

Unit Four Celebrating Jesus* The Church Year

Exaltation of the Holy Cross



We Pray Together

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for our new Second Grade Sunday School year! Open our hearts and minds so we may grow to love and know you more.


Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyn Srpo. Amen.


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Let's Discover

Circle the best answer.

1. When you see a  what does it remind you of?
a. Easter b. Memorial Day c. Halloween

2. When you see a  what does it remind you of?
a. Christmas b. Thanksgiving c. 4th of July

3. When you see a  what does it remind you of?
a. Valentine's Day b. St. Patrick's Day c. Christmas

4. When you see a  what does it remind you of?
a. Labor Day b. Jesus c. Halloween





Our Story

Chris was so thrilled when his parents told him about their upcoming trip to Armenia. He was very excited to see everything that he had read about in Sunday School. He couldn't wait to see Mt. Ararat, Etchmiadzin, St. Gregory's Pit (Khor Virab), and to hear Armenian spoken wherever he went. And of course the delicious food and music would be a treat!



As they were touring Armenia, Chris saw many, many old and beautiful churches. Chris also noticed many stones with fancy cross carvings. They were everywhere, at the museums, parks, churches and open fields. Chris asked Masis, their tour guide, "What are all those stones with crosses called?"

"Oh, those are called khachkars. A khach is a cross like the one around your neck and "kar" means stone. These khachkars are unique, because Armenians are the only people to make them in this way. The cross is a very important symbol for all of us, it is a sign of our faith in Jesus Christ." "Wow! That's so cool!" said Chris. Masis then told the family, "On Sunday, we are going to Etchmiadzin and participate in the Feast Day celebration called the Exaltation of the Holy Cross or *Khachveratz*. A

special procession is led by the priest with the cross that is decorated with basil, a symbol of royalty. During the procession, the four corners of the church are blessed. You are all fortunate to be here during this joyous feast day. Each of you will receive some blessed basil to take with you." Chris and his parents agreed that this was definitely the trip of a lifetime!



God's Word

Then Jesus said to all the people: "If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up my cross each day and follow me."

Based on Luke 9:23



We Learn About God

When we see or make the sign of the cross, we should always think of Jesus. He is at the very center of our lives and when we live that way our faith, hope, and love grow and get stronger! When we wear a cross around our neck, it's not just a piece of jewelry, but a message to everyone saying, "Hey, I belong to Jesus. I follow him. I try to be like him!"

What does the cross mean to me?

Our Armenian Way

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is always celebrated on the Sunday closest to September 14th. There were some important times when the cross of Jesus was raised up and honored. One that we remember on the Exaltation is when, many hundreds of years ago, the True Cross was brought through Armenia on its way back to Jerusalem and exalted before the happy crowds. On the Feast Day, the cross is held high in a procession through the church. The priest and deacons stop at each of the four corners of the church to perform a blessing. The special service and procession is called in Armenian "antasdan" which can be done at other times of the year as well.

Faith Word

Exaltation

To praise highly, to raise up, to make important. We exalt the cross, we praise the cross.

Blessing the four corners of the church is a way of blessing all four directions of the world with the holy cross. How well do you know the Armenian Cross?

CIRCLE **TRUE** OR **FALSE** (T OR F)

1. Armenian crosses show the body of Jesus. T or F
2. All crosses used in our church have been blessed. T or F
3. Armenian churches are designed in the shape of a cross. T or F
4. The Armenian cross often features vines, grapes and wheat which remind us of life. T or F
5. There is only one celebration of the cross in our church. T or F
6. Babies are given crosses by their godparents when they are baptized. T or F
7. The cross was never used as a punishment. T or F



Handmade With Love

Decorate an Armenian Cross

For My Family

Sharing Our Faith

In today's lesson, the first of the Second Grade Sunday School year, your child played a fun "get-to-know-you" game with his/her classmates. In connection with this month's major feast day, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, students were introduced to the most important symbol of our faith, the cross. Jesus tell us that in order to follow him, we must put everything aside, and take up the cross. Through activity, story and Scripture reading, they learned that the cross is at the center of Christian life as well as an important motif in the life of the Armenian people. The Armenian Church honors the cross on Exaltation day with a special procession and blessing service. The class made their own jeweled crosses.

Sharing Our Faith

1. Place your child's cross in a prominent place in your home.
2. Pray with your child daily, always making a sign of the cross.
3. Research "khachkars" or Armenian stone crosses on the Internet with your child. There will be many photos you can enjoy together.

had come to complete the work that such servants of God had begun.) Whose voice did the disciples hear coming out of the bright cloud on the mountain? What did God tell the disciples to do? How do you think the disciples felt when they witnessed Jesus' transfiguration? What if you were there, how would you have felt?" 10 min.

4. Introduce the **Faith Word**. Have them practice saying Ay-la-gerb-oo-tyoon and Var-ta-var in Armenian. Read. Read **Our Armenian Way**. Ask if any of the students are familiar with any of these traditions. Explain that in Armenia and the Middle East, people have buckets or bottles of water ready to splash people. It's a lot of fun and perfect for a hot summer day. If you feel it's appropriate, lightly spritz the class with water so they have an idea of the experience.
5. **Handmade With Love**. Have students color the Transfiguration sheet and then trim and glue onto construction paper; they may then write the invitation on the back. A sample wording could be:

Dear Mom and Dad,
You are invited to attend the Feast of Transfiguration Liturgy on Sunday,
(insert date) at (insert church name). It's a very special celebration of our church!
Love (insert name) 20 min.

6. **Clean up/Celebration Party**. Enjoy refreshments and conversation! Have class sign the autograph page (you too!). Close with the prayer: "Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for this amazing school year, keep our students safe over the summer. Help them to remember all that they have learned and to serve you. Amen." 30 min.

Unit Four: Celebrating Jesus: The Church Year

Lesson Eight: Exaltation of the Cross

Key Concepts

1. Jesus instructs us to put everything aside, take up the cross, and follow him. (Luke 9:23)
2. The Armenian Church celebrates the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross each September with a cross procession and blessing of the four corners (properly, "the fields").
3. The Feast Day recalls specific events when the cross was honored, especially the 7th century recovery of the cross in Jerusalem and its veneration in Armenia.
4. The cross is a powerful symbol of life and hope.

Objectives

During this lesson students will

1. Participate in a getting-to-know-you activity.
2. Match symbols to their holidays and celebrations.
3. Read and discuss the story of a family visiting Armenia.
4. Examine Luke 9:23.
5. Read and discuss symbol of the cross.
6. Learn faith word of 'Exaltation.'
7. Test their knowledge about facts of the Armenian Cross.
8. Decorate Armenian Cross for feast day procession.

Materials Needed

Paper
Cross objects - necklace, picture, wooden cross, khachkar
Several silver and gold markers or crayons

Copies of cross picture from the Appendix copied onto poster or cardstock paper and precut
Cardboard (if cross picture is on thin paper; see Procedure #7)
Wooden sticks or dowels to attach decorated cross
Sprigs of basil
Various colorful craft jewels
Tacky glue

Note to the Teacher

If this first class takes place on a Sunday *after* the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, adapt the lesson accordingly. Timing is still 60 minutes as church attendance is in addition.

Procedure

1. Greet students warmly and open class with the prayer in **We Pray Together**. Introduce yourself. Distribute paper for **Getting to Know You activity: Three Facts**. For the game of *Three Facts*, have second graders write two basic facts about themselves (color of hair or eyes, siblings? Pets?) and one fact that their classmates could not know about them (went to Disneyland over the summer, plays the violin, etc.). Collect all papers and read aloud the two basic facts. Students are to guess who the facts belong to. When someone gets it right, hand the paper to the student to read the third fact. Students will enjoy this game of guessing and learning something new about each other. 15 min.
2. Distribute the lesson to the class. Write some symbols on the board such as a + sign, - sign, stop sign, praying hands, ask them what they mean. Say that symbols stand for something. A heart often reminds us of Valentine's Day, etc. Then have students complete the questions in **Let's Discover**. (Answer: Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Jesus). Ask: "Have you ever thought about the cross? What does it mean to you? Let's read the story." 7 min.
3. Read **Our Story** (see tips on reading in the classroom in the **Introduction**). Ask if anyone has ever been to Armenia. Did they see khachkars? Practice saying some of the new words such as *khachkar*, *khachveratz*, and *exaltation*. Ask children: "Does anyone know why they use basil to decorate the cross on the Exaltation?" There is a tradition that basil was found growing at the foot of Jesus' cross. It is also considered a symbol of kingship. Tell the students (if your first class falls on Exaltation Sunday) that the class will be going in to church to be present for the Antasdan blessing. 5 min.
4. Have a student read the Scripture reading from Luke 9:23 in **God's Word**.
5. Introduce the **Faith Word** and then read or teach **We Learn About God**. Ask if any of the students are wearing a cross. Show other cross objects; allow students to examine and hold them. Have them write a line or two about what the cross means to them. They can draw a picture if they choose and share their responses. 10 min.
6. **Our Armenian Way** Look at the pictures in the text of different crosses: Protestant, Orthodox, Catholic. Ask them how they are different from the Armenian Cross (the first cross pictured). Direct students to complete the true and false questions. Answers and clarifications:
 1. False (The Armenian cross does not depict the body of Jesus on it.)
 2. True (Each cross receives a special blessing.)
 3. True (Most churches are designed in the form of the cross.)
 4. True (The Armenian Cross is a symbol of life and growth - vines, grapes and wheat all symbolize that.)
 5. False (There are 4 celebrations of the cross.)
 6. True (Most newly baptized receive a cross as a remembrance of their baptism from their godparents.)
 7. False (During the time of Jesus, the cross was used as a means of punishment and death. It was with Jesus' crucifixion that the cross came to represent life and hope.) 8 min.

7. **Handmade With Love.** Distribute copies of the cross (and cardboard sheets, if they are needed, in which case students will glue cross onto cardboard with glue sticks). Then they may color the cross with silver or gold or both markers or crayons. They may add jewels to their cross with tacky glue and then a few pieces of basil.
8. Closing prayer: “Dear Jesus, thank you for our classmates, our teacher, our Sunday School, our pastor and everyone in our church family! Let us always look to you and your holy cross as our guide and support. Amen.” 15 min.
9. If your class falls on the same day, have students attend the Exaltation of the Cross blessing holding their crosses.

