation of the faith in the Resurrection of Christ.

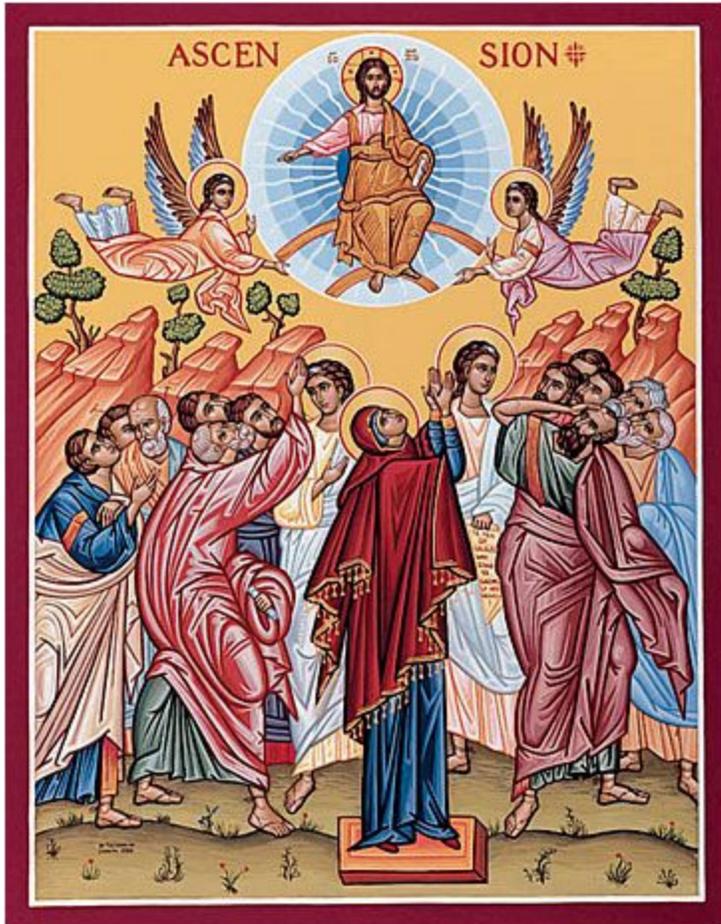


## Lesson 14 - The Ascension of our Lord and Pentecost

**Objective: Students will summarize the sequence of events taken place during the Ascension of our Lord and Pentecost.**

### Ascension

On the 40th day after His resurrection, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives with His disciples. Jesus advised them to gather together in Jerusalem where they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from God. Then He raised His hands and blessed them. As they were looking on, Jesus ascended or rose up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. They still had their eyes fixed on the sky. Then two angels suddenly stood by them and said, "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (**Acts 1:11**).



Following Easter, we do not fast for 50 days because of the joy of the Resurrection. At the Ascension we may feel a sense of parting, a separation because after it, our Lord is not with us in quite the same way any longer. Consider the

disciples. They could have been overwhelmed with grief but on the contrary, they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy." So we too should be of great joy. At the Ascension, we know Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished on earth the whole mission that He had received from the Father. But Jesus leaves us with a promise and an attitude not of regret and sadness but rather of trustful awaiting because at Pentecost the Church receives the promise of God through the Holy Spirit.

Our earthly life is but the beginning to the book. Life in heaven will be its main text, and this text is endless. Similarly, our earthly life is but a tunnel, narrow, dark—and very short—which opens onto a magnificent, sunlit landscape. We think too much of what our life now is. We do not think enough of what it will be. “Men have not heard, nor the ear has perceived, neither hath the eye seen, O God...what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.”

## Pentecost

The disciples returned to Mark’s house where the Lord had the Passover meal with His disciples. Ten days after Jesus’ ascension, on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were praying together. Suddenly, a sound came from heaven like a rush of a mighty wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

And there appeared to them, tongues of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. The people from different lands who had assembled in Jerusalem marveled when they heard the disciples speaking in several languages.

On this day, the Church was established or formed. Each of the Holy Apostles received tongues so that they would spread the Holy Gospel. Each Apostle went to different parts around the world, St. Andrew to Greece, St. Mark to Alexandria, and our patron saint, St. Thomas to India. After living and seeing Jesus Christ, they received the Holy Spirit, which allowed them to spread the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ.



## Lesson 15 - We Grow as Orthodox Christians

***Objective: Students will examine how Orthodox Christians grow as members of the Church.***

God's image is in every person. Through Holy Baptism we become Christians and members of the Church. Even babies who are baptized are full members. They are sealed with the Holy Spirit and receive the Holy Qurbana – the precious and life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the person being baptized is a baby, the parents or close relatives or friends are asked to be godparents for the new baptized child, to help raise him or her as a Christian. Blessed water and special oil are important symbols used during Baptism.

Even after Baptism, we do sin. We might sin purposefully and we might sin by accident. But God always forgives us if we say sorry and we repent and admit our wrongs. We should sincerely try not to do the same thing again. When we sin against each other, we should ask for forgiveness.

No matter how old we are, we should love and honor everyone. Many people older than us, like parents, priests, and teachers, help us to grow as a Christian. Being a Christian means being like Jesus Christ, and the Church teaches us how to be like Him. God has given each of us different talents that we can use in our own ways to serve Him and each other.

In the Orthodox Church, there are many people who have been called by God to lead and serve including the bishop who leads a **Diocese** (Metropolis, or a group of parishes in the same area). The bishop of our Diocese of South-West America is His Grace Alexios Mar Eusebius. We call our Bishop "His Grace" because we honor and love whom God has chosen to shepherd our Church, and it is only through the grace of God that he has the strength to do so.

The priest is the leader of a parish and serves because a bishop cannot be in every parish in a Diocese at the same time. The managing committee and other spiritual leaders within a parish help the priest make decisions as servants. Every member of the Church is also a leader. Everyone in the Church, from the Bishop to each individual member, are equal. Together we are One Body, that of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, we each have our own talent and role that we play and serve. During Holy Baptism we receive

the Holy Chrism, which is the seal of the Holy Spirit. This strengthens our ability to use our talents to serve Jesus and the Church in our own ways.

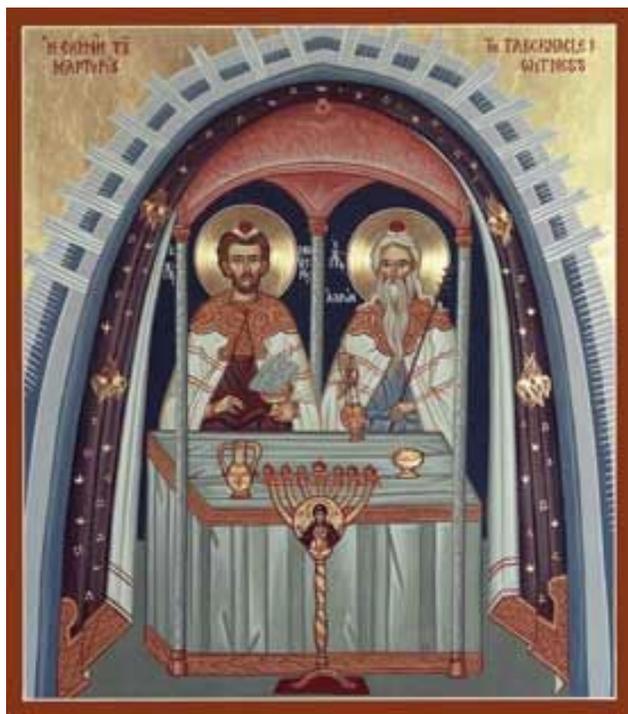
The Saints of our Church have taught us, through their example, that faith in Christ can bring great courage and help to the poor, and Christ's love and unity to everyone. Missionaries in our Church travel to other places and spread the Gospel. Different Orthodox Churches may have different customs, but faith basically is the same.

There is so much that goes into being an Orthodox Christian. We are born into this world, baptized and enter into the Holy Church. From there, we begin a journey within the Church as a member of His Body. We have so much to learn and grow as we walk this Christian journey. It is important to continue to ask questions about our faith and to grow in our knowledge of Christ and the Church so we can grow in our relationship with our Lord.

*Adapted from materials from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America that has been authorized for educational use only.*

## Lesson 16 - Holy Qurbana

**Objective: Students will understand the significance of the Qurbana, in relation to Biblical references.**



### Aaron and the Tabernacle (Exodus, chapters 33-40)

When we come to Holy Qurbana every Sunday, we notice that the altar is beautifully built with colors and designs. The first Holy Qurbana was celebrated by Jesus Christ, the High Priest, but He did not celebrate the Holy Qurbana in the kind of altar we know of. At the last supper, He gave His Body and Blood in just an ordinary room. It is in the Old Testament that we can recognize the altar that we see every Sunday.

### Old Testament

At Mount Sinai, it was through Moses, that God instructed how to build an altar or tabernacle so that He would be in their

presence. God revealed to Moses how to make and furnish the Tabernacle. Moses built a tent called the Tent of Meeting outside the camp for the people to come together and worship God. Inside the tent was a pillar of cloud above and it was inside where God spoke to Moses.

The people brought offerings of gold and silver to furnish the inside of the tent. The Ark of the Testimony was made to keep the two tablets of stone that had the Ten Commandments. On top of this was the Mercy Seat, which was made up of pure gold with two gold cherubs spreading out their wings over the Mercy Seat. A beautiful lamp stand was placed on the side. An altar of incense and an altar of burnt offering. Also, there would be a golden jar of **manna**, or the bread from heaven, that was given to the Israelites in the desert. The entire tabernacle was purified by the anointing of oil.

### Aaron and the Royal Priesthood

Aaron and his sons were specially set apart for the ministry of priesthood and were also anointed with oil. Aaron's authority as a priest was seen through his staff or rod. Also,

Aaron and his sons wore holy garments called “Ephod,” which was made of gold and twined linen. Along with his garments, Aaron also had a rod through which many miracles occurred.

## New Testament

After learning of the Old Testament description of the tabernacle, you are probably thinking that this is not the altar that you might be familiar with. What you read is actually what you see in the altar, you just might not recognize it. It was through Jesus Christ that the Old Testament was fulfilled. After the Last Supper, a new covenant (agreement) was made through the body and blood of Christ.

- Instead of the manna they kept in the tabernacle, the **Body and Blood of Christ** is now used as the Bread of Life.
- The golden jar that held the manna can be now seen as the **Theotokos** or God Bearer. She held the Bread of Life in her womb so that He might be born to save our sins.
- Instead of having the Ark of the Covenant which proclaims the laws for the Israelites, the **Holy Gospel** proclaims the Good News to all believers.
- Aaron’s rod is now the hand Cross that the priest uses to bless us.
- The Mercy Seat is now the **Theotokos**, or Mother of God who holds Christ. St. Mary, as through her the Wisdom of God and the Word (our Lord Jesus Christ) became flesh. This is why Orthodox Churches today usually see icons of Baby Jesus seated with St. Mary, the Mother God as seen in the icon below.

We can see that the Holy Qurbana we celebrate and participate in today, every Sunday and on special feast days, is the same Qurbana that was celebrated for many, many years. We must take the time to prepare ourselves for this holy sacrifice whenever we come to participate in the Holy Qurbana.

