Living the Church Year Lesson Plan: Discovering the Power of the Cross

‘Discovering the Power of the Cross in Daily Life’

Materials: Be ready to watch Fr. Vazken’s Sunday Expressions video https://youtu.be/yBfkGCqh20M

Feast of the Discovery of the Holy Cross

Age Group: 13-18 years old
Length: 30 minutes

Learning Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand the story of St. Helena's discovery of the Holy Cross.
- Recognize the cross as a symbol of victory, hope, and renewal rather than suffering alone.
- Reflect on the difference between trusting God and worrying about the future.
- Identify practical ways to carry their own "crosses" with faith.
- Appreciate the special place of the cross and khachkars in Armenian Christian tradition.

Opening Prayer (3 minutes)

Begin with the sign of the cross.

Prayer: "O Lord Jesus Christ, through Your Holy Cross You conquered sin and death. Help us to trust You, carry our challenges with faith, and live lives filled with Your love. Open our hearts to learn from Your Word today. Amen."

Icebreaker: "What Does the Cross Mean?" (5 minutes)

Show an Armenian cross or image of a khachkar.

Ask:

- When you see a cross, what is the first thing that comes to mind?
- Why do Armenian Christians place crosses in churches, homes, and jewelry?
- Is the cross mainly a symbol of suffering, victory, love, or something else?

Write responses on a board.

Transition: "Today's lesson explores how Christ transformed the cross from an instrument of death into a symbol of life and victory."

Video Review and Teaching (8 minutes)

Part 1: The Discovery of the Cross

Explain:

- St. Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, traveled to Jerusalem in the 4th century.
- Tradition says she discovered the three crosses at Golgotha. The True Cross was identified through God's miraculous power when it restored life to a deceased woman.
- The Armenian Church remembers this discovery as a sign of the power of Christ's Cross.

Part 2: The Meaning of the Gospel Reading

Read or summarize Matthew 24:27-36.

Key point from the video:

Jesus teaches that we do not control the future.

Ask: "What does Jesus say about knowing the day and hour of His coming?"

Answer: "No one knows except the Father."

Explain: Many people spend their lives worrying about tomorrow, but Christ teaches us to trust God and focus on faithful living today.

Part 3: Discovering the Cross in Our Own Lives

The speaker explains:

Every person has a cross:

- School stress
- Family struggles
- Friend problems
- Anxiety about the future
- Health challenges

Jesus carried the Cross and prayed: "Not my will, but Your will be done."

The Christian response is not panic, but trust.

Small Group Discussion (8 minutes)

Divide students into pairs or small groups.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some "crosses" that teenagers face today?
2. Why do you think people often worry so much about the future?
3. What does it mean to trust God while still working hard and being responsible?
4. How does the Cross help us during difficult times?
5. What is one area of your life where you need to pray: "Not my will, but Your will be done"?

After a few minutes, invite volunteers to share.

Armenian Church Connection (3 minutes)

Show pictures of Armenian khachkars if available.

Explain:

- Khachkars are unique expressions of Armenian faith.
- Armenian Christians have carved and preserved khachkars for centuries despite persecution, wars, and hardships.
- The cross became a sign of hope for the Armenian people throughout history.

Ask:

"Why do you think our ancestors placed crosses and khachkars everywhere they lived?"

Expected response: To remember God's presence, protection, and victory.

Take-Home Challenge (2 minutes)

The "Discover the Cross" Challenge

This week:

1. Make the sign of the cross each morning.
2. Spend one minute praying: "Lord, help me trust You today."
3. When you feel stressed or worried, ask: "Is this something I can control, or is it something I need to place in God's hands?"

Key Takeaway

The Feast of the Discovery of the Holy Cross reminds us that the Cross is not primarily a sign of defeat. Through Christ, it became the supreme symbol of victory, hope, trust in God, and new life.