



*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of North America, Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate*
DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
Carole A. Buleza, Director

**2006 Creative Festivals Lesson Plan:
Grades 1-3**

THEME:

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.” JOEL 2:28

GOALS:

1. To prepare students for participation in the Creative Arts Festival.
2. To help students understand the theme well enough to express it in art, poetry, prose, or photography.
3. To learn more about the Holy Spirit, not just to hear His Name.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify Joel as a prophet who lived a long time ago.
2. To understand that a prophet speaks what God wants him to say.
3. To learn that the Holy Spirit was given to all God’s people on Pentecost.
4. To know that we celebrate what happened at Pentecost on the Feast Day of Pentecost in the Orthodox Church.

TIME: 45 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Icon of Christ
- Candle or votive for icon corner
- Icon of Pentecost
- 1 large “tongue of fire” for each child to color and use in the Activity
- Crayons and scissors for each child (or you may cut out 12 “tongues of fire” in advance and simply have the children color them)

FOR THE CATECHIST:

This theme is about the Holy Spirit.

The sentence used for this year's theme comes from the *Book of Joel* in the Old Testament. The Prophecy of Joel is read at Vespers on the Feast of Pentecost in the Orthodox Church. *Joel 2:23-32*.

The Apostle Peter refers to Joel's prophecy when he speaks to the crowds on that first day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit is given to "all flesh." *Acts 2:16-18*.

The Epistle reading for Divine Liturgy on the Feast of Pentecost is *Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11*.

Joel's prophecy is rich in imagery and meaning about the Promise of the Father who will send His Spirit, not just to the few elect of Old Testament patriarchs, prophets, and judges, but for ALL of God's people.

For this age group, however, you will want to focus on the event of that first Pentecost. This may or may not be new information to your students. The Holy Spirit may be hard for many to understand, but give your students the words used by the Church. In time, as your students mature in their Faith, they will mature in understanding of the Spirit.

You can help your youngsters understand the importance of Joel's prophecy by talking about **keeping promises**. Joel tells us that God will send His Spirit to all people, not just a few. In *Acts 4-6*, we read how Jesus commanded the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and to wait for the "Promise

of the Father." This Promise is the coming of the Holy Spirit.

If your church school is few in number, you may want to combine preschoolers-grades three for the activity where they dramatize what happened at Pentecost.

Although many people like to tell children that Pentecost is the birthday of the Church, discourage children from drawing birthday cakes as their entries for the Creative Arts Festival.

In all that you do with your students, try to impart something of the wonder, the vision, the glory of what can be experienced in the Church—because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, none of that is possible!

SUGGESTED READINGS:

- *Acts* Chapters 1 and 2
- Orthodox Study Bible, "Chrismation," p. 274. See also notes for *Acts* 1-2.
- Gospel of *John 7:37-52*; 8:12. See notes in Orthodox Study Bible, p. 232; p. 234.
- "O Heavenly King"

THE LESSON PLAN

OPENING:

Have students stand before the icon and make the Sign of the Cross. Say (or sing) “O Heavenly King.” Remind students that we have said a prayer to the Holy Spirit and that in our Orthodox Church we say this prayer before lessons, meetings, and at the beginning of our private prayers. You might use the term *Trisagion* prayers and tell which prayers they are. When bishops gather for some important meeting, they will say this prayer at the beginning of their meeting. Before each Divine Liturgy, the priest stands in front of the altar and says this prayer to the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION:

Refer to the Sign of the Cross, which the children have just made. Mention that you will be talking about the Holy Spirit. Tell students that this year’s theme for the Creative Arts Festival is about the Holy Spirit.

You might say, “We are going to find out how the Holy Spirit came to the disciples on Pentecost. We’re also going to hear about a man named Joel who lived a long time ago and knew that Jesus would send us the Holy Spirit. Today, we will learn what this means. We also will talk about how the Holy Spirit is given to each of us after we are baptized.”

CONTENT:

1. Talk about Joel as a man who lived a long time ago, long before Jesus was born.

Tell students that Joel was a **prophet**. Use prepared placards with the words prophet, prophecy, and prophecy and their respective definitions.

A prophet listens to God and is chosen by God to tell other people what God wants them to know. The prophet *prophesies*. (Notice the S spelling in the verb form of the word.)

When Joel was living, people didn’t always do what God wanted them to do, so Joel had to remind them to love God. Joel said there would come a time when God would send His Holy Spirit to everybody, not just to the patriarchs, prophets, and judges of the Old Testament. This would happen after Joel died, and after Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead. The words in the theme come from this part of Joel’s prophecy.

2. Talk about the Promise of the Father. See *Acts* 1:4.

Talk with students about keeping promises. Ask for examples of someone promising something; of breaking a promise. (Children remember what adults have promised them. And woe to the adult who breaks his promise!)

You will want to emphasize that God had promised His people that He would send them the Holy Spirit. **God kept His promise!** It happened on Pentecost.

3. Review briefly what happened on the first Pentecost.

Set the scene by reminding students that after Jesus rose from the dead, He stayed on earth for 40 days. Then Jesus was getting ready to go to heaven. Our Church says Jesus ascended into heaven.

But before He ascended to heaven, Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit. And God kept His promise!

Tell the story about Pentecost, since most students will be unable to read. Unless you have an easy rendering in a children's Bible, you might use the story as simplified below. (You might gather your students around you in comfortable seating on the floor.)

Peter and the other disciples were sitting together in the Upper Room. That was the same place where they had met with Jesus for the Last Supper. Suddenly there was the sound of a rushing, noisy, and very strong wind. Tongues of fire came over each of the disciples! And all the people could understand one another, even if they were from different countries and spoke different languages. Peter was amazed, but the other people were even more amazed and they thought people had too much to drink. Peter told them, no, it wasn't that at all, since it was the middle of the day.

Peter remembered that there was a man named Joel who had made a prophecy about how God would send the Holy Spirit to His people. Peter told the people about Joel. Peter told them, "What Joel the Prophet said a long time ago has come true."

*God remembered His promise to His people. God sent His Holy Spirit to them so they wouldn't be lonely. The Holy Spirit would comfort them and make them able to know the Truth about Jesus and about God. Now we have the Holy Spirit in our Church, too. When we make the Sign of the Cross, we say, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the **Holy Spirit**."*

Help children access their imaginations by describing in sensory terms what it must have been like to experience the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. For example,

- *Soaked up by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit – Joel's term "pour out."*
- *Feeling you might be swept away by a rushing, mighty strong wind.*
- *Feeling and knowing something powerful was coming upon you.*
- *Knowing that no one was hurt by any of this, and everyone could understand one another.*

4. Give information that tells what the Holy Spirit can do for us.

Say to your students (and perhaps one or two students will provide examples):

- *The Holy Spirit helps people to know about Jesus Christ.*
- *The Holy Spirit helps us to become Christians.*
- *The Holy Spirit helps us do good things that will make God happy.*

(Note: The Apostle John uses the word "Helper" to describe the Holy Spirit and what He can do for us. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things...." See *John* 14:26.)

5. Give information about the Sacrament of Chrismation, our "personal" Pentecost.

Ask whether any student has seen a baptism. Very briefly explain that the baby is put in water three times "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Then you might

explain that after being baptized, the baby is anointed with special oil, called *Holy Chrism*. Tell students that this is called Chrismation. Also say that this is another sacrament in our Orthodox Church.

You might need to explain that the priest anoints different parts of the body with the Holy Chrism. (If students don't know what it means to be anointed, remind them of when they kiss the cross on a feast day and the priest anoints them with oil on their foreheads. This is plain olive oil, however. Holy Chrism is used *only* for Chrismation.)

You might want to explain that the Holy Chrism isn't poured or rubbed on the baby; instead, the priest uses either his fingers or a brush filled with Holy Chrism.

You will want to stress what the priest says as he anoints the baby: The priest traces the Sign of the Cross with the Holy Chrism on the forehead, eyes, nostrils, lips, both ears, chest (breast), hands, and feet, each time saying, "**the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.**" Ask students to repeat this phrase.

Make a point of talking about what it means **to receive a gift** and what it means for something to be **sealed** (kept safe and secure forever). **We receive the Holy Spirit as a gift from God. The gift is sealed in us, safe and secure.** (You might also use the image of a stamp or embossed seal that is placed on something important.)

After Chrismation, the baby is a member of the Orthodox Church and can receive Holy Communion, even as an infant. If

we didn't have the Holy Spirit, we couldn't do any of that.

You could also explain that just like the Holy Spirit came down upon each of the apostles at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes down upon the baby at Chrismation.

ACTIVITY:

Organize your students around a work space for coloring. Distribute to each a sheet with a large "tongue of fire." Give each child crayons and scissors. Have children cut out and color the "tongue of fire." (Or have children color "tongues of fire" that have already been cut out.) Tell students that you will use the tongues of fire in something coming up next. Allow time for clean-up.

Your students can act out what happened at Pentecost. (If your church school is few in number, you might do this activity with the preschool/kindergarten group or with older children as well.)

Arrange some students, ideally 12 of them, sitting in a line to represent the disciples in the Upper Room. Have as many others stand behind the "disciples." These students will hold the "red tongues of fire" they just made and be ready to place them over the heads of the "disciples" at the appointed time. Make a point of saying that there were twelve disciples at that first Pentecost (especially if you have fewer than twelve children in line).

Tell everyone else that you need their help. Ask everyone to make a sound like "shhhhhhhhhh." Keep the sound going louder and louder as you signal the children with the "tongues of fire" to

place them over the heads of the “disciples.” Keep this “shhhhh” sound going for a minute or so. Ask the students to tell you what they have just done. Help them to verbalize that they have pretended to be the disciples on the first Pentecost when the Holy Spirit, like the sound “of a rushing mighty wind,” came upon the disciples and “filled the whole house where they were sitting.” *Acts 2:2.*

Tell students that you will read to them now from the Bible where we hear about what happened at Pentecost. *Acts 2:1-4.* Remind students that the Prophet Joel spoke about this hundreds of years before Christ was even born on earth. Remind them that Joel was a *prophet*.

You might also say that the Holy Spirit was sent 50 days after Christ’s Resurrection and that Pentecost comes from a word meaning fifty.

Then ask students to tell in their own words what happened when The Holy Spirit came down on the disciples. Remind them that we celebrate this in Church on Pentecost. For older students, tell them the Church calls this feast “Descent of the Holy Spirit.” Remind students that when we receive Chrismation, the Holy Spirit is given to us, just as it was given to the disciples on the first Pentecost.

You might explain some of your parish’s local customs in celebrating this Feast, e.g., using green-colored vestments; strewing bundles of greenery around the church or on the church floor.

If students are scheduled to begin work immediately on their entries for the Creative Arts Festival, provide a

stretching activity and bathroom break before beginning the work.

CLOSING:

Gather students around the icon corner to make the sign of the Cross. You might want to speak louder when you come to “and of the **Holy Spirit**,” in order to emphasize to students that we call upon the Holy Spirit each time we make the Sign of the Cross—the same Spirit that came to us on Pentecost. You will want to explain that in Orthodox worship, we always call upon the Holy Spirit at the *beginning* of an activity, not at the end.

