

Section A — FOCUS Study Themes

Particular Story Selections Organized by Theme with Group Levels noted

- *Being Orthodox in Today's World*
- *The Season of Christmas*
- *God is Calling You*
- *The Journey to Pascha*

Being Orthodox in Today's World *"I Am Orthodox!"*

Theme Books for Children

People, written and illustrated by Peter Spier. [ISBN 0-385-24469-X Large paperbound, ISBN 0-385-13181-X Trade]. *All Ages* An excellent resource book to use throughout this study, this large (and fairly intricate) picture book emphasizes the differences/individuality among the four (to six) billion people on earth. Can be used for discussions on how we are the same and different, and what the implications are "for the peace of the whole world...."

A Picnic in October, by Eve Bunting. illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. [Harcourt Brace & Co. ISBN 0-15-201656-2 hardcover] *Ages 7-10*. A boy finally understands why his grandmother insists on taking the family to Ellis Island each year to celebrate Lady Liberty's birthday. A story about the Statue of Liberty, and the significance of Ellis Island, where so many immigrants entered America.

The Prairie Train, by Antoine Ó Flatharta, illustrated by Eric Rohmann. [Crown Publishers, Inc.-Random House. ISBN 0-517-70988-0 hardcover]. *Ages 7-10* As a young Irish immigrant boy travels by steam engine across the American prairie to a new home, he loses a favorite toy made by his grandfather. Distraught about his loss and the uncertainty ahead, he falls asleep, but a meeting with his grandfather in a dream prepares him for the new experiences that await him at the end of his journey.

The Keeping Quilt, by Patricia Polacco. [Aladdin Paperbacks, NY. ISBN-0-689-84447-6 paperback; ISBN 0-671-64963-9 hardcover. Illustrated] *All Ages* A homemade quilt sewn together from scraps of a young Russian-Jewish emigrant girl's dress becomes a family keepsake that ties together four generations, remaining a symbol of their enduring love and faith. A good story about keeping family traditions.

Uncle Vova's Tree, by Patricia Polacco. A touching story about Russian Orthodox immigrants to America.

Dancing with Dziadziu, by Susan Campbell Bartoletti. [Harcourt, Brace and Co. [ISBN 0-15-2-675-5]] Polish story set around Easter about how grandparents met and courted. Love and family oriented. Charming illustrations.

Bravo Maurice!, by Rebecca Bond. [Little, Brown & Company. ISBN 0-316-10545-7 Hardcover] *All Ages* A delightfully illustrated book about the first 6-8 yrs. of a boy's life

with his family, as his relatives think he will take up their careers (for he seems so good at and interested in each), until one day they discover he has a special gift of his own.

Families Are Different, written and illustrated by Nina Pellegrini. [A Holiday House Book, ISBN 0-8234-0887-6] **Age 4-12** Nico lives in a large town with her family. She and her sister look a lot alike, but neither resembles their mom and dad. Nico looks around and realizes that families *are* different. Some have stepsisters or step-brothers, one or several parents and grandparents. Some all look alike, but that isn't what's important. These Korean girls are adopted, but their family is one that is built on love.

The Wall, by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Ronald Himler. [A Reading Rainbow Book, Clarion Books. ISBN 0-395-51588-2 hardcover, ISBN 0-395-62977-2 paperback] **All Ages** A young boy accompanies his father on a visit to his "grandfather's wall"—the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. While there, he gets a "sense" of the wall's significance for so many people. Excellent illustrations.

I Look Up To My Dad, by Cedric I. Hurtt. [A Leathers Publishing Production, (Phone 1-888-888-7696) ISBN 1-890622-82-6] **Ages 3-6** A modest paperback book for Dads to read with their sons (or daughters) that sets a good example of relationships and commitment for both.

Something to Remember Me By, by Susan V. Bosak, illustrated by Laurie McGaw. [ISBN 1-896232-01-9 hardcover, 10896232-02-7 paperback] **Ages 7-Adult** The story of the relationship between a grandmother and her granddaughter over the years, illustrating the many gifts that each can give to one another. This award-winning book is a celebration of the gift of love, memories and legacies across generations.

Love You Forever, Robert Munsch. [ISBN 0-920668-37-2A] tender story of the love of a mother for her child, even as he grows up and becomes a man. The story reverses when she needs his love and care. For all ages.

Crazy Lady! by Jane Leslie Conly. [Harper/Collins Publishers. ISBN 0-06-021360-4] The story of Vernon, a junior high boy who befriends a neighborhood woman and her mentally challenged son. Unconditional love and overcoming loss.

Read for Me, Mama, by Vashanti Rahaman [Honesdale, Pa.: Boyds Mills Press, 1997] A young mother is too ashamed to admit to her 6 or 7 year old son that she cannot read

Why? by Nikolai Popov [North-South Books, NY ISBN 1-55858-534-6] A wordless picture book that shows how simple aggression can escalate into violence (involving a mouse and a frog) that quickly results in ruin. Striking illustrations.

North Star: St. Herman of Alaska by Dorrie Papademetriou. [ISBN 088141-223-6 hardcover] A charming story of the life of St. Herman, the first saint of North America, interwoven with northern lights, Kodiak bears, giant cabbages and angel's wings that are part of the stories about this saint who loved children.

If A Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks, by Faith Ringgold. [Simon & Schuster: Books for Young Readers. ISBN 0-689-81892-0] A well-illustrated and simply-told story of the life of the African-American girl Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. The story, told by a city bus, introduces students to Martin Luther King and other key persons and events in the life of the civil rights movement in America.

The Story of Passover, by Norma Simon. [HarperCollins Publishers; Trophy Picture Book ISBN 0-06-443491-5], **Ages 7-12**. A soft-cover book with good illustrations that provides a very readable review of the biblical story of the first Passover, with additional material on how the Jewish people have celebrated this feast up to the present day. Teachers and parents can use whatever portions are relevant for the age of their children.

For Every Child: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in words and pictures. Text adapted by Caroline Castle, Foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. [Published in association with UNICEF: Phyllis Fogelman Books (Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers) ISBN 0-8037-2650-3 hardcover] **Age 6-Adult** Impressively illustrated by 15 world famous artists, this is an book based on a selection of 14 of the 54 principles in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, related in simple language. (The full text of each principle is printed in an appendix.)

Theme Books for Teens & Adults

Orthodox America: 1794-1976; Development of the Orthodox Church in America, by Constance J. Tarasar, General Editor, and John H. Erickson, Associate Editor. [The Orthodox Church in America, Department of History and Archives, Syosset, New York 1975.] The commemorative volume of the history of the Orthodox peoples and churches in North America, published by the OCA on the occasion of the Bicentennial of the United States. **Click on title for access to text.**

Orthodox Christians in America, by John H. Erickson. [Oxford University Press, *Religion in American Life* Series, ISBN 0-19-510852-3] A good introduction for teachers and high school students. Much of the material (between the first and last chapters) is a condensed and updated version of material that appeared in **Orthodox America 1794-1976: Development of the Orthodox Church in America** (OCA, 1975. *Out-of-print*; see oca.org for text). Contains a helpful Appendix with a current listing of Orthodox Churches worldwide, a glossary of terms, a brief chronology of the history of the Church in North America, and bibliography.

The Orthodox Church, by Bishop Kallistos (Ware)

The Orthodox Way, by Bishop Kallistos (Ware)

Celebration of Faith, Vol. 1: I Believe by Alexander Schmemmann. [ISBN 0-88141-111-6 paperback]. The first volume of a trilogy of short sermons, edited in English (delivered originally in Russian on Radio Liberty to believers and searchers for the faith in communist Russia) focuses on the Nicene Creed. An excellent text for small group discussions in connection with baptism and Christian life.

For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy, by Alexander Schmemmann. [ISBN 0-913836-08-7]. One of the most popular introductions to Orthodox faith and life. Originally written for a National Student Christian Federation conference, its relevance and impact on youth and adults across the generations has led to its translation into more than 15 languages worldwide. Confronts contemporary issues such as "secularism" and Christian culture in the modern age, but from within the perspective of worship and the liturgy of the Church.

Of Water and the Spirit, by Alexander Schmemmann. [ISBN 0-91

Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy and the West, by Alexander Schmemmann. [ISBN 0-913836-49-4]. Twelve essays on issues and reflections on the Orthodox witness in today's world, relating to history, theology, liturgy, canonical order, mission, and dialogue with other churches.

Witness to the World, by John Meyendorff. [ISBN 0-88141-069-1 paperback] A collection of editorials from *The Orthodox Church* newspaper that focus on the Church's responsibility in education and mission, Orthodox participation in ecumenical dialogue, and spiritual developments in Russia.

Vision of Unity, by John Meyendorff. [ISBN 0-88141-068-3 paperback] A collection of relevant editorials from *The Orthodox Church* newspaper that focus on Orthodox unity in North America and basic principles of Church structure.

The Meaning of Icons

Christ and the Church (Afonsky)?

Toward An American Orthodox Church (Bogolepov)?

[Look also for related themes in books listed in the sections below]

Holy Week **The Journey to Pascha**

Theme Books for Children

The Story of Easter, by Aileen Fisher. [HarperCollins Publishers; Trophy Picture Book ISBN 0-06-443490-7], **Ages 6-10** This soft-covered book with good illustrations tells the biblical story of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus with references to different ways of celebrating the feast throughout the world. A few adjustments in vocabulary/practice may be necessary (e.g., change all adjectives for days of Holy Week to "Holy" Thursday for Maunday Thursday, Holy Friday for Good Friday, etc. where necessary.) Teachers and parents should easily recognize and adjust where needed.

The Story of Passover, by Norma Simon. [HarperCollins Publishers; Trophy Picture Book ISBN 0-06-443491-5], **Ages 7-10**. A soft-cover book with good illustrations that provides a very readable review of the biblical story of the first Passover, with additional material on how the Jewish people have celebrated this feast up to the present day. Teachers and parents can use whatever portions are relevant for the age of their children.

Celebrate: A Book of Jewish Holidays, by Judith Gross. [Platt & Munk; "All Aboard Books" series, ISBN 0-448-40302-1], **Ages 4-8**. This is a brief introduction to Jewish Holidays with references to Biblical events. Can be used as a reference for younger children when speaking of New Testament Feasts that fulfill Old Testamental events. Delightful illustrations by Bari Weissman.

God is With Us, by Sophie Koulomzin. [OCA –OCPC]. **Ages 4-10**. A soft-cover book of Bible stories for children, with iconographic illustrations covering basic stories from Creation to Pentecost. Stories for the Journey to Pascha study unit are found in pages 82-105. (*Out of print, but available in many parish libraries.*)

The Tale of Three Trees, retold by Angela Elwell Hunt. [Lion Publishing, Elgin, IL ISBN 7459-1743-7] **Ages 4-10 & above**. Three little trees on a mountain exchange their dreams of what they wish to become when they grow up, not knowing that their expectations are exceeded as each has an important role in the life of God's Son. Beautifully illustrated by Tim Jonke. 16pp. Audio cassette also available

The Book of Jonah, by Niko Chocheli. [SVS Press ISBN 0-88141-207-4] **Ages 7 & above.** A wonderfully illustrated story of Jonah, the reluctant messenger God sent to Nineveh to call the people to repentance. (The biblical story is one of the 15 Old Testament readings read on Holy Saturday.)

A Child's Story of Easter, by Etta Wilson. [Ideals Children's Books, Nashville; Hambleton-Hill Publishing, Inc. ISBN 1-57102-107-8. **Ages 6-10.** Large picture book with a good, brief narrative on Jesus' life, and teaching, with emphasis on the last days in Jerusalem. Illustrations are geared more to younger children.

The Easter Story, by Carol Heyer. [Ideals Children's Books, Nashville; Hambleton-Hill Publishing, Inc. ISBN 0-8249-8439-0. **Ages 6-10.** Striking illustrations (which never show the face of Jesus, but focus on the events of which he was a part) summarize the highlights of Jesus' life, and the drama of his suffering, death and resurrection.

The Very First Easter, by Paul L. Maier. [Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. ISBN 0-570-07053-8]. Written by an historian, this book is a conversation between a 10-11 year-old boy and his parents that tells the story of events from the Entry to Jerusalem to the Ascension. Questions asked by the boy are answered with reference to the Church, the Eucharist, Christ's humanity and divinity, in simple terms and with reference to the historical context. Good for middle-school children. Major weakness is the "realistic" Hollywood style of the illustrations.

Rechenka's Eggs, by Patricia Polacco. A delightful Easter story set in Orthodox Russia about Babushka and her prize-winning pysanki. Themes of love, caring and birth. The author is known for her books about ethnically diverse neighborhoods and is also an illustrator. Ukrainian and Georgian, she has studied iconography, which is evident in her books.

The Giving Tree, by Shel Silverstein. [Harper/Collins Publishers. ISBN 0-06-025665-6] The story of a tree that is friend to a boy throughout his life. An example of unconditional love and giving as the tree continues to give his life for others' needs. This book has become a classic for all ages.

Dancing with Dziadziu, by Susan Campbell Bartoletti. [Harcourt, Brace and Co. ISBN 0-15-2-675-5] Polish story set around Easter about how grandparents met and courted. Love and family oriented. Charming illustrations.