

***LIVING THE LITURGY***  
**A LESSON PLAN FOR TEACHING THE LITURGY TO YOUNG PEOPLE**

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**Three Keys Which Open the Door to the Liturgy**

**FIRST KEY:** Know what the Liturgy is, why it is sacramental, and what that means for daily life in practical terms.

**BACKGROUND MATERIAL:** God made us good to do good in the world. He wants us to be Holy as He is Holy. To help us achieve holiness, the church has sacraments--services that bring us the grace of God. The first is Baptism, by which we enter the Church and clear our path for getting to be as good as we can, in the image of God. Chrismation, Unction, Penance, Ordination, Marriage. Greatest is Holy Eucharist. Through the sacramental life "we are crucified with Christ, we are buried with Him, we are resurrected with Him and 'we sit with him in heavenly places' (Ephesians 2:6). Through Holy Communion we are mystically united with Christ, become 'one in body' and 'one in blood' and 'Christ-bearers' and 'God-bearers'. Sacramental life is at the heart of what it means to a Christian.

The Liturgy had its beginning with the Last Supper--the Bread and Wine we receive as the Body and Blood of our Lord. The absolute necessity of it is clear in John's Gospel (6:53): "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me and I in him." Communion unites us to Christ and to our fellow Christians. Medicine of immortality, antidote of death. It has a sacrificial character--individuation of the One Sacrifice. We thank God for His blessings--eucharisto--we appeal to Him in our petitions, and we offer it on behalf of the whole world, living and dead, for whom Christ died. It is the Sacrament in which Christ is truly and essentially present under the forms of bread and wine, offered as a bloodless sacrifice and a re-enactment,

The Liturgy is where we are at the most intense level united with Christ and growing in the image and likeness of God. It is the place of "remembering" and actually sharing in the redemptive Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, as well as His whole incarnate life. It is the location where time past, time present, and time future are gathered up for us in ultimate meaning and significance. Divine Liturgy related to the calendar--conducted on Sunday "Kyriake" the Lord's Day which honors the Resurrection of Christ. Each day we remember a specific event in the life of Christ or the Theotokos, or we remember a Saint on the date of his or her martyrdom.

## LESSON PLAN FOR SECTION 1, THE FIRST KEY:

A. AIM OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LESSONS FOR THE WEEK: Tell the group that before telling them the aim of our religious education this week, you want to know their answer to this question: "What is the most important thing you do each week?". I will give you a minute to think of the answer to that question. After the minute is up, ask them to tell a partner. After two minutes, ask the group for responses. The right answer for Orthodox Christians is that the most important thing they can each week is to meet Jesus Christ in the Divine Liturgy. Then tell them our aim this week is to understand why the Liturgy is so important. One of the reasons is because it helps us to relive the life of Jesus in a special way. We will learn how to live the Liturgy so that we can meet Jesus and other believers every week in the very special way the Liturgy gives us for that meeting. We will get to play act the Liturgy in learning how to live it.

B. THE LIFE OF JESUS: Say to the students: It will help to understand the Liturgy if you know as much about the Life of Jesus as you can. I want to make a list of all the major events in Jesus' life so we can have them fresh in our minds as we talk about the Liturgy. Take a minute to think about the things you know about the life of Jesus. When I give the signal, I will ask you to share them so I can put them on our chart. Make a chart listing whatever biographical information you receive. When done, move on to the next section.

B. GOD WANTS US TO BE HOLY: Ask kids to think about the answers to these questions for a minute. Why did God make us? What does He want us to be? Give them a minute to think about it. After a minute ask them to share their answers with a partner. After they have done this, you ask the group the question. Start getting answers. Then say: Let's see what the Bible says. Then read from Scripture: Leviticus 11:44, 1 Peter 1:16, Romans 1:7, 2 Peters 1:4, Matthew 5:48. What do you think holy means? Elicit responses. Then develop the concept: God made us good to do good. He wants us to be like him--holy--set apart for good things--and not just ordinary--doing mean and bad things. Tell story of Alexander the Great who had a cowardly soldier with the same name: Alexander. He told the soldier to either change his ways and become brave, or to change his name--he wanted his name to be given only to brave people. In the same way God wants the people who believe in him to be holy--special people who do right things in the world--not wrong things. You wouldn't want to do something wrong that would shame your family's name. You should feel the same way about Jesus' name.

C: THE CHURCH GIVES US THE SACRAMENTS TO HELP US BE THE HOLY PEOPLE OF GOD: Ask: How do we know what the right things we are supposed to do are? Elicit answers and then develop the idea that God sent His Son to teach us holiness. When Jesus died, he left us His Church to teach us. Then the Church put the Bible together to help us learn from the printed Word what Jesus said and did. The Church also made holy services--Sacraments--to do the things that Jesus wanted us to do: Baptism, Chrismation, Ordination, Confession, etc. At the Last Supper, Jesus told us to eat bread and drink wine in a mystical, special way so we, too, could be with him as the Apostles

were at the Last Supper. The most special Sacrament is the Holy Eucharist (word means thanksgiving) where we gather together as people who believe in Him and meet him personally through the Bread and Wine that miraculously becomes His Body and Blood at every Liturgy. Did you realize that a miracle takes place every Sunday in your Church? Yes, Jesus comes to us in a mystical way through the Bread and Wine which we brought to Church as gifts, along with ourselves.

**SECOND KEY:** Know the basic structure of the present day form of the Liturgy with points of reference for your participation.

**BACKGROUND:** The Liturgy has not changed much since the early meetings of the Christians. According to Justin Martyr in 150 A.D., they would gather together to read from the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible, then there would be a sermon, prayers said on behalf of everybody, the kiss of peace, the presentation of the Bread and the Cup (with wine and water in it) to the leader of the service, prayers of praise and thanksgiving offered over the bread and wine, the administration of the elements of the Sacraments, and then the collection of donations for the poor--150 A.D. Like a string of pearls, the shorter litanies appear at the ends of 9 units in the Liturgy:

1. Litany      2. First Antiphon.      3. Second Antiphon      4. Third Antiphon (Little Entrance)      5. Scripture Readings      6. Great Entrance      7. Great Eucharistic Prayer (Anaphora)      8. Communion      9. Dismissal

The proskomidi is the preparation which takes places at the left side altar before the Liturgy begins. The priest mentions the names of those we want remembered who cannot be with us at this Liturgy, either because they are away or in Heaven.

### **LESSON PLAN FOR SECTION 2: THE SECOND KEY**

**A. THE LAST SUPPER WAS THE FIRST DIVINE LITURGY:** Ask the class to describe the Last Supper. Fill them in on information they may not have had. Read from Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:17-20 and 1 Cor 11:23-34. Tell them that the Last Supper was the first Divine Liturgy. After Jesus died, his Disciples would meet regularly to break bread and drink wine as he told them to do. Then describe the service as Justin Martyr described it in 150 A.D. Ask them if they recognize any of the parts: Reading of the Scriptures, Sermon, Prayers, Presentation of the Gifts, administration, collection. Ask if anyone has ever seen the Proskomidi--some altar boys may have. Briefly describe what happens in that service, especially the names to be commemorated, because the Liturgy is where all believers come together.

**B. THE POINTS OF REFERENCE:** Now we will begin the Liturgy with the words: Blessed be the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages. Explain that the Kingdom of God is where holiness reigns--could be inside of each one of them, or heaven. Next, I will read a short prayer you hear many, many times in the liturgy--if you've been listening! Read one of the shorter litanies. Stress the form and key words: Help, save, comfort and protect us, O God, with Thy favor. Commemorating our most holy, pure, blessed and glorified Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and

one another, and our whole life to Christ, our God. The people respond: "To Thee, O Lord." For to Thee belong all glory, honor, and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen. Ask: In this prayer we ask God to protect us. From what? From those things that would make us unholy. Who do we remember while asking for this protection? The Theotokos because she is our model of all-holiness, and the Saints, because they too were holy people of God. Then the priest leader tells us to commend ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ, our God. He's asking us to turn our lives over to God for help in being holy and pure, like the Theotokos. He asks us to do that many time in the Liturgy. And each time he does, we are to make the sign of the Cross--our little silent prayer that puts a shield between us and the evil in the world. Then he tells us to give glory and honor to God for many different reasons. Each glory prayer has a reason. This first one says we give honor because he deserves it: the word says "due". The shorter litany comes at the end of each of the nine parts of the liturgy we are going to talk about.

PART 1) GREAT LITANY: The litany is a prayer service in which the priest leads the people in prayer and the people respond with "Lord, have mercy." Ask them to tell you what the word mercy means. Elicit responses. Explain it means to treat someone better than he deserves for whatever it is he's done that deserves punishment. An object lesson that works is capturing an imaginary, pesky fly that deserves to die because it contaminates food and spreads disease. You feel sorry for it, however, and instead of killing it, you open the window and let it fly out. So we ask God to be lenient with us, and give us all the things we're asking for and His Mercy when he's judging us. Next, ask the children to listen as you read the petitions from the Great Litany on pp. \_\_\_\_\_ in your parish's liturgy book so they can tell you what things we are asked to pray for. Elicit responses and then tell them if they didn't pray for these things, nothing really happened in that litany. The priest is not praying for us, we do our own praying and if we don't, then nothing is happening. Next, role play the litany with one of the children being the priest. Use a real stole, explaining first the significance of it. No priest can lead a service without wearing it. End with the short litany, tell them to cross themselves when they hear the magic words of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Theotokos, and the G- word: Glory!

PART 2) FIRST ANTIPHON: In this short section we ask Jesus to save us by listening to the prayers of His Holy Mother on our behalf. Just as we ask friends to do favors for us, we ask the Saints and the Theotokos to pray for us. The hymn we sing is Tes Presvies--Through the Prayers. Ask them to sing it quickly. Read the short litany, on p.\_\_\_\_, which ends the section.

PART 3) THE SECOND ANTIPHON: In this short section we ask Jesus, who rose from the dead, to save us--"Soson Imas--Save Us". Then we sing a hymn which tells many of the things we believe about Jesus--"O Monogenis--Only-Begotten Son of God." You can sing along with these hymns as part of your participation. And then cross yourself when you hear the familiar words of the short litany which mention the Theotokos, the Saints, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and give us yet another reason for giving glory to God.

PART 4) THE THIRD ANTIPHON AND LITTLE ENTRANCE: Here we sing many special hymns and watch the Priest carry in the Gospel. He tells us to stand and pay attention, and then we sing a hymn that says: Come, let us worship and bow down unto Christ. Save us, O Son of God, Who rose from the dead, as we praise Thee. Alleluia. The hymns that are sung here tell about Jesus' Resurrection, and about the reason for that Sunday's Feast or remembrance of a saint. This section ends again with the short litany, p. \_\_\_\_\_. Have children role play the Little Entrance. All respond by bowing down to worship. Explain that worship is showing adoration for something great and wonderful. Because the Gospel is the Word of God, the Little Entrance is like seeing Jesus come walking before us. Ends with short litany, p. \_\_\_\_\_. Glory is due because God is holy.

PART 5) THE SCRIPTURE READINGS: This section begins with Thrice-Holy Hymn. Explain we sing this with the angels in heaven as Isaiah described in 6:1-2a,3-4. It shows how awe-inspiring God is: Holy, Mighty and Immortal. Then a lay person reads from the Acts or Epistles. We respond with Alleluia. Then the priest reads from the Gospel. We respond with "Glory to You, O Lord, Glory to You." Ends with short litany on p. \_\_\_\_\_. We listen attentively to both readings. Role play this section with some selections from Epistles and Gospel.

PART 6) THE GREAT ENTRANCE: Here the Priest transfers the gifts of bread and wine from the left side altar to the main altar in a procession. To get ready for the procession, the choir sings the Cherubic Hymn--or Angel's Hymn in which it says we are to be like angels, putting aside all our cares of this world to get ready to meet our King. The priest asks the Lord to remember us as all in His Kingdom. Role play this section with utensils and altar coverings, real or make-believe.

PART 7) THE GREAT EUCHARISTIC PRAYER (The Anaphora--the Core of the Liturgy): This is the "heart" or sacramental center and oldest part of the Liturgy. Here we are asked to "Love one another" and say what we believe about God in the Creed and then respond to the long prayer in which the priest leads us. Key phrases from the great prayer to help the children remember are: Let us stand aright, let us stand in awe; Let us lift up our hearts; Let us give thanks unto the Lord. Then the priest says the words from the Mystical Supper--the First Divine Liturgy: "Take eat, this is My Body--Drink ye all of this: This is my Blood of the New Testament." Then the Most Sacred Moment of the Liturgy comes when the priest prays for the Holy Spirit to come down and change the gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord as we kneel and sing "Se Imnoumen--We Praise Thee." The prayer comes to a close as we remember the Theotokos and all those for whom this Liturgy is offered, and then ends as we say the Lord's Prayer. Have children role-play parts of the prayer, especially the Offering: "Thy Gifts, of what is Thine, do we offer to Thee in all we do and for all Thy Blessings" where the priest lifts up the Host from the Prosporo which becomes the Body of Christ when it goes into the Chalice for Holy Communion

PART 8) THE HOLY COMMUNION: Here the Priest prepares Holy Communion as the Communion Hymn is being sung, and then calls us with the words: "With the fear of God, with faith and with love draw near." The Hymns which follow tell how we have

received the Holy Spirit. Have students role-play the administration and receiving of Holy Communion, of giving their name to the Priest before receiving.

PART 9) THE DISMISSAL: The Liturgy comes to an end as the priest stands before the Icon of our Lord to begin the final prayers and we sing the joyous hymn, "Ii to Onoma Kiriou" "Blessed be the name of the Lord. . ." The last prayer is "Through the prayer of our holy Fathers have mercy upon us, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God." Have children role-play priest reading closing prayers in front of an icon.

**THIRD KEY:** Know how to enter into the participation.

BACKGROUND: The Church is One; it is "the household of God." We are all members of the Body by virtue of our Baptism. We are all priests; like Jesus we are King, Priest, and Prophet: King, in throwing down all evil acts and destroying sin. Priest in offering yourself to God and sacrificing the body and dying to yourself. Prophet in learning of the future and being filled and sealed with zeal. A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." Word liturgy means "work of the people."

How does one participate:

1) Receiving Holy Communion. Frequent Communion is the aim. Holy Communion is the chief reason for the Divine Liturgy. Holy Banquet to which our Lord invites us every Sunday.

2) Being the Church. Liturgy not only the preparation, consecration, and distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ, it is also our affirmation of what we are: the people of God.

3) Sharing in the Symbolism.

The Prothesis -- the Birth of Christ--hidden away from general notice, during which bread and wine are prepared.

The Little Entrance with the Gospel -- the beginning of Christ's public ministry and the first reason why the Lord came into the world, to teach humanity the Truth of God.

The Scripture Readings and the Sermon -- Christ, who teaches us His great truths.

The Great Entrance with the Holy Gifts -- second reason why Christ came--to die for us upon the Cross. Repetition of the words of the thief, "Remember us all when thou comest into thy Kingdom."

The Words of the Institution of the Sacrament -- the Last Supper

The Consecration of the Gifts -- our presence at the Crucifixion when Jesus offered His Body and Blood for all mankind upon the Cross.

The Holy Communion is our sharing in the new life of our Resurrected Lord. The coming forth of the chalice from the Royal Gates parallels the coming forth of the Risen Lord from the tomb.

The Return of the Gifts to the Prothesis symbolizes the Ascension of our Lord and His return to the right hand of the Father.

- 4) Responding to Dialogues and Biddings.
- 5) Singing the Hymns.
- 6) Reciting the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.
- 7) Using Your Body to Worship.
- 8) Listening to the Readings and Sermon.
- 9) Using the "Units" of the Divine Liturgy.
- 10) "Praying the Divine Liturgy."

### **LESSON PLAN FOR SECTION 3: THE THIRD KEY**

1) RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION: Ask how students prepare themselves to receive. Those who are old enough, should follow adult rules of not eating anything before Communion from the time they arise on the day of Communion. Encourage discussion about Confession when needed as preparation for Holy Communion. Another good practice to encourage is to have them ask forgiveness from their family members before leaving the home that morning, and kissing the hand of their parents. Have students read the "I Believe and I Confess" prayer from the Liturgy. Encourage them to read it as they await Communion. Tell them to give their name to the priest as their turn comes for Communion, and to cross themselves after receiving. Review rules of fasting which are to be followed on Wednesdays and Fridays and during other fasting periods. Have the class create a wall mural of themselves standing in line for Holy Communion--let each child draw him or herself in line using colored pens.

2) BEING IN CHURCH: Have an attendance chart in the room on which each child records their presence on the Sundays they are there, as a way of encouraging good attendance and reinforcing the importance of attending the "Banquet" to which they are called every Sunday.

3) SHARING THE SYMBOLISM: Use icons from the "Come Bless the Lord" Icon Packet to help illustrate the symbolism of the Liturgy as outlined in the introductory

section above. Have children draw murals to illustrate the various parts of the liturgy and connect those with lines (or string) to the icon events they symbolize.

4) RESPONDING TO DIALOGUES AND BIDDINGS: Role-play parts of the Liturgy that ask for responses, e.g., "Let us pray," and have students respond with appropriate actions and words, i.e., "Lord have mercy," "To You, O Lord," etc..

5) SINGING THE HYMNS: Teach and sing hymns on a regular basis until all the standard ones have been learned. Use HYMNS FROM THE LITURGY, prepared especially for young people, as well as music from the Archdiocesan Curriculum Materials, the National Forum, parish hymnals, etc. 6) RECITING THE LORD'S PRAYER AND CREED: Have students memorize these as soon as they are able--they are never too young!

7) USING YOUR BODY TO WORSHIP: Role play sections of the Liturgy that ask for body responses, e.g., "Let us bow our heads to the Lord." Also, repeat the "Glories" and name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and Theotokos and ask them to make the Sign of Cross when the Trinity and saints are mentioned.

8) LISTENING TO THE READINGS AND SERMONS: Ask students to recap what the epistle and gospel reading and sermon for the day was.

9) USING THE "UNITS" OF THE DIVINE LITURGY: Encourage students to consciously think of the "units" or different sections of the Liturgy as a way of helping them "live" it more intently.

10) PRAYING THE DIVINE LITURGY: Encourage students to use their liturgy books and to join in praying the liturgy each time they are in Church. The Liturgy is the work of the people and they are needed to do the "work" of praising God for His Great and Wonderful Gifts, especially the New Life which Jesus gives to all those who come to Him in faith and love.