

Level 5: Jesus, the God-Man

Focus: The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us!

Participants will identify the purpose of God's coming "in the flesh," relating the Gospel story of the Incarnation to the Nicene Creed, the Kontakion of the Sunday of Orthodoxy and other liturgical verses. The world into which Jesus was born was not predisposed to receive Him, as reflected by events and persons who sought to kill the Christ child. Even today, the world can ignore the significance of the coming of God in the flesh.

Session 1 What is the Nativity Fast?

- **Reflect** on the idea of waiting and preparation, rather than reducing the feast of the Nativity to a one-day event.
- **List** some ways in which we might "deepen our Advent preparation.
- **Commit** yourself to reading a series of short biblical texts (one per day) on the biblical history of salvation, leading to the birth of Christ.
- **Read** and **discuss** (or reflect upon) selected chapters in *The Winter Pascha*, by Fr. Thomas Hopko, as your personal preparation for the Feast of the Nativity.

Session 2 Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

- **Describe** the event of Mary's entrance into the Temple.
- **Select** one or more verses that speak of the role of the Virgin Mary in the coming of Christ to the world, and **explain** why or how Mary's cooperation with God was an essential part of our salvation. (*cf. Liturgical Resource Bin* for selections.)
- **Tell** how or why the singing of the *Christmas Kanon* is part of our preparation for the Feast of the Nativity and what we learn from it.

Session 3 The "Winter" Saints

- **Identify** Saint Katherine and Saint Barbara, as saints that are commemorated during Advent.
- **Describe** briefly the life of each saint.
- **Acknowledge** that saints do God's will in many different ways.
- **Identify** other saints that are commemorated during this Advent season, and **tell the story** of one of them and the way his/she reflected

Session 4 St. Nicholas of Myra and Lycia

- **Identify** St. Nicholas as a bishop and patron saint of many groups.
- **Recognize** the danger of refashioning St. Nicholas into a "cozy" figure.
- **Suggest** meaningful ways of commemorating the life of St. Nicholas during this season.

Christ in their life.

Session 5 The Ancestors of Christ

- **Recognize** the prophets Daniel and Elisha as two of the forefathers who tell us about the coming of Christ, the Messiah.
- **Compare** God's saving action through His prophets Daniel and Elisha with His action through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Session 6 The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

- **Define** the final Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity as the Sunday of the Ancestors of Christ.
- **Acknowledge** and **explain** the importance of the human genealogies of Jesus Christ given to us in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.
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Session 7 The Prefeast of the Nativity

- **Differentiate** between "real" celebration and "wrongly-based" celebration of major religious feasts.
- **Identify** the Prefeast of Christmas as the week (or five days) leading directly to the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.
- **List** three ways that you will personally try to redirect your preparation for the feast of God's coming into the world.

Session 8 "God is With Us!"

- **Give examples** of how the world receives Christ today.
- **List words** that characterize our celebration of Christmas in today's society, and the ways they distort the understanding of "God with us!"
- **Describe** several concrete ways we can begin to restore the meaning of God's coming: in our personal lives, in our families, in our church life and in society.