

THIS IS ONLY A SAMPLE.

THE ACTIVITY BOOK CONTAINS 92
PAGES, AS WELL AS FULL COLOUR
ILLUSTRATIONS AND NUMEROUS
ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING COLOURING
ILLUSTRATIONS, CROSSWORD PUZZLES,
COLOUR BY NUMBER IMAGES, AND
WRITING ACTIVITIES

Great Lent, Holy Week and Pascha

Activity Book for Children

Mostly Suitable for Preetens

Written by Ioana Dimitriu

Illustrated by Ana-Maria Lemnaru

Lengua Viva
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
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Blessing

This Activity Book has been published with the blessing of His Eminence Irénée, Archbishop of Ottawa and the Archdiocese of Canada of the Orthodox Church in America.

I am honoured to bless this most instructive work for the education of our Christian youth.

The Triodion is the period of the liturgical year of the Holy Orthodox Church that sets the tone for the whole year. It is essential to our Christian lives that from our early years we understand and experience the richness and beauty of our church services so that the wisdom acquired from them may continue to guide us throughout our lives.

Your work is an invaluable help in introducing our children to this spiritual experience.

May God continue to bless your labours for His children.

In His love,

+Irénée

Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Canada

Foreword

I would like to express my gratitude for the blessing received from Archbishop Irénée for writing and publishing this work. My main source of inspiration and documentation—for which I am deeply grateful—has been the book written by His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of Romania, entitled *Hunger and Thirst for God. The Understanding and the Benefit of Fasting*.

The readings in this activity book follow the sequence of the Triodion, namely the four Sundays before the beginning of Great Lent, the five Sundays of Great Lent, Lazarus Saturday, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Pascha. The texts are written in a very accessible language, which is suitable to younger audiences. The multiple choice questions, the crossword puzzles, and the other writing activities are designed to engage younger as well as older elementary school children. The colouring illustrations were created by a young Romanian artist, who drew her inspiration from the Byzantine iconographic tradition. Nevertheless, they are slightly stylized in order to appeal specifically to very young viewers.

This publication is appropriate for use in various group settings, such as Sunday school, vacation Bible studies, and summer camps. Answers to most of the activities, including the crossword puzzles, are available online at www.LenguaViva.ca Feedback from Sunday school teachers, parents, and students, is always welcome and much appreciated.

Since this project has been developed solely with personal resources, and with support from family and friends to whom I am very grateful, it is important that Sunday School teachers do not allow this material to be photocopied and distributed without written consent from the publisher. Such missionary endeavours rely on support from parish leaders, parents, and Sunday school teachers.

Glory to God for all things!

Ioana Dimitriu, PhD

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The Triodion

The word "tri-odion" means "three odes" or "three songs." *The Triodion* is the title of a book of prayers which is used at church for many services in the springtime. The book is entitled *The Triodion* or *The Lenten Triodion*, because the hymns in it are arranged in groups of three.

We also call "Triodion" the ten weeks before Pascha.

In this Activity Book, you will learn about the most important days of this time of preparation. They are:

- ☆ the four Sundays before the beginning of Great Lent
- ☆ the five Sundays of Great Lent
- ☆ Lazarus Saturday
- ☆ Palm Sunday
- ☆ Holy Week
- ☆ Pascha



Activity 1. The Triodion. Read the Table of Contents. Try to remember the names of the Sundays of the Triodion in order. Then complete the table below.

SUNDAYS	NAMES
4 th before Great Lent	Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee
3 rd before Great Lent	
2 nd before Great Lent	
Last Sunday before Great Lent	
1st Sunday of Great Lent	
2nd Sunday of Great Lent	
3rd Sunday of Great Lent	
4th Sunday of Great Lent	
5th Sunday of Great Lent	
PALM SUNDAY	
HOLY AND GREAT PASCHA	RESURRECTION SUNDAY



Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee

Three Weeks Before Great Lent

The Beginning of the Lenten Triodion

This Sunday¹ we hear the Lord's parable of the two men who are praying at the Temple in Jerusalem.

One is a Publican, a tax collector. The Jewish people did not like tax collectors, because they worked for the Romans who had occupied their country. Tax collectors were usually greedy. In this story, the tax collector knows that he is a sinful man, and he asks God sincerely to have mercy on him. He prays with humility.

The other man is a Pharisee, a man who considers himself good and generous. He helps the poor and keeps all the Jewish laws, but he is proud. He judges the tax collector in his mind, and thanks God for not being like him or like other sinful men.

Through this parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, Jesus teaches us to pray with humility like the tax collector, and to be generous like the Pharisee.



¹ This Sunday we hear the reading of *The Gospel According to Saint Luke*, chapter 18, verses 10 to 14.

Activity 2. The Publican or the Pharisee? Whom does each of the following descriptions apply to? Write **P** for the Publican, **Ph** for the Pharisee, **Both** for both, and **No** for neither of them.

1. generous _____
2. gives money to the Temple and to the poor _____
3. works for the foreign occupiers _____
4. keeps the fast _____
5. boastful _____
6. self-righteous _____
7. prays _____
8. says only "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner!" _____
9. humble _____
10. proud _____
11. judgmental _____
12. condemns _____
13. considers himself superior _____
14. Jewish _____
15. Roman _____
16. greedy _____
17. sinful _____
18. is not liked by his people _____

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Glory forever!





Activity 3. My prayer. It is important to know how to pray. Before you begin to pray, take a couple of moments to stand still and focus on the following:




- Have a **humble attitude**. Remember that you are standing in front of the Creator of the whole Universe, of both the visible and the invisible worlds. Do not be careless, disrespectful, impatient, or boastful, when addressing the King of kings.
- **Forgive everyone** in your heart.

What do you say when you pray? Remember these points:

- **Give glory to God**
- **Thank Him** for His great goodness
- **Ask Him to forgive** all your sins.²
- **Ask Him** to protect you, to help you, and to give you and your loved ones all the good things here on Earth, and eternal life in His Kingdom.

Write a prayer in which you follow the points previously mentioned. Use your own words. Ask your priest if you can use your prayer.

When you have a wish and pray to God that it may be fulfilled:

-  make sure to pray that His will be done
-  remember to give Him thanks, whatever His answer is
-  have faith that He will do what is best.

² This does not replace Confession before the priest.



Sunday of the Prodigal Son³

Two Weeks Before Great Lent

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is a story about a father who had two sons. One day, the younger son asked his father to divide his inheritance and to give him his portion. The father fulfilled his son's wish. The son took the money and went to a far country.

There, he wasted all his inheritance by organizing expensive parties. One year, no rain fell, and the trees gave no fruit, and the fields gave no crops. People had no food. There was a big famine. This young man had no money left, so he went to work on a pig farm. He was so hungry that he wanted to eat the pigs' food. He soon realized his big mistake, and decided to go back home. He thought that his father's servants had a better life than him.

As he was getting close to home, his father saw him from a distance. He ran out of the house to greet his son and to hug him. The son humbly asked his father to forgive him, saying: "I am no longer worthy to be called your son." The father not only forgave him, but he was so happy to see him back home that he called for a big celebration. He asked his servants to bring the best robe for his son, and to put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. The father also asked for the fattened calf to be killed so that they could celebrate and be merry.

³ In *The Gospel According to Saint Luke*, chapter 15, verses 11 to 32.

The older son's heart became filled with envy when he heard all this. He did not understand why the father treated his sinful brother so well. The father explained to him that he was happy because his younger son had been dead, and now he was alive again; he had been lost, and now he was found.

Through this parable, the Lord teaches us the power of repentance. To repent means to change your mind about your behaviour. When he was rich, the young man was proud and thought that he could do anything that he wanted. He wasted his time and his money by partying, instead of studying or working. Then he became poor and suffered from hunger. Suffering made him humble, and only then was he able to see that he had made a big mistake. He felt sorry and went back to his father's house to ask forgiveness.

Every time we proudly disobey our parents and teachers, we too move far from our Heavenly Father. He waits for us to realize that we are wrong and to change our mind, the way the Prodigal Son did.

When we return to God and ask Him to forgive us, with sincerity and humility, He opens His arms and joyfully embraces us with His love.

When we confess all our sins and receive forgiveness, we make peace with God and with all people.



Activity 4. Parable of the Prodigal Son. True or False? Write **T** if the sentences below are true, and **F** if they are false.

1. The main characters of this parable are a father and his son. ____
2. Through this parable, the Lord teaches us about the power of repentance. ____
3. The father agreed to divide the inheritance and to give his oldest son the portion that he had asked for. ____
4. The younger son moved far away from his family. ____
5. The Prodigal Son spent his money wisely. ____
6. The Prodigal Son was rich, proud, and wasteful. ____
7. There was a big drought in that far away country. ____
8. The Prodigal Son fasted willingly. ____
9. The Prodigal Son suffered from malnutrition. ____
10. Suffering made the Prodigal Son humble. ____
11. When he was left alone, with no money or food, the Prodigal Son began to feel sorry and wanted to change his way of life. ____
12. When the younger son returned home, his father scolded him. ____
13. The older brother was happy to see his younger sibling back home. ____
14. The father forgave his repentant son without making him any reproaches about his past behaviour. ____
15. The Prodigal Son's father is an image of our loving and forgiving Heavenly Father. ____

Short Reflection: In this lesson I learned _____



Sunday of the Last Judgment

Meatfare Sunday

One Week Before Great Lent

At the end of time, our Lord Jesus Christ will come again in His Glory to judge everyone from all nations, the living and the dead. At the Last Judgment, He will judge people based on how much each and every one of us has been able TO LOVE. For this reason, on this Sunday we are reminded that in addition to confessing our sins and changing our behaviour, we also need to show our love. We show our love to other people by doing good to them.

Christ is mysteriously present in every human being, regardless of race, nationality, gender, or religion. He created every one of us out of love. He loves each and every person, and He commanded us to also love all people, our friends as well as our enemies.

One way of expressing our love is by offering our help. Every time we do something good to someone, we should remember to thank God for giving us the opportunity to express our love. The good that we do pleases God if we do it out of love for Him and for people.

When we give something to someone in the name of the Lord, we serve Him. This is what we learn from today's Gospel reading. The Lord teaches us to express our love for Him by serving and by helping people. This is what He said about the Last Judgment:

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison and come to you? And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” (Matthew 25:34-40)

Everyone is able to give, no matter how rich or how poor one is. We are truly rich when we have Christ's love in our hearts. We may help others in different ways. Some of us may be able to give money, food or clothing to those who are in need. Others may offer their time and talent by singing in the church choir, by helping in the kitchen or in the garden, or in any other way that they can. Others may be good listeners and be able to comfort and encourage a friend who is going through a hard time.

The Lord encourages us to be generous with our material things, our talents, and our time.⁴ By giving, we express our love. The Lord will judge us according to how much we have loved Him and our brothers and sisters during our lives here on Earth.



⁴ Remember to ask for your parents' permission before you offer to help someone or to give something to someone.

Activity 5. How would you show your love? Imagine what would you do in the following situations to show your love:

1. Your mother is not feeling well and she must stay in bed for a couple of days.

2. Your grandfather is in the hospital. _____

3. The house that your neighbours were renting was damaged by a fire. They need a place to stay for a few days until they find another home. _____

4. Your neighbours also lost their belongings in the fire. They have a child who is your age. _____

(continued on page 22)

5. One of your siblings had an argument with his best friend. He is very upset and needs to talk. It's a long story. _____

6. Your neighbour walks her dog every day. She also takes good care of her garden. One day you find out that she broke her leg. _____

7. One of your classmates tells you that he has a hard time learning the multiplication table by heart. _____

8. A child falls off his bicycle in front of you. _____

Activity 6. Ways of Expressing Love. This activity is related to the previous one. Choose the corresponding category from the list below to indicate the way in which you showed your love in the above mentioned situations.

- a. hospitality: at point(s) _____



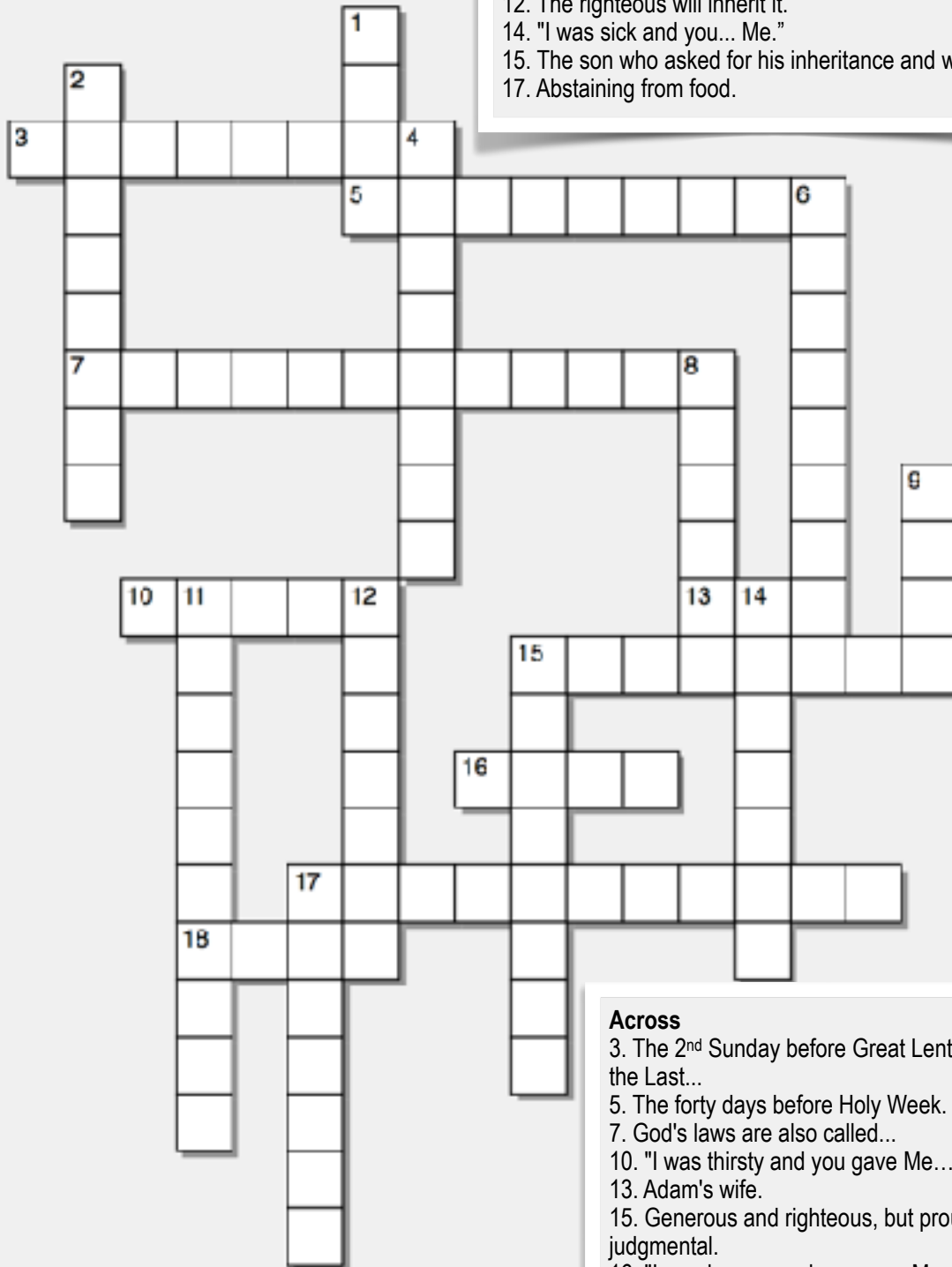
- b.** patience: at point(s) _____
- c.** physical help: at point(s) _____
- d.** material help: at point(s) _____
- e.** listening: at point(s) _____
- f.** visiting the sick: at point(s) _____
- g.** comforting: at point(s) _____
- h.** encouraging: at point(s) _____

Activity 7. How did you do good? Mention one way in which you helped:

1. Your mother: _____
2. Your father: _____
3. A friend: _____



Activity 8. The Sundays before Great Lent. Solve the crossword puzzle!



Down

1. Who is Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven?
2. He prayed humbly: "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner!"
4. The service book used during the weeks before Pascha.
6. What should we gather in Heaven rather than on Earth?
8. "Please forgive me, my brother, for I am a ..."
9. By giving, we express our ...
11. The Parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us about it.
12. The righteous will inherit it.
14. "I was sick and you... Me."
15. The son who asked for his inheritance and went away.
17. Abstaining from food.

Across

3. The 2nd Sunday before Great Lent is of the Last...
5. The forty days before Holy Week.
7. God's laws are also called...
10. "I was thirsty and you gave Me..."
13. Adam's wife.
15. Generous and righteous, but proud and judgmental.
16. "I was hungry and you gave Me..."
17. We receive it when we repent and confess our sins.
18. He was sent away from Paradise.

PAGES OMITTED FROM THE PREVIEW

Sunday of Orthodoxy

One day, Jesus met Nathanael. When they met, Jesus already knew who Nathanael was, where he was from, and that he was a good man. Nathanael asked Jesus how He knew him. The Lord answered: “When you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

What did Jesus mean by saying “I saw you?” He could not have possibly seen Nathanael with His eyes, because He was far from that place. What Jesus meant was a different kind of seeing, not with the bodily eyes, but with the spiritual eyes or “the eyes of the heart.” Nathanael was astonished. Inspired by God, he understood that in front of him there stood the Son of God. “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” he exclaimed. God revealed to him that Jesus was not only a great prophet, but His Divine Son.

If we confess that Jesus is the Son of God, it means that we have God in our hearts, and that we know that He is the One True God. If we confess that Jesus is the Son of God, then we have faith in what cannot be seen with the eyes, but it can only be felt with the heart. We cannot see God with our bodily eyes, but we can “see” him with our spiritual “eyes.” We express the true faith by confessing that Jesus is the Son of God.

The word “Orthodox” means “the right belief,” “the right praise,” “the right worship.” We, Orthodox Christians, worship the One True God in the right way.

HOLY ICONS

On this first Sunday of Great Lent, we celebrate the Orthodox Christian faith. In A.D. 843, the Holy Empress Theodora and the Holy Fathers of the Church were victorious against **iconoclasm**.

Iconoclasm means “the breaking of icons.” The iconoclasts did not like icons. They destroyed many holy images and were violent against Christians who venerated them. They thought that holy images were idols.

We, Orthodox Christians, **do not worship icons**. We only **worship the one God** in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We bow down and kiss holy images of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints, as a sign of veneration or honour. We do not venerate the piece of wood or the glass that the icon is made of, but the person whom the image represents.

We venerate icons, we do not worship them!

Remember the difference between:

★ worship or adoration, which is due only to the Holy Trinity;

★ veneration or honour, which we give to the Saints, to the icons, to the relics, to the Holy Gospel, and to the Cross.

Imagine that you have a photo of someone very dear to you—your brother, sister, mother, or father—whom you have not seen for a long time. If you kiss that person in the photo, it does not mean that you love the piece of paper, but that you are thinking of your loved one. By kissing and by talking to that person in your heart, you express your love and you feel that you are closer to her or to him.

Something similar happens when you venerate an icon. The honour that you show to the holy image goes to the person who is depicted in it. Unlike a friend in a photo, the Saints in the icons see you. They feel that you kiss them, they hear what you tell them in your heart, and they know that you love them. And they surely love you back.

a. Who Are the Saints?

The Saints are human persons who did their best to live a holy life on Earth. They are created human beings, like us. We do not worship the Creation, but only the Creator. We do not worship the Saints. The Saints are God's friends, and now they are with Him in Heaven. They have received from God powers to heal, to expel demons, and to help us in many ways. The Saints help humans on Earth by the power of God.

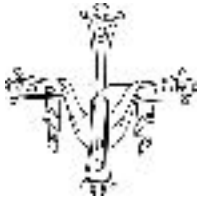
We pray to the Angels, to the Mother of God, and to the Saints, asking them to intercede for us, which means to pray for us to God. We trust that their prayer is stronger and more pure than ours, because they lived holy lives.

b. Do We Worship the Saints?

We do not worship the Saints. We **venerate** them. To venerate means **to honour** or **to pay respect**. We honour the Saints, the icons and other religious objects, such as the Gospel, the Cross, and the holy relics.

c. Why Do We Venerate the Gospel?

The Gospel is the word of God which was revealed to us through the Holy Apostles and Evangelists. The Gospel tells us of the coming, the life, the death, and the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.



d. Why Do We Venerate the Cross?

We venerate the Cross because Christ was nailed to it, and through His Death He destroyed death and gave us eternal life.

e. Why Do We Venerate Holy Relics?⁵

Jesus Christ is the True Image of God the Father. We, human beings, are not God's image, but we have been made **in His Image**. By sinning, we have distorted this image in us. By living holy lives, the Saints have restored God's image in their hearts. We get closer to them by venerating their relics. This is also a sign through which we confess our faith in the Resurrection. We know that their holy bones will be alive again, and we hope that our bodies too will rise at the end of time to live forever in the Kingdom of God.

f. How Do We Venerate Icons?

We venerate icons by bowing down in front of them while making the sign of the cross, and by kissing the image of the saint whom they represent. In icons of Christ, we should kiss the feet or the blessing hand. In icons of the Virgin Mary, we should kiss the hand. We may kiss the cheek in the icon of a saint, because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. While we venerate an icon, we usually say a short prayer in our mind or even with our lips.

Lord, forgive me, a sinner!

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!

Lord, help me!

Holy Virgin Mary, pray to God for us!

Most Holy Theotokos, save us!

Mother of God, help me!

⁵ Holy relics are remains or body parts of the Saints.

g. Do We Venerate Any Christian Image?

No, we do not venerate just any Christian image. A Christian image is an Orthodox icon only if it is made according to certain rules which are called *canons* of the Church. An icon can be venerated only after it is blessed on the Holy Altar.

h. Do Icons and Relics Really Make Miracles?

Some icons are wonderworking. This means that many people who prayed in front of them received help. They were either healed of their diseases, made peace with someone in their families, found a job, and so on. Many people give testimony that they have really experienced the power of God through holy images and icons.

Some icons weep, others stream myrrh. These are miracles or special blessings that the faithful receive. It happens not only in churches, but also sometimes in people's homes. But not all icons give such obvious signs of God's presence. Orthodox Christians honour the Saints depicted in any icon that has been blessed. However, when they are in front of a wonderworking icon, they feel even more admiration for how God has chosen to make known His presence through that icon.



God hears us anywhere and anytime we pray.



God is very close to us at all times. He is everywhere, and especially in our hearts. When we are in front of an icon, it is we who feel closer to God.

Activity 11. The Orthodox faith. Choose all the correct answers below. More than one answer may be correct in each case:

1. What does the word “orthodox” mean?
 - a. Eastern
 - b. the right belief

- c. the right worship
2. The Sunday of Orthodoxy
- a. is the first Sunday of Great Lent
 - b. was first celebrated under the rule of Empress Irene
 - c. marks the victory against iconoclasm
3. Orthodox Christians
- a. worship holy images
 - b. venerate icons
 - c. do not venerate the Cross
4. Orthodox Christians believe that Saints are
- a. half human and half divine
 - b. God's friends
 - c. with God in Heaven
5. Orthodox Christians believe that Saints
- a. lived holy lives on Earth
 - b. received powers from God
 - c. pray to God for us
6. God hears the prayers of those who
- a. always pray in front of a wonderworking icon
 - b. obey His commandments
 - c. have great faith in Him

Short Reflection: In this lesson I learned _____

PAGES HAVE BEEN OMITTED FROM THIS PREVIEW

Activity 16. Short Reflections

a. Give two examples of what it means to say no to something that you want.

b. Give two examples of what the cross may mean in someone's life.

c. What does it mean to take up one's cross?

d. Give an example of how you follow Jesus.



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About the Author

Ioana Dimitriu was inspired to start writing children's books with Orthodox Christian content, after having worked as a youth volunteer during a mission trip to Mexico.

Her daughter Janina is a constant source of joy and inspiration. Ioana is amazed at the way children approach God with a pure heart and understand divine mysteries intuitively. She hopes to contribute to their understanding of God by explaining some of the Orthodox Christian teachings in an accessible language and through engaging activities.

Ioana holds a Doctorate in Spanish, and she took Theology courses at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Canada. She works as a Spanish teacher and a freelance Romanian-English-Spanish translator.



About the Illustrator

Ana-Maria Lemnaru is a graduate of George Enescu University of Arts in Iași, Romania. She obtained a Master of Arts Degree in Illustration from Manchester School of Arts in the United Kingdom.

Ana-Maria explores both traditional and digital artistic forms of expression. She sees art as a way of offering original, profound, and valuable realities to the public.