

## 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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. Introduce 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

Pictures of different types of crosses easily found on the internet

Cross objects- necklace, picture, wooden cross, khachkar \*only if available

Several silver and gold markers or crayons

Copies of cross picture from the back of this manual copied onto poster or cardstock paper and precut.

Cardboard (if cross picture is on thin paper; see Procedure #8)

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; place them somewhere that are accessible for touch. 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: Catholic, Protestant, Greek, etc. Ask them how they are different from the Armenian Cross. 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.