



Living the Church Year Lesson Plan: The Holy Cross of Varak

The Holy Cross of Varak (8 Minutes)

Materials: Be ready to watch Fr. Vazken's Sunday Expressions video about the Feast of the Holy Cross of Varak <https://youtu.be/TGIAcj3qPYI>

"Finding Your Simon: Carrying the Cross Together"

Ages: 12-18

Length: 45-60 minutes

Lesson Theme

The speaker explains that everyone carries crosses in life. These crosses may be struggles, worries, disappointments, or hardships. While each person must ultimately carry his or her own cross, God gives us help through the Church, prayer, and the community of believers.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the connection between Jesus carrying the Cross and our own struggles.
- Reflect on the "crosses" they carry in daily life.
- Understand the role of Simon of Cyrene in the Gospel story.
- Recognize the Armenian Church as a place of support, truth, prayer, and community.
- Discover ways they can help carry the crosses of others.

Opening Prayer (2 Minutes)

"Lord Jesus Christ, You carried the Cross out of love for the world. Help us understand what it means to carry our own crosses and to help others carry theirs. Teach us to find strength in You and in Your Church. Amen."

Opening Discussion (5 Minutes)

Ask students: **What do you think of when you hear the word "cross"?**

Write responses on the board.

Possible answers:

- Jesus
- Church
- Sacrifice
- Faith
- Suffering
- Love
- Hope

Then ask: **What are some difficult things young people deal with today?**

Students may mention:

- School pressure
- Family problems
- Friendship issues
- Anxiety
- Social media
- Loneliness
- Fear about the future

Explain:

The speaker in the video calls these kinds of struggles "crosses."

Video Viewing

Watch the video together. Ask students to listen for:

1. The story of Simon of Cyrene.
2. What the speaker says modern crosses are.
3. What he identifies as today's "Simon."
4. Why the Church is important.

Main Lesson Discussion (15 Minutes)

Part 1: Simon of Cyrene

Review the story from the video. As Jesus carried His Cross toward Golgotha, Simon was taken from the crowd and made to help carry it.

Ask:

- Why do you think the speaker focuses on Simon?

- Why is Simon important?
- Have you ever had someone help you during a difficult time?

Main Point

Even Jesus accepted help carrying His Cross. Sometimes God sends people into our lives to help us carry our burdens.

Part 2: Everybody Has Crosses

The speaker mentions several examples:

- Health struggles
- Financial problems
- Difficult relationships
- Family challenges

Ask: **What crosses do teenagers carry?**

Possible answers:

- Pressure to fit in
- Academic stress
- Family conflicts
- Fear of failure
- Being left out
- Making difficult choices

Discuss: Why do people often try to hide their crosses?

Part 3: The Church as Simon

One of the most important ideas in the video is that the Church can become a modern-day Simon.

Ask:

How can the Church help people?

Possible answers:

- Prayer
- Worship
- Friendship
- Guidance
- Youth groups
- Sunday School
- Support during difficult times

Explain: The speaker says the Church is not simply a building or history. It is a living community that helps people carry their crosses.

Small Group Activity (10 Minutes)

"My Cross, My Simon"

Give each student an index card. On one side write:

A Cross I Carry

Examples:

- Stress
- Fear
- Anger
- Family problems
- Feeling alone

On the other side write:

The Simons Who Help Me

Examples:

- Parents
- Grandparents
- Friends
- Priest
- Teachers
- Youth leaders
- Church community

Invite students to share if they are comfortable.

Reflection on Truth (5 Minutes)

The speaker repeatedly says:

"Truth is not an idea. Truth is Jesus Christ."

Ask:

What do you think this means?

Guide discussion toward:

- Christianity is about a relationship with Christ.
 - Jesus shows us how to live.
 - We look to Christ when life becomes confusing.
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Becoming a Simon

Ask:

How can you become a Simon for someone else this week?

Possible answers:

- Encourage a friend
- Listen to someone who is hurting
- Pray for someone
- Include someone who feels left out
- Help a family member without being asked

Explain:

A Christian not only receives help but also gives help.

Key Takeaways

1. Everyone has crosses to carry.
 2. Jesus understands our struggles because He carried the Cross.
 3. Simon of Cyrene reminds us that God gives us help.
 4. The Church is a community that helps us bear life's burdens.
 5. The truth we seek is found in Jesus Christ.
 6. Christians are called to help others carry their crosses.
 7. Faith is not only about history; it is meant to help us today.
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Closing Challenge

This week:

- Identify one cross you are carrying.
- Pray about it every day.
- Attend church and look for ways the community can strengthen you.
- Be a Simon for one person by helping, encouraging, or praying for them.