

The Church Celebrates

EASTER

UNIT
4
LESSON
THREE

From Our Hearts to God

Lord, sometimes we pray for things to help us enjoy life. But we thank you today for life, so that we can enjoy many things. Following your ways can make us happy and wise. You make it possible for us to live forever with God. Thank you! Amen.

MY WORLD

Time for a look back. Go to Lesson Two of this unit and write one question that you can ask the class. Write the answer here as well:

Question:



Answer:

GOD'S GUIDING WORDS

Christ died to free us from sin once and for all. An innocent person died for those who are guilty. Christ did this to bring you to God...

1 Peter 3:18



Getting Closer to God

Jesus has been compared to a rock. He is the rock that became the cornerstone of the new relationship with God. When a building is being erected, the cornerstone is the first stone laid in the corner where two walls begin and form the first part of the new building. Later, it would be placed anywhere but was thought to be the most important stone, often marked with names and dates to dedicate it.

God was building a new creation. Jesus holds it together for us.

Put Jesus' name in the cornerstone then put your name and the names of your family and people you know in church. These are all people who are part of the Church.



RESPONDING IN FAITH

Jesus, thank you for making it possible for me to be with you forever! Amen.

Our Armenian Way

During the days before and after Easter, the Armenian Church has many special services that give us the opportunity to be with God in a remarkable way. Celebrating Poon Paregentan, attending Lenten services, rejoicing on Palm Sunday, going to the Holy Week services, renewing ourselves at Easter, commemorating the Ascension of the Lord to Heaven, and remembering that the followers of Christ started the Church at Pentecost, are all of the ways we Armenian Christians remember what Easter means.

OUR SALVATION HISTORY AND THE EASTER CYCLE

- God made heaven and earth and everything on the earth.
- He created all living things. In the story of Adam and Eve we see how the first people enjoyed a life of direct contact with God in the Garden of Eden which was an earthly paradise.
- We celebrate the beauty and perfection of that paradise with the Feast of Poon Paregentan.
- God told Adam and Eve they could have everything there except they must not eat the fruit of one tree. Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God. Eve and Adam ate from the *Tree of the Knowledge of Right and Wrong*. God punished Adam and Eve by sending them out of the Garden of Eden so they could not eat from the *Tree of Life*.
- **The Expulsion** of Adam and Eve is the first story of the **Sundays of Great Lent**.
- The Bible tells us how we can get back to a new paradise – heaven.
- The Second Sunday of Lent tells the story of the **Prodigal Son** (Luke 15:11-32). He leaves his wonderful home and father to live life in his own way. He soon finds himself without money and without friends doing a job he hates. He realizes he made the wrong choice. He decides to go back and ask for a job with his father because he knew having the worst job at his father's was better than the terrible life he was living. On his way back his father sees him on the road and welcomes him because it was as if his son had died and now was alive again. The story teaches us if we truly are sorry for the wrong things we do and the wrong choices we make and we want to put things right again, God welcomes us.



- The Third Sunday of Lent tells the story of the **Steward** (Luke 16:1-13) who was trusted to do a good job managing his employer's business. He did not and when the employer demanded an accounting of the business, the steward went to all those who owed his boss and made deals with them to collect some of what they owed. He knew his boss would fire him anyway, but he hoped he could get a job with one of the people with whom he had made a deal. Jesus tells us that if we can be clever like the steward to provide for ourselves on earth, we should also try hard to live a life that would please God. God hopes we will do right things and make right choices.
- The Fourth Sunday of Lent tells the story of the **Judge** (Luke 18:1-8) who would not bother with a widow's problem. The woman was persistent and went to him every day asking for his help. Finally the judge helped her just to get rid of her, not because he wanted to be fair. Jesus teaches us that we should always pray because God listens to our prayers and answers them fairly. He is a loving God. He cares for us and wants us to talk to him in prayer.
- The Fifth Sunday of Lent is called **Advent or the Second Coming**. The word advent means "coming." This day reminds us that Jesus will come again and that we need to always be prepared for him by living by God's rules.
- Holy Week starts with Palm Sunday which celebrates Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and continues with many others that recall the Last Supper, Jesus' lonely prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, his crucifixion, and burial.
- Easter is the way Jesus opened Paradise to us again. He did this by his death and resurrection. JESUS IS THE TREE OF LIFE. When we receive Holy Communion we eat the fruit of that tree. Adam and Eve were not allowed, but we are!
- The Feast of the Ascension commemorates Jesus rising to heaven to make a place for us.
- The Feast of Pentecost celebrates the birth of the Church - us! All those who believe in Jesus are the Church.





Taking a **Closer** Look

An Armenian cross often has leaves, branches, and fruit at its base, reminding us that Jesus is the Tree of Life.



Time to Celebrate

Pop a balloon and explain how the picture inside relates to the Easter story.



FAMILY CORNER

Sharing Our Faith

Our lesson this week presented the Easter Cycle from Poon Paregentan to Pentecost. The children reviewed the entire cycle, created their own “cross of life” and popped balloons to find a special Easter Cycle remembrance inside.

Living Our Faith

1. At home this week, gather up the family’s shoes and line them up creating the “steps to Easter and the steps to Church.” Write the following words on index cards or pieces of paper and on the back of the card put the number of that card. Work with your fourth grade student to put the cards in the shoes in the correct order according to the story. Then check the numbers on the back of the cards to see if your child was right on target. If not, work together to get the cards in order. (If you don’t want to use your shoes, cut the index cards in the shape of feet – perhaps tracing your child’s foot.)

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Poon Paregentan | 8. Palm Sunday |
| 2. Great Lent Begins | 9. The Last Supper |
| 3. Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve | 10. Washing of the Disciples Feet |
| 4. Sunday of the Prodigal Son | 11. Crucifixion |
| 5. Sunday of the Steward | 12. Resurrection |
| 6. Sunday of the Judge | 13. Ascension |
| 7. Sunday of Advent | 14. Pentecost |

the cross, let's just bow our heads and sign ourselves with the cross.”

8. Read or teach **Time to Celebrate**. Distribute portions of the *anooshaboor*; of course, if anyone is reluctant, don't force it. Tell children that the main ingredients of this traditional Armenian Christmas pudding are apricots, raisins, nuts, and wheat.
9. Conclude class with **Responding in Faith**, read aloud together. 10 min.

Evaluating Your Lesson

What went well? Why?

What did not go well? How can it be changed for next year?

Extending the Lesson

If your church has stained glass pictures or icons of any of the Five Major Feast Days, take the students into church to see them. You might want to arrange with their parents that you will bring the students to church after services for them to look at the windows or icons and be dismissed to their parents from church.

The Church Celebrates Easter



Key Concepts

1. Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, the foundational event of our faith.
2. Easter is the most important holy day of the church calendar.
3. The Easter cycle encompasses Poon Paregentan to Pentecost all of which emphasize the importance and meaning of Christ.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Conduct a self-review of last week's lesson.
2. Explore the concepts of Jesus as cornerstone and tree of life.
3. Review the events and lessons of Great Lent, Holy Week, Easter, the Ascension, and Pentecost.
4. Draw an Armenian cross.
5. Participate in an activity to review and order the events commemorated in the Easter Cycle.

Materials Needed

A large rock

A branch with leaf or flower buds on it

Drawing paper and crayons or markers

Sixteen inflated balloons, into which each Bible verse from the sheet at the back of this manual has been inserted.

Procedure

1. Pray **From Our Hearts to God**. Then ask students to do the activity in **My World**. Review questions and throw in a few of your own!
2. Read **God's Guiding Words** together. Ask students to underline the words that help us understand why Jesus Christ died for us (*Christ did this to bring you to God*). 10 min.
3. Bring out the large rock and ask the students: "Why do people build with rocks?" (They are strong, they last a long time, they don't require maintenance, they are not expensive, they are easy to get, etc. - accept all reasonable answers.) Read **Getting Closer to God**. After the mention of the word "cornerstone" in the second sentence, ask students to define the word. After some guesses, proceed with the reading which provides a definition. Then have them write in their names and names of loved ones and people they know in the church. 10 min.
4. Read or "teach" the first paragraph under **Our Armenian Way** to the students then have them take turns reading each bulleted text. You can have students come to the front and read; feel free to discuss and ask questions periodically. If you have time, or would like to, turn to the actual Scripture story. Ask if any of your students have participated in Holy Week services such as the Washing of the Feet (*Vodunluva*). If some have, let them tell about the experience. 10 min.
5. Bring out the branch with buds on it. Ask the students: "What happens to these buds in the spring?" (They open up, they become flowers or leaves, they grow.) Say: "Remember when God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden he wanted to prevent them from eating from the Tree of Life because that would give them everlasting life; God did not think people were worthy of this yet. But now Jesus has made it possible after our death to have everlasting life with God in heaven. So Jesus

can be compared to the Tree of Life. This branch is like Jesus himself, who brought new life to the world. It is also each one of us, since we can flower and blossom when we live in Christ.”

6. Direct the students to look at the cross pictured in this section and note that the base ends of the cross depict life. Have a student read **Taking a Closer Look**. Give each student a paper and crayons or markers and have them draw an Armenian cross that suggests a “tree of life.” Tape the crosses on the board and then use them for a bulletin board display. 15 min.
7. For **Time to Celebrate**, tell the students that you have a bag of balloons for them to pop in celebration of Easter. You’ll need to organize this according to class size. Have students select a balloon. Say: “Pop the balloon by stepping on it and find the Bible verse that is inside. After all the balloons are popped, you will share what event or story from Lent and Easter is behind this verse and then we will tape them on the board in order.”
8. Close with the prayer in **Responding in Faith**. 15 min.



Key Concepts

1. The Transfiguration commemorates the appearance of Jesus in his glorified form with the prophet Elijah and Moses on Mt. Tabor, recalling the fulfillment of the Law and Prophecy in Jesus.
2. This revelation of Jesus to his three disciples, Peter, James, and John, gave them and us a preview of the resurrection, heaven and God’s eternal power.
3. The Assumption of St. Mary emphasizes her importance to God and the salvation story; only she and the prophet Elijah were taken bodily into heaven.
4. The Feast of Assumption is celebrated with the blessing of grapes as grapes are propagated by the vine rather than the grape seed (just as Jesus was brought into being as a human being through the Holy Spirit).

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review the two major feast days of Transfiguration and Assumption.
2. Read the Bible account of the Transfiguration.
3. Explore the concepts of Jesus as the “true Vine” and the meaning behind the blessing of grapes.
4. Learn about the Assumption of St. Mary.
5. Create a yarn “grapevine” with grapes and leaves describing what they’ve learned about Jesus and what he has taught them.
6. Share a snack of grapes, bread, and grape juice.

Materials Needed

Bibles marked to Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13, Luke 9:28-36. Use several types of Bibles giving the easiest to read to those students who have difficulty reading. This can be optional; see procedure #2

The “Importance of the Transfiguration” from the Appendix, one for each student; see procedure # 3

A length of green yarn; copies of the bunch of grapes and the grape leaf from the Appendix, one for each student; see procedure #5

Pencils, pens, markers

Grape juice and bread for all the students

Note to the Teacher

Next week, the children will be learning the blessing refrain, **Amen. Alleluia.**

If you are not comfortable singing, plan for a parent or choir member to help teach the students.

You might also want extra help with the craft.

If you’re doing next week’s lesson (The Exaltation of the Holy Cross) on the actual Sunday of the feast, plan on attending the brief service at the end of liturgy. Advise parents as well. Since the Exaltation falls in early to mid-September, you might not yet have Sunday School, in which case, schedule the lesson shortly after.

Procedure

1. Say the prayer together in **From Our Hearts to God**.
2. Give each student a Bible with one of the passages about the Transfiguration bookmarked and noted on the bookmark. Use different Bibles if you have a variety available to you as some mention the name of the mountain (Mt. Tabor) and some do not. *If it is too difficult to have a variety of Bibles, just write the Bible references on the board and assign students*