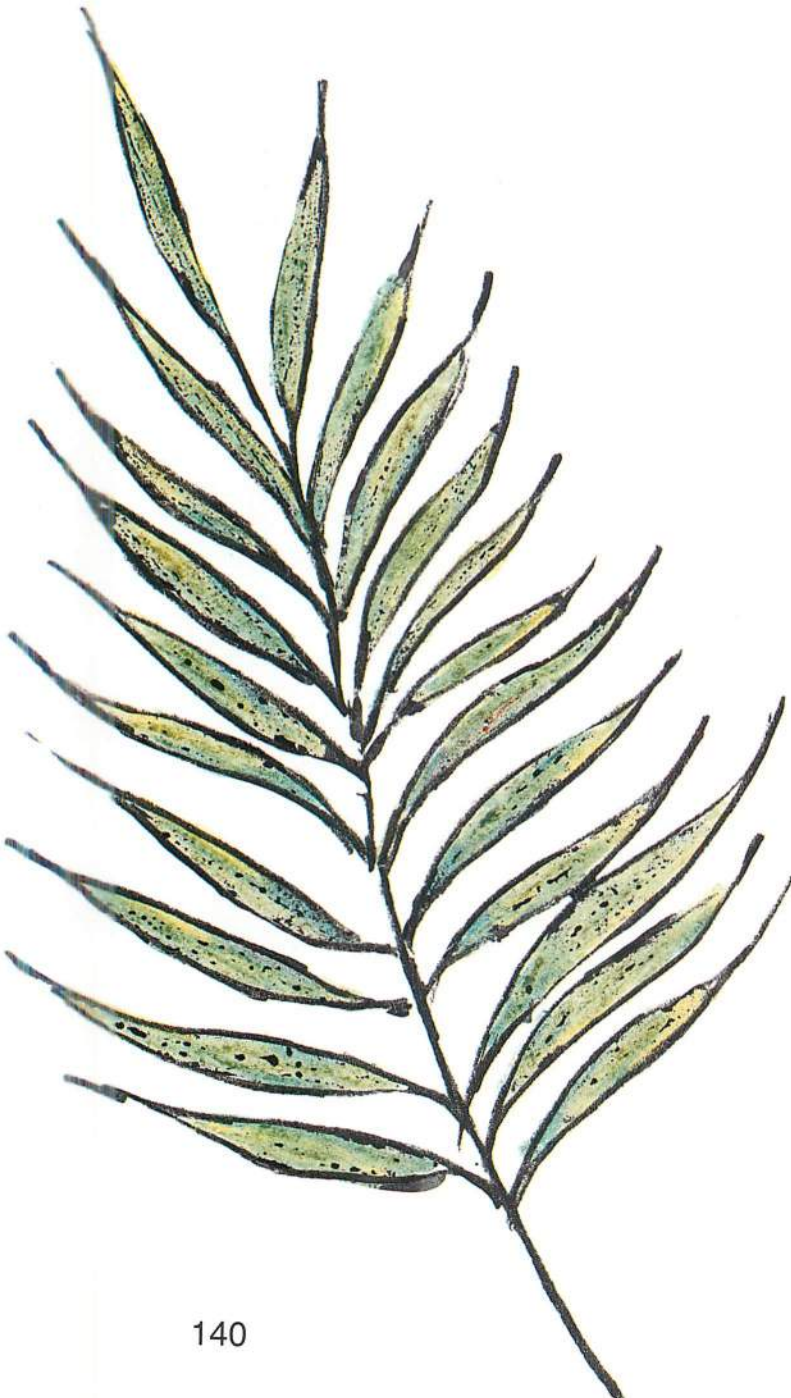


Lent and Holy Week

I Corinthians 1:20-24



Purpose

Lent and Holy Week are the season set aside by the Church for self-examination and self-appraisal, to strengthen our character and to renew our Christian faith and our dedication to Christ. The Church invites us to stop busy social schedules, and to use our time to reflect upon and renew our spiritual life.

Because of our isolation and non-communication and the influence of the world, we are not experiencing the fullness of human life that we are capable of when we express Christian love. We have hang-ups and problems of all kinds, fears and worries, bad relationships, weaknesses, and potentialities that grind down or key up our feelings; or we just tolerate all sorts of things because we feel helpless to do anything about them. This is what it is to be in sin, in darkness. Sinfulness means more than telling lies, cheating, stealing, and all the obvious sins. We do commit sins and it is important, if not more so, to recognize the waste of human life which is our real sinfulness. We are not created just to squander our lives in utter mediocrity. This is not what God has promised us, what he wants for us. Life is not meant to be a rat race or the dullness of endless nights in front of a TV screen. The first step in

achieving the fullness of life promised by Jesus is to acknowledge the poverty we have settled for, to allow that our lives are not all that they might be.

Church's Emphasis

The church brings in a most stirring and moving perspective to our faith as we go through Lent and our Lord's final week with us on earth.

In the Armenian Church, the Sunday preceding the first Sunday of Lent is "Poon Paregentan," the day of good living or carnival day which is comparable to the Mardi Gras held on Ash Wednesday in New Orleans, Louisiana. In the Armenian Church, the day commemorates the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and reminds us that man was originally created and is destined to eternal and endless joy with God. Thereafter, each Sunday in Lent reminds us of a basic Christian truth for personal meditation and action.

Focus

In this unit we will focus on the services held during Holy Week and Soorp Badarak which covers the most important events in the Christian Church. During Holy Week, the emphasis is no longer on the Christian truths dealing with our relationship with God but on Christian truths which reveal what our Lord endured with love for us and for our salvation. We experience the last acts of the Passion of our Lord. These special services invite us to know and to experience Christ in a very personal way and in expectant faith for the power and love of Christ to transform our daily lives. To experience Jesus in our lives is to experience the fullness of life. Our sorrow because of what he suffered is changed to joy because of why he suffered.

We seek satisfaction in a variety of ways, from situations, things, people; and

even after we discover that these "saviors" really do not satisfy, we keep returning to them. God has made us in such a way that we are meant to live in loving communication with himself through Jesus (John 14:6).

During the Holy Week services, we are asked to choose for or against accepting the love of the risen Lord. He was "foolishness" for the Greeks, a "stumbling block" for the Jews and he continues to be the pivotal point of decision. Being a follower of Christ is not a matter of birth or participation in rituals and services, but of decision. This is the decision of faith.

Conclusion

The Holy Week services call forth from us not an emotional, fleeting spiritual experience but a commitment to Christ; to accept his love and accept him as Lord of our lives. To experience what salvation means is to experience the intimate love of Jesus and to accept that Jesus personally loves each of us. This is what the special services of Holy Week are designed to convey in a compelling way by our Church Fathers who were exemplary in their love of the Lord.



SUNDAYS OF LENT

The Sundays of Lent following "Poon

Paregentan" are based on Bible scriptures. Look up the following references and write the Christian truth each reference conveys:

Sunday of Expulsion (Genesis 3:1-24)

Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

Sunday of the Steward (Luke 16:1-13)

Sunday of the Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

Sunday of Advent (Mark 13:1-37)

At-Home-Work

I *JOURNAL ENTRY.* Read "Heresies" and respond to questions.

II *Read and study next week's lesson.*

III *Go over today's lesson and Bible readings with your family throughout the weeks.*

Monday

I Corinthians 1:20-24, John 14:6

Tuesday

Genesis 3:1-24

Wednesday

Luke 15:11-32

Thursday

Luke 16:1-13

Friday

Luke 18:1-8

Saturday

Mark 13:1-37

Unit VII: Badarak and Special Services _____

Session 1—Lent and Holy Week

Key Concepts

1. During Lent, the Church focuses upon our relationship with God.
2. During Holy Week, the Church focuses upon the suffering and love of our Lord for us.
3. The Holy Week services call on us to renew our commitment to Christ.

Objectives

Students will

1. Read and discuss Bible readings of Lenten Sundays with a partner.
2. Make journal entries.

Background for Teacher

Scripture and Holy Tradition speak to us repeatedly about the Second Coming. They give us no grounds for supposing that, through a steady advance in "civilization," the world will grow gradually better until mankind succeeds in establishing God's kingdom on earth. The Christian view of world history is entirely opposed to this kind of evolutionary optimism. What we are taught to expect are disasters in the world of nature, increasingly destructive warfare between men, bewilderment and heresy among those who call themselves Christians. (See especially Matthew 24:3-27.) This period of tribulation will culminate in the appearance of "the man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3-4) or Antichrist, who, according to the interpretation traditional in the Orthodox Church, will not be Satan himself, but a human being, a genuine man, in whom all the forces of evil will be concentrated and who will for a time hold the entire world under his sway. The brief reign of Antichrist will be abruptly terminated by the Second Coming of the Lord, this time not in a humble way, as at his birth in Bethlehem, but "sitting on the right hand of power, and drawing near upon the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26:64) So the course of history will be brought to a sudden and dramatic end, through direct intervention from the divine realm.

The precise time of the Second Coming is hidden from us: "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father has determined by his own decision." (Acts 1:7) The Lord will come "as a thief in the night." (1 Thess. 5:2) This means that, while avoiding speculation about the exact date, we are to be always prepared and expectant. "What I say unto you I say unto all: Watch." (Mark 13:37) For,

whether the End comes late or soon in our human time-scale, it is always imminent, always spiritually close at hand. We are to have in our hearts a sense of urgency. *The Orthodox Way*

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- Copy of *The Orthodox Way* by Kallistos Ware (Epilogue: God as Eternity)

Procedure

1. Take time to talk to students as they arrive. Begin by asking a student to read I Corinthians 1:20-24 as an opening meditation.

Review last week's conclusions on the moral issue of the Turks and suffering from a Christian point of view.

Have students share journal entries on the poem by Baruir Sevag. (10 min.)

2. Tell class: "Today we will discuss the Church's focus in her services during Lent and Holy Week, and the response it requires from each of us.

"We will study the unit on *Badarak and Special Services* during these weeks before Easter (modify, if this is the case) and we will plan to attend Holy Week services together as a class on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, to experience together the last days on earth of our Lord." (If possible, arrange for rides. And arrange to meet after each service for thirty minutes to discuss the personal significance and experience of each student. Appropriate Lenten refreshments would add to the sense of fellowship.)

"At the end of your lesson is an exercise entitled, 'Sundays of Lent.'" (Pair off students and have them read and discuss the Bible readings and write the Christian truth each conveys.)

Summary for the Teacher

- The Sunday of Expulsion—The banishment of Adam and Eve from Paradise as a result of their sin and disobedience (the sad consequences of sin).
 - Parable of the Prodigal Son—The love and forgiveness of God for the repentant sinner.
 - The Sunday of the Steward—The wise use of earthly things to insure our spiritual growth and eternal life.
 - The Sunday of the Judge—The importance of prayer in our Christian life and growth.
 - The last Sunday before Palm Sunday is called the Sunday of Advent—The events connected with the Second Coming of Christ. (15 min.)
3. Have each team report back to the class. (5 min.)
4. Explain to the class: "The last Sunday which tells

about the events connected with the Second Coming of Christ is covered in the last chapter of the book, *The Orthodox Way*, by Father Kallistos Ware." (If you have a copy of the book, xerox the page in question and read in class—Epilogue, God as Eternity. Or read from the chapter included in "Background for Teacher.") Allow for discussion. (5 min.)

5. Tell students: "Our journal entry today, which we will do at the end of class, also goes along with the Scripture reading for the Sunday of Advent on the Second Coming of Christ."

Ask: "What is the emphasis placed on the scriptural readings for the Sundays during Lent? Where is the emphasis placed during Holy Week? What is the aim of our Church fathers in arranging the Sundays of Lent and the special services of Holy Week? Do we have our personal responsibility in our own Christian renewal? When we write in our journals, think of the heresies that we hold as individuals and pray that we will open our hearts more fully to the love that Christ offers." (10 min.)

6. Begin journal entries, "Heresies," and have students share them with one another, time permitting. (15 min.)

7. Remind them to share their Bible readings and lesson with their families, and read and study next week's lesson.

Session 2—Turunpatzek

Key Concepts

1. *Turunpatzek* expresses our desire for the grace and love of God, now, before it is too late.
2. All of our rituals are scripturally based and are as meaningful as the personal commitment they inspire.

Objectives

Students will

1. Read and discuss the Parable of the Ten Virgins.
2. Sing the hymn "Shenorhia Mez Der" (see procedure #3).
3. Make journal entry.
4. Attend the Turunpatzek service, if possible.

Background for Teacher

Our commitment to Christ and the Christian life is a personal decision and one that is not to be delayed. Let us consider a couple of impediments that might stand in the way of our personal commitment.

Language might be an impediment. Gradually, many parts of our services are being translated into English, we should avail ourselves of the translations that have been made.

The sacraments, worship services, and rituals are the buttresses which support the Church.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we feel a part of what is going on and feel that the priests, deacons and choir are speaking or singing the words that are in our hearts, which we affirm with our personal, "Amen."

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- Copies of music for *Shenorhia Mez Der*

Procedure

1. Take time to talk to students as they arrive. Begin by asking a student to read Psalm 118:1, 5, 6, 8, 14, 17-19 as an opening meditation.

Tell students: "Last week we talked about the meaning of Lenten Sundays and of Holy Week services. (You might wish to review last week's readings.) We also talked about the Second Coming of Christ. Today we will discuss the service of *Turunpatzek* and the response it requires from each of us.

"We will consider the questions: Who will enter God's Kingdom? Who lives in the Kingdom of God? What is the Church? Is she necessary? And we will learn the hymn of the Wise Virgins, based on the parable told by Jesus; but first let's read the parable and do the exercise at the end of our lesson, 'The Fate of the Unprepared.'" (Have a volunteer read Matthew 25:1-13.)

Have students work in pairs. (25 min.)

2. Have a sharing time for the class when they come back together. (10 min.)

3. Spend ten minutes learning the hymn "Shenorhia Mez Der." (Arrange to have a choir member teach the hymn; photocopy music for students beforehand.) (10 min.)

4. Spend remaining time on journal entries, "Personal Commitment." Students can share entries next Sunday. (15 min.)

5. Remind them to share their Bible readings and lesson with their families, and read and study next week's lesson.

Session 3—Khavaroom

Key Concepts

1. Khavaroom portrays the betrayal, arrest, torture, passion, and trial of our Lord.
2. Christian joy overcomes all sorrow.

Objectives

Students will

1. Sing "Shenorhia Mez Der."