Theme:
“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (Mark 11:17)

Goal:
To help the students understand the theme well enough to express it in art, photography, poetry, and creative writing.

Lesson Objectives:
The students will be able to:
• Recall that the Church is God’s house and therefore is a holy place.
• Look at the icon of the Cleansing of the Temple and describe what is happening.
• Identify which behavior is appropriate and inappropriate in church.
• Discuss some ways we can help new people feel welcome in our church.

Time: 40 Minutes

Materials:
• Icon of the Entrance into Jerusalem (attached)
• Icon of the Cleansing of the Temple (attached)
• Cleansing of the Temple Coloring Page (attached)
• Crayons

Background Information for the Teacher:
Because this theme might be difficult to understand, especially for young children, it would help to “set the scene” so that the children can place Jesus’ actions in context. By first discussing Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, the children may be able to relate to an event that’s more familiar. In addition, because Jesus was welcomed into the city and treated with great honor and respect, it becomes clear that He was acting in a position of authority when He cleansed the Temple. This was not a random act when Jesus suddenly became angry one day. Jesus was acting on behalf of God the Father. The Temple had previously been a holy place to worship God and study His Word and now it had become defiled, and therefore needed to be cleansed.

Opening Prayer:
“In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”
Introduction:
“Today we’re going to learn about our Creative Festivals theme. It comes from the Book of Mark in the New Testament of the Bible: ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.’ The prayer we just said also mentioned the word, ‘house.’ Whose house do you think we’re talking about? Is it my house or your house? (No.) What about God’s house? Could we be talking about God’s house? (Yes.) What is another name for God’s house? (The Church.) If the Church is God’s house, do you think it’s a holy place? (Yes, the Church is a very holy place.)

The Entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem

“Do you remember what Palm Sunday is? Palm Sunday takes place the week before Pascha. On Palm Sunday we remember when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.” (Show the students the icon of the Entrance into Jerusalem. Be sure to point out that children as well as adults welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem.) “What are the people doing? (Taking palm branches from the trees, laying them on the ground, waving them in the air, laying their clothes on the ground.) “Jesus rode on the donkey as it walked over the palm branches and clothes. This was a sign of great honor. The people shouted, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Jesus Drives the Merchants Out of the Temple

“The next day, Jesus went to the Temple. It was a very holy place. Today we worship God in the Church, but at that time, the Temple was the place where people worshipped God. Jesus saw that there were many merchants who had set up tables inside the Temple. Does anyone know what a merchant is? (Obtain responses.) A merchant is someone who sells things. Merchants were selling animals that people bought to give as offerings to God. Other things, such as incense, were sold, too. There were also people who made change and traded different kinds of money.” (Show the children the icon of The Cleansing of the Temple. Point to Jesus, some of the figures in the icon, the animals, etc., and have the children describe what is happening.)

“Can you imagine if we had people buying and selling animals inside our church? Do you think that would be a good thing?” (No.) “Jesus didn’t think this was a good thing! He turned the tables over and drove out of the Temple all those who were selling things and making change. He said, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.’”

The Church is a Holy Place

“So we’ve learned that the church is a house of prayer and is a holy place. How do we know this? What are some things we do in church?” (Obtain responses. Possible
responses may include making the sign of the cross when we enter or leave the Church, worshipping God by attending Divine Liturgy and other services, receiving the sacraments, praying, singing, etc.)

“How do you think we should behave in church? What are some things we should or shouldn’t do?” (Obtain responses.) I’m going to mention some things and I want you to tell me if this is something we should do when we’re in church. Answer by saying yes or no.”

Try to wear the nicest clothes we have to church. (Yes.)
Run inside the church. (No.)
Kiss the icons. (Yes.)
Make the sign of the cross. (Yes.)
Talk loudly to our parents. (No.)
Eat our holy bread in such a way so that we get crumbs all over the floor. (No.)
Make sure we’re standing during important parts of the service, such as the Gospel reading. (Yes.)
Play with the service books by using them as building blocks. (No.)
Try to pay attention to the service. (Yes.)

A House of Prayer for All Nations

“What do you think it means to be a house of prayer for all nations? Do you think only some people are allowed in, but not everyone?” (No, the Church is supposed to welcome all different types of people, from all different places.)

“In the beginning of our lesson, we talked about Palm Sunday and how the people, including children, welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem. So you have an important job in the church, too. When new people come into our church, what are some things we should do to make them feel welcome?” (Greet them, talk to them, introduce them to other people, invite them to sit with us, help them follow along with the service, give them holy bread, invite them to coffee hour, invite the children to Sunday Church School, etc.)

Activity

Give each child the coloring page and crayons. Have the children color the picture. If time permits, you may also have them work on their Creative Festival entries.

Closing Prayer

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”
Cleansing the Temple

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