

Blessed is the Kingdom: An Orthodox Church School Curriculum



Lesson 1

Preschool

The Prospora

Objective: Using the Prospora and the Liturgy of Preparation, students will learn that Christ is the King and is at the center of the Liturgy and our lives.



Lesson Introduction

5 min

Begin by **asking students**:

How do you know that Liturgy has begun? What do you hear at the start of the service?

Play the Liturgy link video of Blessed is the Kingdom. **Ask**:

Do you remember hearing this at the start of Liturgy? Why do you think we start the Liturgy with this exclamation?

Accept answers, and then **say**:

We are acknowledging that this is God's kingdom and that it is blessed. Because we literally say "blessed is the kingdom". We also are acknowledging that Christ is King and rules over all. At the center of our faith is Christ. Today we are going to learn about how Christ is at the center of every Divine Liturgy through the Eucharist or bread/wine we receive. So what do you think the priest does prior to this exclamation? How does he prepare for Liturgy?

Take answers, and then **explain**:

The priest enters church, prays, and kisses the icons. He even uses the prayer we just said to start church school. After praying in front of the icons, the priest enters the altar and is vested for the Liturgy. He completes the Liturgy of Preparation or proskomedia. What does Proskomedia means?

If they need help, **say**:

Proskomedia is Greek for "offering", and it is our offering to God. We form the wheat into bread and the grapes into wine. During the Liturgy, God consecrates or transforms it into the Body and Blood of Christ. This means He makes it into the body and blood, while it still retains the form of the bread and wine. Today we are going to prepare pretend Prospora, or the bread that the priest uses.

Opening Prayer

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good one.

Liturgy Link

Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

<https://www.oca.org/media/video/20th-aac-thursday-morning-divine-liturgy>

Skip to 18:34 for this portion

5 Minute Bonus

If time allows, take a walk into the church. Stand where you can see into the altar, and show the students the Table of Oblation. The priest could also bring out the Diskos and Chalice to show the students.

Lesson—25 min

Note to the teacher: Preschool classrooms may vary in attention spans. If your class is struggling with the detailed explanations of each step provided, it is okay to simply demonstrate that sections of the Prospora are removed in order to remember different people, but not go into the details of all the groups. The goal is for them to remember the purpose of the event, not all the details.

Reminder: Please tell the students before the playdough is handed out that they are recreating a solemn and holy preparation for Liturgy. While playdough is fun to use to make snakes and silly items, now is not the time. Students should be respectful and treat their creations with the solemnity they deserve. Remind students that the playdough will go home with them, and they may then play with it.

Begin by saying:

Today we are going to play the role of the priest and go through the steps of the Liturgy of Preparation using playdough. Together we are going to create loaves of Prospora and then we will work together to perform the Liturgy of Preparation.

Split the playdough into ten equal parts. Take two parts and tier them to create the two layers of Prospora “dough”. Roll each into a ball and then have a student slightly flatten each one, and stack them one on top of the other. As they help you, **ask** them:

Why do you think there are two layers to the loaves?

Take answers. Then **say**:

Christ has two natures: one divine or God and one human or Christ; You have a nature—like Christ, you are human. Is a dog a human? (No) Is a tree a human? (No, their nature is not the same as yours.) So Christ has two natures, just like the bread and wine have two natures (bread is bread and the body of Christ; and wine is wine and the blood of Christ).

After all five loaves have been formed; have them use the stamps to write IC XC in the center top and NI KA underneath. Guide each student to help you do this. **Ask them:**

What does each of these letters represent?

If they need help, **explain**:

The IC XC is the Greek letters for Jesus Christ and NI KA is the Greek that means conquers.

Then **ask**:

Where else might we see these letters?

Show an icon of Christ if available with these letters displayed. When all the loaves are completed, **say the following**:

First the priest takes one of the Prospora which is considered the lamb. Why would it be considered the lamb?”

Prior to Christ, the priests would use animals, such as lambs as part of their church service. Christ is the Lamb who died on the cross for us.



Supplies Needed

One per student:

- homemade playdough in bags or store bought playdough in container for each student to take home

One per class:

- small pitcher of purple grape juice
- small pitcher of water
- cup to represent the Chalice
- plate to represent the Diskos
- butter knife or playdough knife to represent the spear
- letter stamps for IC, XC, NI, KA (scrapbooking stamps like the ones in the link below work well, but an actual Prospora bread stamp could work)

[Hobby Lobby Stamps link](#)

- icon of Christ (optional)

Lesson Continued

Teacher Resources

OCA Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs: A Manual for Adult Instruction

<https://www.oca.org/cdn/PDFs/2023-0609-EOCB.pdf>

Chapter 1 Proskomedia: Blessed is the Kingdom

Prospophora Baking Instructions

<https://ctshbg.org/files/Propspophora-Baking-Prayers-and-Instructions.pdf>

Pictures of the Liturgy of Preparation

<https://www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-divine-liturgy/prothesis>

Play Dough Recipe

<https://www.playdoughrecipe.com>

Supplemental Ideas

- Have an actual Prospophora loaf ready for each student to take home with them and eat. Use this to remind students how the priest takes names each week to pray for at the Chalice.
- Have the priest do a Proskomedia demonstration for the students.



Have a student lift up the Prospophora the teacher made, and **say**:

The priest makes the sign of the Cross three times, then says "In remembrance of our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ." He then cuts a cube out of the center of this loaf.

Choose a student to demonstrate this, and then **continue with**:

This is placed on the plate, and then he pierces the right side while saying: One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith there came out blood and water. At this point in the service, the priest would add wine mixed with water into the chalice to represent the blood and water that came out.

Choose a student to do this with the knife. Have another student pour juice and water into the chalice cup. Keep selecting students as you **continue**:

Now we take a second Prospophora, and we cut out one portion in honor of the Mother of God, and it sits on the right hand of the Lamb on the Diskos or plate.

The third Prospophora is called that of the nine ranks, and we take nine portions out of it. Who do you think these might be for?

Take answers, then **say**:

The saints—John the Baptist, the prophets, the apostles, the hierarches, the martyrs, the monastic saints, the unmercenaries, the parents of God Joachim and Anna, the saint who is celebrated that day, and finally the saint whose liturgy is being celebrated.

Have students take turns removing these portions and placing them on the left side of the Lamb in three rows of three. While reading through the fourth and fifth Prospophora steps, have students help you complete them. **Continue**:

From the fourth Prospophora we remove a portion for the hierarchs, the priesthood, and all the living. These go below the Lamb.

And from the fifth Prospophora we take a portion for those Orthodox Christians who have died. This goes below the ones for the living. The Diskos is then covered and remains on the Table of Oblation for later.

Look at the arrangement of pieces of Prospophora on our plate. Why do you think we arranged them this way? Who is at the center? (Christ the Lamb) Why would Christ be at the center? Think back to what is said at the start of the service: 'Blessed is the Kingdom'.

Take answers and discuss, then **conclude with**:

This shows that Christ is the center of our Kingdom-- that He rules over all and should be at the center of our lives.

Have students take their Prospophora and return it all to a ball of playdough that can be put back into their bags or containers to be taken home. Remind students that now the playdough has returned to its playdough state, and they are free to be silly with it and play with it at home.

Lesson Activities

Chalice Craft—10 min

Supplies needed: plastic wine glasses, sticker gems, cross stickers, permanent markers

Have students answer the following questions:

- *The Proskomedia that we just created and prepared represents the body of Christ. What represents the blood of Christ? (Wine)*
- *We saw that the bread or body of Christ is on the Diskos before Liturgy. What is the wine stored in? (Chalice)*
- *Do you remember when we pierced the Lamb with our spear and then poured juice which represented wine and water into our chalice? This goes back to John 19:34 which reads: One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith there came out blood and water.*

Students decorate their chalice with permanent markers, a cross sticker, and sticker gems.



Closing Thoughts— 5 min

Let the students listen one more time to the Liturgy Link "Blessed is the Kingdom". Remind them to listen for that at the start of Liturgy next time. Finally, ask them how they will keep Christ at the center of their lives this week.

Keeping Christ at the Center Game (Circle Ball)—10 min

Supplies needed: a few balls of different sizes

Students sit in a circle with crossed legs. Each knee should be touching the knee of the person beside them. The ball is placed in the center of this circle. Ask the students:

- *Who is supposed to be at the center of your life? (Christ)*
- *When we prepared the Proskomedia for Liturgy, who was at the center of the Diskos? (Christ)*

Then explain:

We are making a circle around this ball, which is going to represent Christ. The goal is to keep it at the center of the circle and not allow it to escape from the circle over someone's legs.

Students roll the ball back and forth and around the circle. They see how many times they can hit it without it leaving the circle. If needed, call out names of who to roll it to next or always have the students roll it back to the teacher. This way everyone gets a turn to touch the ball, and the teacher can remain in control of the ball.



Closing Prayer

It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos we magnify you!