



Presentation in the Temple


Study Guide - Level 1 (Grades K-2 / Ages 5-7)

February 2

Lesson Format

- Intro / Summary of the feast
- Review the epistle and gospel readings
- Review festal hymns of the day
- Read front page of handout together
- Use study guide content for discussion and Q&A on this week's topics
- Complete activities on inside pages of handout
- Recap / Review of the feast

Tips & Hints

- Use as few or as many of the questions and explanations found in the study guide based on ages of the youth, helping them discover how the Orthodox Faith can be a part of their daily life.
- Watch for the  in the handout for topics/questions which might spark conversations with participants.
- It's recommended to use open-ended questions, encouraging young people to think, share their experiences or ideas, and strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ and His holy Orthodox Faith.
- Questions, ideas, feedback, and suggestions can be directed to the publisher at orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

✦ Overview

When a child is dedicated to God, it is a very important moment in their relationship with God.

In the Old Testament, this event was celebrated in the Temple - it's like a church, but for Jewish people.

God made agreements with the tribes of Israel that they would live according to His rules.

When Jesus was born, He was brought by Mary and Joseph to the Temple to glorify God.

Because Jesus is the Son of God, this was a very special event.

A very wise old man named Simeon met them and thanked God for the opportunity to see Jesus, telling Mary and Joseph that Jesus would be very important for the salvation of everyone.

We remember St. Simeon's prayer, singing or reading it every evening in church.

As the Light of the world, Jesus provides for us a path to Salvation.

Jesus came to prepare us to one day live with Him and God the Father in Heaven.

📖 Apostolos / Epistle and Gospel Readings

Open the bible and have someone read the Apostolos/Epistle and another student read the Gospel lesson for the day.

Epistle: Hebrews 7:7-17

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

Talk about the epistle reading:

Today's epistle was written by St. Paul.

It is one of the books (or letters) found in the New Testament of our bible.

1) Ask: "What is the author of today's epistle/apostol talking about?"

Possible Answers

- In the Old Testament, God established agreements for His people
- Until Jesus came, the religious leaders were responsible for doing the prayers and services
- When Christ became human, He began to preach about the way to get to Heaven
- He wanted people to worship God the Father in the right way
- Since Jesus is God, His priesthood is perfect and eternal

2) Ask: "How is the message of this epistle apply to our lives?"

Possible Answers

- As Orthodox Christians, we follow Christ
- Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament rules and regulations, meaning we don't follow those as Christians
- We live according to the teachings of the Church as prescribed by Christ

Talk about the Gospel reading:

Today's gospel was written by St. Luke.

It is one of four written accounts of the life of Jesus Christ, found in the New Testament of our bible.

1) Ask: "What took place in today's lesson?"

Possible Answers

- St. Luke provides an account of Jesus' entry into the Temple
- The event took place 40 days after His birth
- While Jesus was in the Temple, a righteous man named Simeon received Christ, praying over Him
- The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that Christ was the Messiah

2) Ask: "Why is this important for us living in the 21st century?"

Possible Answers

- The teachings of the church are for our benefit - we grow closer to God by following them
- The Virgin Mary was obedient to God, and is an example of humility for us
- Our faith in Jesus helps nurture our relationship with God
- Christ is the salvation and True Light of the world

☑ Goal

After completing this handout, youth should be able to articulate the following:

- What we celebrate/commemorate on the feast of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple
- Be familiar with the festal theme songs (apolytikion/troparion and kontakion).
- Understand what is featured in the festal icon.
- Why the feast is important, and celebrated annually in the church.
- Understand what took place and how this reveals Christ as our Great High Priest.
- Know why this feast is relevant to us today.
- How the Church encourages us to live godly lives regardless of age or situation.

Hymnography

Have someone read the Troparion/ Apolytikion and Kontakion on the handout.

Review: Troparion (tro - par - ee - ohn) or Apolytikion (ah - po - lee - tee - key - ee - ohn) and Kontakion (kon - tahk - ee - ohn) are theme songs for each feast, celebration, or saint.

Troparion and **Apolytikion** are names for the same hymn. **Kontakion** is a separate hymn expanding on the ideas proclaimed in the Troparion or Apolytikion, where the last line is used as a refrain during some services.

Both hymns describe what or who we're celebrating, and how this event or saint is important to our lives as Orthodox Christians.

These are celebratory hymns, rejoicing in God's mercy and wonders.

1) Ask: "What do the hymns teach us about the feast?"

Possible Answers

- We glorify the Virgin Mary because she is the Mother of Jesus: the Son of God
- Christ is the Light of the world, the Son of God, providing redemption to all
- Simeon, the Righteous elder glorifies God, affirms that Christ is the Messiah

2) Ask: "How can the message of the hymns apply to our lives?"

Possible Answers

- We glorify the Virgin Mary because of her closeness to Christ
- Christ restores our relationship with God the Father
- We can glorify God for His wonders and mercy, singing these hymns as praise
- Christ gives us peace and saves us from sin and the devil
- St. Simeon is an example for us of how to live a godly life, and what happens when you do: you can encounter God face to face

A Closer Look

After reading the front page of the handout, discuss and explore the themes below. Related questions can be found on the next page "Discussion Questions."

Opening Review:

Today's feast is a celebration of when Jesus went to the Temple.

He was still a baby, but this was a very special day, because the elder Simeon recognized and proclaimed that Jesus is the Messiah - the savior of the world!

St. Simeon proclaims that Christ is destined to be very special, and he wrote an important prayer we still use in church every day:

Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a Light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of your people: Israel.

Joseph and the Virgin Mary marvelled at the things spoken of the Child (Luke 2:33).

What Does This Mean for Us?

Our participation in this feast is a way for us to celebrate our belief that Jesus is the Light of the world. As the Son of God, He came to provide salvation from sin and death.

This feast reminds us that Christ is the Light of the world.

Godly Examples for Us

The Righteous Simeon and Anna are wonderful examples for us because they show how living a life of prayer and worship centered on God can be fruitful and good.

Ask: What can we learn from Simeon and Anna?

Possible Answers:

- God hears our prayers, bringing us closer to Him
- Our faith in God helps us live a meaningful life
- If we follow God in faith, He will provide us joyous and wonderful experiences - either in this life or the next

Simeon and Anna were truly righteous people in the eyes of God. We remember them as saints because of their dedication to God.

Ask: What things that Simeon and Anna did, can we do?

Possible Answers:

- Focus on God's promise of a Messiah (i.e., Jesus Christ)
- Devoted to reading, understanding, and living God's teachings in scripture
- Their faith was found in humility and the mercy of God

Our Relationship with God

Simeon and Anna devoted themselves to being in God's Temple as the means to draw closer to God, preparing to see the Messiah. We, as followers of Christ, have the opportunity to become the living Temple of God by coming to church as often as possible.

Ask: How can we be the Temple of God in our lives?

Possible Answers:

- Devoting a portion of every day to prayer
- Remembering God's love and mercy when facing difficult situations at home, school, work, or in relationships
- Caring for our body with respect, by not putting bad things into it (*junk food, inappropriate images or music*)
- Obeying our parents and teachers, and our priest at church
- Minding our words and thoughts, so other people think of Christ when they see us or hear us

In these ways, we can be like Simeon and Anna, preparing ourselves in godly ways to be ready by keeping Christ in our hearts and lives.

Handout Activities

In the handout for the feast, there are a variety of activities which can be completed:

Front Page: Read the introductory text, ensuring the young people understand the feast, what took place, and how it relates to their lives. Read the festal hymns and scripture readings, using this study guide to understand their meanings.

Page 2: Read through the *Whos' Who in the Icon*, answering questions about the icon, who is portrayed, and what's taking place.

The Presentation in the Temple icon reflects a historical event with theological meaning. By completing the blanks, students can choose from the word list, identifying what's shown in the icon, and why this feast is important to celebrate, and serves as an affirmation of the Incarnation of Christ, the Light of the world.

Page 3: "*Be a Light of Christ*" is an activity for young people of all ages to make their own candle(s). After making the candles either in class or at home, bring them to church on the feast day to be blessed and then lit before an icon, as a physical offering to God, illumined by the Light of Christ.

The goal of this activity is to give students an opportunity create something which is then blessed and used as an offering to God. The candles we use and light in church have a purpose - encourage the young people in your parish to see the value of offering prayers (and candles) both in church and at home.

Page 4: *Learning from the Feast:* Help the students understand the meaning of the liturgical texts, writing their interpretation of the hymns. As Orthodox liturgical hymns are didactic (intending to teach the singers and listeners), the message of the text reveals what we believe about the revelation of Christ as the Messiah during His presentation in the Temple.

Page 5: The first activity encourages the students to connect the icon of the Presentation with the festal troparion/apolytikion (theme song), drawing lines between the words and images to see how the liturgical arts relate to each other.

Then, students have the opportunity to draw their own visual representation of the prayer of St. Simeon.

As icons are images with theological meaning, encourage the students to see their drawings not simply as a sketch, but as an icon proclaiming the message of Christ's birth.

Take a photo of the student icons and email the image to us at: orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

(Be sure to include the students' first name, age, parish, city, and state/province.)

Page 6: This drawing of the Presentation icon can be used for coloring by young and old alike. By creating our own icons, we synthesize our thoughts and knowledge of the feast with our understanding of Jesus Christ and what He means to us as our God and Savior. Icons, even those printed in black and white (and colored with crayons, markers, paints, etc.) are sacred images, and should be treated with respect. Even those colored by the youngest of children have a sacred use and should not be simply tossed in the garbage after the feast.

Icons help us make a connection with God, as they teach us about His incarnation, therefore, we honor them with prominent places in our homes, and gently save them for use on the feast in future years.

Take a photo of the student icons and email the image to us at: orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

(Be sure to include the students' first name, age, parish, city, and state/province.)

? Did You Know

Let's get to know a bit more about aspects of this feast:

Why are candles blessed at the feast of the Presentation in the Temple?

The feasts of Christmas, Theophany, and the Presentation in the Temple represent a trio of great feasts glorifying our Lord as the Light of the world.

Therefore it's fitting, that at the last of these three celebrations, candles are blessed.

On the feast, the blessing of candles is done before the liturgy (instead of at the end as when fruit and grapes are blessed

on the feast of the Transfiguration).

The blessing allows the faithful to then hold the candles during the liturgy, as we do throughout the entire festal divine liturgy on Pascha.

This sequence of events serves as a tangible reminder that each of us is called to be bearers of Christ's light, received in church, and brought with us into the world through our daily lives.

