

# ACTIVITIES FOR GREAT LENT

Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America

## Contents:

- **Two Lenten activities for each of the following age groups:**  
Grades 2-3, 4-6, and 7-8.
- **Teacher Pages (following the activity pages) with answers to questions, plus suggestions for discussion.**

## Activity One (Grades 2-3)

Read the following story about Saint Gerasim (*Gair-a-seem*) to the children. Have a church calendar and an icon of the saint for children to look at. (The OCA website, under “Feasts & Saints” for March 4, has a nice one.)

A few questions, which you may or may not choose to ask the children as you go along, are included in italics with the text. If you do choose to ask the questions, give children a minute to offer answers, but don't let it go on too long. Call their attention back to the story by saying, “Let's go on with the story” or “Let's find out what happened next.”

### **Saint Gerasim and the Lion**

Each day during the year, our Church remembers special people called saints—they loved God and worked to do the things He wants us all to do. (*Ask: What are some of those things? Praying, doing kind things for others, taking care of His world.*)

On March 4<sup>th</sup> we remember a saint named Gerasim. (Show children March 4<sup>th</sup> on the calendar, and the icon. Ask them what's in the icon with the saint. A lion! Tell them they'll find out why the lion is there as they hear the story.)

Gerasim loved to pray and be close to the trees, birds and other beautiful things God made. So he went to live in a quiet place near the Jordan River—the same river where John the Baptist had baptized Jesus many long years before.

Some other men who also wanted to spend their time praying soon joined him there. The men, called monks, lived very simple lives. They used palm branches to weave baskets. Each one had only a few clothes and a mat to sleep on. All of them ate very plain food and drank only water. They spent their time praying or working.

One day as Saint Gerasim was out walking, he heard the roar of an animal. He could tell the animal was in pain, and soon he saw what it was--a lion limping along.

The lion roared again, and Gerasim felt sorry for the poor animal. But he was afraid, too—the lion was so big and it had such a loud roar! (*Ask: What do you think Saint Gerasim did next?*)

So Saint Gerasim prayed, asking God to protect him. He walked slowly over to the lion, and when he got close he could see a sharp thorn stuck in the lion's big paw. He spoke quietly to the lion, took the paw in his hands, and gently pulled out the thorn. (*Ask: What do you think the lion did?*)

The lion wanted to stay with this kind man. So he followed Saint Gerasim back to the monastery, the place where the monks lived. (*Ask: What do you think the other monks thought when they saw Gerasim being followed by a lion?*) Well, at first the other monks were frightened, but soon they saw that the lion was a friend. So they fed him, and got to know him. He stayed with them and they took good care of him for the rest of his life. (*End*)

Show the icon again, and let the children tell you what is happening. Let them describe their experiences of loving and caring for an animal. Suggest a Lenten effort to care for animals.

**Activity Two (Grades 2-3)** (Make a copy of this sheet for each child)

Find the Word

For each sentence, unscramble the word below it and fill in the blanks.

1. God asks us to \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ to others.

V E I G

2. Jesus Christ is the \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

O N S

3. The time before Pascha (Easter) is called \_\_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Lent.

T E R A G

4. We make the \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ of the Cross to show our love for Jesus  
Christ.

G N I S

\*\*\*\*\*

Some of the letters have numbers below them. Put them in the right order, and you will spell an important word in this sentence:

Jesus Christ is our \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Activity Three (Grades 4-6)** (Make a copy of this page for each student)

During Great Lent, we read many verses from the Book of Proverbs, where we find good advice and lots of wise sayings. Here are parts of some verses from Proverbs, with one word missing. Fill in each blank with the word that fits best, from the list provided. Look them up if you need to.

1. The wise will inherit honor, but fools get \_\_\_\_\_. Proverbs 3:35
2. Commit your work to the Lord, and your \_\_\_\_\_ will be established. 16:3
3. A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the \_\_\_\_\_. 17:22
4. A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his \_\_\_\_\_. 18:2
5. Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the \_\_\_\_\_. 19:20
6. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the \_\_\_\_\_. 16: 24
7. By justice a king gives stability to the land, but one who exacts gifts \_\_\_\_\_ it. 29:4
8. Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take \_\_\_\_\_ in Him. 30:5

Words: PLANS, BODY, REFUGE, RUINS, DISGRACE, OPINION, BONES, FUTURE.

**Activity Four (Grades 4-6)**

On Sundays of Great Lent, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. Here is something Saint Basil said:

*The bread you do not use belongs to the hungry; the garment hanging in your closet and not worn is the clothing of the naked; the shoes you do not wear are the shoes of someone who is barefoot; the money you keep locked away is the money of the poor.*

What is Saint Basil saying about the things we have and the things we actually need?  
What things in your life are “extra” things that you could do without? How could you use the money you spend on “extra” things to help the poor instead?

**Activity Five (Grades 7-8)** (Make a copy of this sheet for each student)

**Find the Number**

*Do the arithmetic for each step:*

1. Write the number of Sundays in Great Lent. \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Add the number of nights Jonah was in the belly of the fish in Jonah 2: 1:17. \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Add the number of women *named* as being at Jesus' tomb in Luke 24:10. \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Subtract the number of things over which God gives mankind dominion in Genesis 1:26. \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Multiply by the number of times Jesus says "Feed my sheep" to Peter according to John 21:17. \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Subtract the number of "undesirable" groups Jesus is accused of eating with in Mark 2:16. \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Divide by the number of apostles named in Mark 3:17. \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. Add the number of Job's children (daughters and sons) in Job 1: 2. \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. Add the number of rivers that the Garden of Eden's first river divided into in Genesis 2:10. \_\_\_\_\_
  
10. Multiply by the number of Gods worshipped and believed in by Christians. \_\_\_\_\_

**What's your final number?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity Six (Grades 7-8)** (Make a copy of this sheet for each student)

**Scrambled Verses**

During Great Lent we read many verses from the Book of Proverbs. They give us good advice, and many wise sayings.

Here are some verses from Proverbs, with one word missing, and a list of scrambled words. For each blank, choose the scrambled word that best fits. Unscramble it and write it in. Look up the proverb if you need to. Verse numbers follow each proverb.

1. He who speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters \_\_\_\_\_.  
(12: 17)
  
2. Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more \_\_\_\_\_ for a fool than for him. (29: 20)
  
3. Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are \_\_\_\_\_ to the slaughter. (24: 11)
  
4. The Lord is a stronghold to him whose way is upright, but \_\_\_\_\_ to evildoers.  
(10: 29)
  
5. He who walks with wise men becomes wise, but the companion of \_\_\_\_\_ will suffer harm. (13: 20)
  
6. He who conceals his transgressions will not \_\_\_\_\_, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find mercy. (28: 13)

*Scrambled Words:*

**OITTSURNCD E**

**EDTCIE**

**OEHP**

**N TLUMBSIG**

**SOLOF**

**RSEPOPR**

## TEACHER PAGES

**Activity One:** If you wish to add another detail to the story, you can tell children that when Saint Gerasim died, the devoted lion was so stricken with grief that it lay down on the saint's grave, gave a loud roar, and died.

**Activity Two:** The scrambled words are *give, son, great, and sign*. The final word is *savior*.

Go over the meaning of "Great Lent." This is the time of getting ready for the great day of Pascha, or Easter. Ask children to think of some ways we get ready: by praying, doing good for others, and eating simple foods rather than some of the "special" things we are used to.

Go over the meaning of "savior." Jesus Christ saves us by giving us the promise that we can always be with Him, with God the Father, and with the people we love in His Kingdom.

**Activity Three:** Like all Biblical activities produced by the Department of Christian Education, this one uses the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Words in order:

- |             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| 1. disgrace | 5. future |
| 2. plans    | 6. body   |
| 3. bones    | 7. ruins  |
| 4. opinion  | 8. refuge |

Ask students which proverbs they find especially meaningful.

**Activity Four:** You may wish to tell students more about Saint Basil. Find information about his life under "Feasts and Saints" for January 1 on the OCA website.

**Activity Five:** The arithmetic is as follows:

1. **5.** As you go over the answers, you can emphasize the fact that Palm Sunday begins Holy Week. It is not one of the Sundays of Great Lent, which ends on Lazarus Saturday.

2. **5 plus 3 is 8**

6. **18 minus 2 is 16**

3. **8 plus 3 is 11**

7. **16 divided by 2 is 8**

4. **11 minus 5 is 6**

8. **8 plus 10 is 18**

5. **3 times 6 is 18**

9. **18 plus 4 is 22**

10. **1 times 22 is 22.** This is the final number.

Review the fact that God is one God in three Persons. This is not easy to understand, but it is basic to our faith because it is what God has shown us.

**Activity Six:** The scrambled words, in order, are:

- |              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. deceit    | 4. destruction |
| 2. hope      | 5. fools       |
| 3. stumbling | 6. prosper     |

Look on the website of the Department of Christian Education, **dce.oca.org**, for *Journey to Pascha*, a study unit with lessons written for various age groups, as well as instructions for making palm crosses. You will find many other resources there, too.