

## Session Nine-“Pentecostarion” The Feast of Feasts

*Main Ideas: Christ IS Risen- the celebration of Pascha continues throughout the year. Focus on commemorations of people such as St. Thomas and the Myrrhbearers and events that followed Christ’s Resurrection, such as Ascension and Pentecost during the fifty days that follow Pascha.*

*Supplies needed: From supplemental materials - “I Believe it” and “Unbelievable” cards and trivia question/fact sheet, chart paper, markers, colored pencils, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.) My Little Orthodox Christian Activity Book available at*

<https://www.orthodoxmarketplace.com/esss/product/my-little-orthodox-christian-activity-book>

Preparation: Set up your “I Believe it!” and “Unbelievable” cards.

(10 minutes) Warm Up Activity- “Would you believe that...?” Post the red and green “I Believe It!” and “Unbelievable” cards somewhere in the classroom, such as on opposite walls or tables on either side of the room. Have students start in the middle of the room, then one by one, read the statements below starting with “Would you believe that...” Students should move to the side of the room that reflects their answer. Depending on time, students could return to the middle after each statement or just switch sides if they think the answer for the next statement is different. The questions and answers aren’t really relevant, the goal is to start thinking about how you decide what to believe and what not to believe. A few statements have been included below, but consider coming up with a list of facts about the history of your parish or your town to make the info more relatable to youth of your parish.

Believe it or not:

An octopus has three hearts (True)

A butterfly can taste with its feet (True)

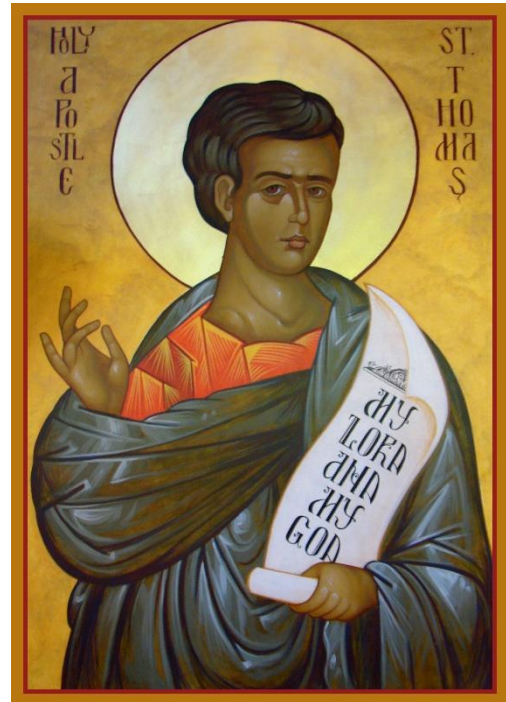
Mars has the shortest days of all the planets (False, Jupiter does)

Polar bears have black skin (True)

Orcas, usually known as Killer Whales, are actually a type of fish (False, they are a type of dolphin)

The largest ostrich egg ever laid weighed 12 pounds (False, It weighed a little over 5.5 pounds)

The human hand has 27 bones (True)



Peanuts grow underground (True)

(15 minutes) Have students take turns reading out loud about St. Thomas.

### **The Feast of Feasts**

Pascha is the Feast of all Feasts, and because it is so important, the Church celebrates for over fifty days! “Pentecostarion” is a special name for the time after the Resurrection including Christ’s Ascension into heaven, through the coming down of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and remembering the Holy Host of all the saints. Just like the Triodion is a period time that gets its name from the book of songs and services, The Pentecostarion is also book with the special songs and services celebrating the special time of the year. In this Session, we’ll learn a little bit more about how the joy of the Resurrection continues on!

### **Doubting Thomas**

Just like the Sundays before and during Great Lent, the Sundays following Great Lent are each assigned a specific person or event to remember. On the second Sunday of Pascha we remember Thomas, one of the Twelve Apostles. Remember that Mary and the women went to Jesus’s tomb on Sunday morning, and learned that His body was risen from the dead. Later that evening, the Apostles were gathered together in a room, hiding from the Jewish leaders who knew the Apostles were friends and followers for Jesus. All of a sudden, Jesus was in the room with them. Read John 20: 19-29 to find out what happened when they gathered there.

*“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.”*

*Ask youth: “What do you think it means that they were glad?”- Give them opportunities to respond, making sure to emphasize the relief and comfort they must have felt- many around them thought they were silly for believing that Christ would return, they were joyful to have their friend with them again, and probably felt some degree of comfort and protection from those who might seek to harm them for their belief.*

Thomas was not with them when Jesus came to visit and when he returned you can imagine that his friends told him that they had seen Jesus and were sure that it was him. Thomas, couldn’t believe it. *“So he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’”*

Our game at the beginning of class got us thinking about what was believable and unbelievable. Unfortunately for Thomas, he gets a little bit of a bad reputation for not believing his friends, and not believing in Jesus’s power. But this Sunday teaches us that it is natural to have doubts or questions about the faith. The Church realizes that asking questions is a way to learn, and we get the message that if our doubts or questions lead us to grow in our faith, then they can be useful. For example, there is a difference between refusing to take a medication because you can’t believe that it will work and talking to your doctor about how it works so that you are sure to take it in the right way. Jesus returns to show that He is not mad at Thomas, and Thomas has a chance to grow his faith.

*“And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace to you!’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and My God!’ Although He doubted at first, Thomas sees that this is truly God. His doubt turns into true faith that he will eventually share with many nations. You might think, it was easy for Thomas to believe because he could see and touch Jesus’s wounds to know that they are real, but we can’t do that. Jesus recognizes that Thomas’s faith is strong now that he has seen Jesus for his own eyes, but adds something for all of us. He says, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Jesus knows that we don’t have the chance to see and touch His wounds, so He blesses those who believe anyway because they have strong faith.*

[\(10-15 minutes\) Have students read about and work on the puzzle for the Myrrh-Bearing Women](#)

### **The Myrrh Bearing Women, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus**

On the third Sunday of Pascha, the church remembers several people who bravely showed their faith in Jesus and gave witness to the Resurrection.

Following the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, asked Pontius Pilate for permission to take Jesus’s body down from the Cross. Pilate gave them permission and the men wrapped Jesus’ body in linen cloths and placed it in a tomb that had not been used before. They took a great risk caring for the body of Christ and Joseph in particular had a lot to lose because he was a wealthy and a member of the Jewish leadership. Even though Pilate had given them permission, the Jewish leaders captured St. Joseph and threw him in prison. Christ appeared to Joseph while he was in prison and after he was released, he spent the rest of his life telling others about the truth of the Resurrection.



[At this point you may want to pass out copies of any relevant puzzles or activities from My Orthodox Christian Activity Book. This will provide a short break in the session. The book contains choices for many feast days and saints.](#)

As we heard in the Gospel stories of the Resurrection, Mary and the women were the first to go to Jesus’ grave after His death. These women bravely traveled before dawn to go to the tomb. As we learned in Session Five, the different Gospel accounts list several different names for the women in the group. Use the passages below to unscramble the names to complete the list of the eight women who are commonly counted among the Myrrh Bearing Women. The footnotes in the Orthodox Study Bible may also be helpful

Matthew 28: 1

Luke 24: 10

Mark 16: 1

John 20: 1

Mary \_\_\_\_\_ (AEEGANMDL)

Mary the MOTHER OF GOD

\_\_\_\_\_ (NJAANO) \_\_\_\_\_

(LESOAM)

Mary the wife of Cleopas

\_\_\_\_\_ ASNUNSA

Mary of Bethany

Martha of Bethany

**We Are All Called to be Myrrh Bearers**

The Myrrhbearers are an example for all of us to try to follow. They showed how important Christ was to them by coming “very early” in the morning to care for Christ’s body and bringing expensive oils and spices to anoint Him. They shared their testimony to what they saw so that others would believe in the Resurrection of Christ. We can follow their example in many ways. Make a list below of some ways in which we can be like the Myrrhbearers:

Youth can brainstorm together or individually and then share their lists. There could be many answers, but encourage them to add the following if they don’t come up with them on their own: “very early” could include arriving to church early and making sure that we wake up earlier enough each morning to say our prayers without being rushed; just like they brought oils and spices we can offer items like candles each Sunday and wear our nicest clothing; bearing witness to the Resurrection and to Christ by talking about our faith to others and not being afraid to say prayers in public places.

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(10 minutes) Have students read through the information about Ascension

### **The Ascension of Our Lord**

For forty days after Pascha Jesus appeared on earth. He talked with His disciples, ate food with them- not because He needed food to survive anymore, but to show that His human body had truly risen from the dead. As the time was coming for Him to go back to Heaven, He called the disciples together and told them that it was now their responsibility to take their knowledge and their faith in the resurrection out to all of the nations. By ascending in body into heaven, Christ shows us that our human form is even higher than the angels and if we want to rise to the place that He has prepared for us, we need to try as hard as we can to avoid the sins that will weigh us down. Just like the disciples, we are responsible for sharing what we know about God so that as many people as possible can join Christ in heaven.

(15 minutes) Have students read through information about Pentecost, then complete the activity sheet.

### **Happy Birthday!**

Pentecost marks another very important day in the life of the Christian Church- its birthday! Before this time, people had followed Jesus, but were not a formal Christian church with all of the services, practices, rules, etc. that we have now. After Jesus ascended into Heaven, the Apostles had to figure out how they were going to carry out His command to go and tell all of the nations. They went to the temple and gathered together to pray, but they would need help. Ten days after the Ascension, the disciples and others were gathered together and all of a sudden there was sounds like whooshing wind and tongues of fire appeared over each of the Apostles. This fire didn't burn them, it was the Holy Spirit coming to be in their midst. The Apostles began speaking to the crowds of people outside, telling them about Jesus, His Resurrection, the healing and other miracles that He had performed, and more. Being in a large city, there were many people who did not speak the same language as the Apostles, or even as each other. But, the power of the Holy Spirit made it so that everyone could understand in their own language. In that first day, over three thousand people asked to become followers of Christ, the beginning of the Church.



### **The Head and the Body**

When Jesus Ascended to Heaven, He told His disciples, *“I, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).”* His body went to Heaven and so the Church was established to be His body on Earth, to do the work for His glory. Fr. Anthony Coniaris puts it this way... we are as *“the members of the Body (the church) reporting for duty to the Head (Christ).* He continues to be present in the world today through the members of His Body.

Have your teachers ever taken you on a field trip and told you to be on your best behavior because you are representing the teacher and your school? When we pray, when we help others, when we come to services together, we are representing and showing to the world what Jesus was all about. We can follow

the example of the apostles and their actions on Pentecost throughout our daily lives. While many of

our peers at school, on sports teams, in after school activities, etc. may speak the same language as us, many may be unfamiliar with the teachings of the Jesus and of the church. Just like the apostles, the Holy Spirit can guide us to share our faith so that others can hear it and understand it even when we aren't sure of the right words to say.

### **A Special Prayer**

Since Pascha, we have not said the prayer, "O Heavenly King..." which is usually said at the beginning of the Trisagion, among other times. From Pascha until Ascension it replaced with "Christ Is Risen from the dead..." and then with the Tropar for Ascension. We also don't kneel from Pascha until Pentecost. On Pentecost we say special prayers to return to kneeling at appropriate times during services and we return to the Prayer of the Holy Spirit. "O Heavenly King, the Comforter the Spirit of Truth, Who is everywhere present and fills all things. Treasury of blessings and giver of life, come and abide in us and cleanse from every impurity and save our souls O Good One!





The Holy Spirit descended on the Twelve Apostles. Sketch in a candle for each Apostle and label their names.

(Hint, look in Acts 1:12-26 if you need help remembering their names.)

End the Session with  
Christ IS Risen!