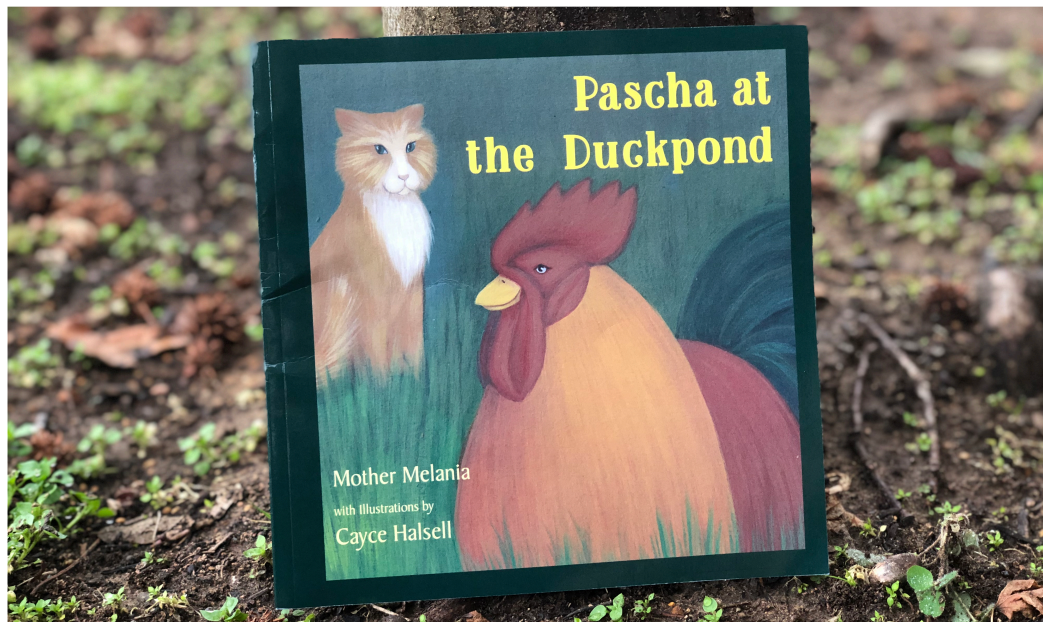


PASCHA AT THE DUCKPOND

LENTEN LESSONS FOR PRE-K TO HIGH SCHOOL



ABOUT THE BOOK

Pascha at the Duckpond is written by Mother Melania from Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga, CA.

The story is written in the form of a fable and intended for children, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if this becomes a classic among young and old alike. The story is about a group of animals preparing for Pascha during

1

WORSHIP

We participate in additional services at church during Lent

2

TEACHING

What is Great Lent all about and why does our attitude matter?

3

PRAXIS

Living our faith: Fasting, Prayer, & Almsgiving

"If anyone has labored from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward. If anyone has come at the third hour, with thanksgiving let him keep the feast. If anyone has arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings; for he shall suffer no loss. If anyone has delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near without hesitation. If anyone has arrived even at the eleventh hour, let him fear not on account of his delay..."

St. John
Chrysostom,
Paschal Homily

Great Lent - although it doesn't take long before you realize that one of these animals is YOU! But which one? Am I the rooster who keeps the rules of the fast, but misses the spirit of the fast entirely? Am I the cat who doesn't want to fast and abhors those who flaunt that they are fasting? Am I the church mouse secretly keeping the fast and quietly trying to help those around me in need? Am I the hamster who has genuine medical problems and cannot keep the fast like everyone else, but is deeply thankful for what I do have? This story challenges us to think - Who do I think I am? Who am I really? Who do I want to be?



Caring for those who are sick

During Great Lent, we provide our children with learning opportunities by attending as many Lenten services as possible, explaining the lessons being offered during Lent (the themed Sundays, why we have so many different services, etc), and also leading by example as we fast, pray, help others, read our Bible, and go to Holy Confession. It is through this active participation in Great Lent that we teach our children about their faith.

Our level of participation in Great Lent will look different for each family, depending on

FOR PARENTS & TEACHERS

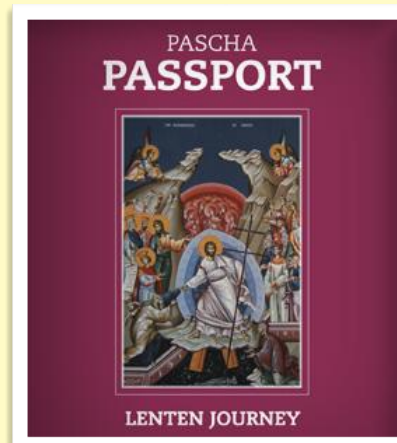
Worship, Teaching, & Praxis

Dr. Constance Tarasar wrote her doctoral dissertation on *A Process Model for the Design of Curriculum for Orthodox Christian Religious Education*. She explains that we pass our Orthodox Christian faith on to our children through a synergistic approach of incorporating participation in church services (worship), with guidance from our clergy, teachers, and parents (teaching), and living our faith daily wherever we go (praxis).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

The Pascha Passport was created by St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Loveland, Co. It is a tool to help parents and teachers guide and nurture children during the Lenten journey towards Pascha.

It is set up as a passport with spots designated for stickers showing each child's participation in the services and boxes to check for participation in prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and reading the Bible. This small book includes a short explanation of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, the different services, and the Sundays of Great Lent.



circumstances, but our goal each and every year is to increase our participation in all aspects of Great Lent. It is a journey that prepares us for the greatest of all feasts - Pascha!

“ANOTHER EXAMPLE IS THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF OUR LENTEN SERVICES. THEY CANNOT TRULY BE UNDERSTOOD UNLESS WE KNOW THAT THEIR PURPOSE IS MAINLY CATECHETICAL. IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH THE BAPTISM OF CATECHUMENS TOOK PLACE DURING THE VIGIL SERVICE ON THE NIGHT PRECEDING EASTER; AND LENT, THEREFORE, WAS A TIME OF INTENSIVE PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT, AS BAPTISM WAS THEN OFTEN CALLED.”
- FR. ALEXANDER SCHMEMMANN

Pascha at the Duckpond is an opportunity for us to discuss with our children the different attitudes one can have during Lent. Both our level of effort and mindset will impact our participation during this time. We can guide and nurture our children by explaining to them that we approach all of these aspects during Lent humbly, repentantly, and with the firm conviction that we want to improve as we strive to grow closer to God. Even more important than simply explaining this to them - is living it ourselves. Quietly, humbly, and attentively. Sophie Koulomzin insightfully reminds us, “You can teach only that which you have made your own...” Where are we on this spiritual journey and what can we do this year to continue our progress as well?

LESSONS & ACTIVITIES

Making the Most of Them

We process and learn information through all of our senses. The Church, in all her wisdom, knows this and incorporates all of our senses during the Divine Liturgy, which is a teaching service. It's important to remember this when we are preparing our lessons for our students, regardless of their age. The more senses we engage during the lesson, the more likely the student will retain the information long term.

Therefore, when planning your lessons, try to avoid only using one mode of teaching. For example, only having a verbal discussion. It's important to provide visual notes or pictures to go along with the discussion. If at all possible - and it's not always possible - provide an element that incorporates the students' sight, hearing, smell, taste, and the ability to have a hands-on element during the lesson. Again, it's not always going to be feasible to include all the senses, but try to include as many as possible.

Secondly, think carefully about what you plan for your lesson. Does each element of the lesson support the goal? Try to avoid “filler” activities as part of the main lesson. Save those for if you finish earlier than expected and have some time left over before parents pick up their children. If you choose to provide a coloring sheet, ask yourself, “How does this support the lesson's goal?” If you plan to have a discussion about the picture and then color it - great! If not, use it for the children who finish early to keep them occupied. In the classroom setting, we have such a short period of time with our kids for religious education. Let's make the most of it!

PASCHA AT THE DUCKPOND

LESSON & ACTIVITIES FOR AGES 4 - 6

GOAL: Who do I want to be in the story?

Read *Pascha at the Duckpond* by Mother Melania to your children.

Ask the children:

Did Rigid the Rooster try to help people?
(Yes)

What did he do?

(He brought a vaporizer to Henry the Hamster)

Did Rigid like being thanked for his gift?
(Yes - It's always nice when someone says thank you, but we should give gifts because it's the nice thing to do, not to get recognition for those gifts.)

Who do you think did the best job of being nice and taking care of other people?
(Charity the Church Mouse)

Why?

(She did it just to be nice. She enjoyed being with Henry and just wanted to help him. She wasn't interested in getting any recognition from him for being nice.)

Charity the Church Mouse wanted to make sure she took care of people who needed help. She even went looking for Rigid and Capers when they didn't show up to church. That's a really nice friend!

ACTIVITY: Chris is Risen!

1. Practice singing, "Christ is Risen!"
2. Learn how to respond to "Christ is Risen!" in more than one language. There is a list of responses in the back of *Pascha at the Duckpond*. Teach your children the most common responses used at your parish first.

ACTIVITY: Helping Others

1. Go on a hunt around your house to find all the coins. Then put them in the tray at church.
2. What can you do when someone in your house doesn't feel good? You could bring them a drink, a blanket, a box of tissues, their phone, or a snack. Sometimes just snuggling someone and talking to them can help them feel better too.

PASCHA AT THE DUCKPOND

LESSON & ACTIVITIES FOR AGES 7 - 10

GOAL: How should we act, especially during Great Lent?

Read *Pascha at the Duckpond* by Mother Melania to your children.

Ask your children about the different characteristics of each of the animals. Can you name some ways that we act during Lent that resembles these animals?

Rigid the Rooster: He focuses more on the rules and the outward actions of Lent, but neglects to work on humility and repentance. What do we do during Lent? (We put forth extra effort to go to church more often, fast, pray, help others, read the Bible, and go to Holy Confession.) What are humility and repentance? Why are they important?

Capers the Cat: He is not interested in participating Lent at all. Why? Why is Lent important?

Henry the Hamster: He gets sick during Lent. How does he react to the help he receives? Who helps him? Who did the best job helping him and why?

Charity the Church Mouse: She secretly fasts and only wants to help others in any way she can without receiving any recognition for what she's done. She truly loves her neighbor. Why is this the ideal way to act during Lent? (And throughout the year)

ACTIVITY: Chris is Risen!

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ACTIVITY: Helping Others

1. Ask your mom or dad if they could take you to the grocery store to buy some non-perishable foods. Then donate them to your church or local food pantry.
2. Coordinate a church cleaning day before Pascha for your students and provide each of them with a task.

PASCHA AT THE DUCKPOND

LESSONS & ACTIVITY FOR OLDER STUDENTS

GOAL: What does the Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom mean?

Part of the *Paschal Homily from St. John Chrysostom* is provided in the book, *Pascha at the Duckpond*. Read the homily in its entirety and discuss with your students.

GOAL: Who is St. John Chrysostom?

St. John Chrysostom was a bishop and lived from 347 - 407A.D. He was a gifted speaker and thus called Chrysostom or golden-mouthed. He wrote the sermon that Orthodox priests read to us every year on Pascha. (See above)

What else did St. John Chrysostom do? (He wrote extensively about God and is known as a Church Father, he gave generously to those in need and helped them any way he could, he added to the Divine Liturgy which we celebrate almost every Sunday, and more!)

Look at an icon of St. John Chrysostom. What is he wearing? (Vestments) What is he holding? (Oftentimes, a Gospel) Is he depicted by himself or with someone

else? If he's with others, are they St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory the Theologian? If so, why? (They are known as the Three Hierarchs. Each of them were bishops and wrote extensively about God.)

ACTIVITY: Pascha at the Duckpond Play

Create a play for your parish, class, homeschool co-op, or family!

Assign roles for each of the animals in the book.

Choose whether each child brings their own costume (make-shift / homemade ones are great) or if they will be purchased by the church, co-op, or families.

Write a script:

- Each of the animals will speak their lines from the book
- The narrator(s) shall speak the rest of the parts
- Make sure to include a moral to the story: Great Lent is about our preparation for Pascha through humility, love, repentance, prayer, fasting, & almsgiving. We may stumble, but we keep trying to do better.