Read

Acts 10:34a, 37–43
Psalm 118:1–2, 16–17, 22–23
Colossians 3:1–4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6b–8
John 20:1–9, Mark 16:1–7, or Luke 24:13–35

Easter Sunday: The Resurrection of the Lord

March 31, 2024

REFLECTION

What is it like to keep a promise?

When the women came to the tomb of Jesus to anoint him, they wondered aloud who would roll away the stone. But when they arrived, the tomb was empty and they were told that Jesus had been raised from the dead . . . he had kept his promise!

That wasn't the end for Jesus, but just the beginning. Everything that he taught his disciples and everything he showed them was true. Their faith hadn't been in vain. This was their new beginning.

Easter is our new beginning too. The healing Jesus brought, the kingdom he taught, and the love he shared, all of it is open for each one of us. Sin does not have the final say in our lives. Jesus defeated that. His resurrection paves a path for our new life in him.

Because of that, we are an Easter people and "Alleluia" is our song! We are no longer slaves to sin and death. We have new life in Christ and every day is an invitation to live as his disciple. If Jesus kept his promise, we can too. We can be trustworthy, virtuous, and faithful. And if we ever fall, we can remember that Jesus loves us as we are and continuously calls us to follow him.

ACTION

Easter eggs are a fun way to celebrate new life. Instead of candy inside, research scriptures passages where Jesus is making a promise or saying he will do something. Write them down in your prayer journal and on small slips of paper. Put those pieces of paper with the verses on them in plastic Easter eggs and share them with friends and family. Check out Matthew 11:28, 16:24–25, 28:20 and John 6:37, 10:10, 14: 3, 14: 18 for inspiration.

"Man of Your Word" —Maverick City Music feat. Chandler Moore and KJ Scriven *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TrVCZF-4pI*

QUESTIONS

- What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- What promises have you made to God and others that you want to keep?
- Easter is a time of new beginnings. Where in your life do you want to begin again?

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Introduction to
EASTER TIME

The Season

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The season of Easter Time is a fifty-day celebration that Christ has conquered death and reigns with the Father for eternity. Through his passion, death, and resurrection, we are immersed into Christ's paschal mystery. We gaze again upon the face of love poured out, sacrificed for us and for all, the face of God that we see through Christ's life and love. And, we are taught yet again that this loving way is to be our way, the Way.

The Easter Gospel accounts bring us face to face with the mystery of Christ's resurrection, so that we, with the disciples, may move from unbelief to belief, declare our love of Christ, and recommit ourselves to sharing this love in our world.

If we have kept Lent well, Easter Time will help us solidify our commitment to Christ in our daily living. If we slipped during Lent, letting go of resolutions and falling into less-than-Christlike patterns of behavior, this season may be one of new opportunity to live in the hope and joy of the resurrection. Through Christ, we no longer need to despair: we have all we need to overcome the temptations and challenges of life. By the end of the season, we will be reminded that we are promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who will guide us and remind us of all we have learned from our Lord.

There is no doubt that we need Easter's joy, hope, and love. There is much in our lives as individuals and in the world that speaks more of death and darkness than of life and light. It is essential, then, that we linger in Easter Time, for its full fifty days, and carry it as witnesses into our lives. Christ's risen life has the power to change the world; we must carry this life through our daily living, as Easter people, now and forever.

Celebrating Easter Time with Teens

While Lent has a particular sort of appeal for teens who are developmentally moving from concrete to abstract thinking, Easter Time may be a challenge, particularly for younger teens. The resounding themes of love and the assurance of the Holy Spirit provide the concrete direction needed for younger teens, while the mystery of the resurrection, ascension and descent of the Holy Spirit may be more appealing to older youth. Bring the season to life in your reflections by sharing your own examples of Christian life and love, and invite the teens to do the same for one another.

Preparing the Liturgical Environment

The white of Easter Time is bright after the long Lenten bareness and penitential violet. Add an Easter lily, baptismal candle, and green plants to your environment to reinforce the focus of the season on the newness of life, which we gain through Christ's resurrection. Include a Bible or lectionary, open to the Easter narrative, and a strip of cloth or paper on which is written the word "Alleluia!"

March 31, 2024

EASTER SUNDAY: THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

LECTIONARY #42ABC
Acts 10:34a, 37–43
Psalm 118:1–2, 16–17, 22–23
Colossians 3:1–4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6b–8
Sequence: *Victimae paschali laudes*
John 20:1–9, Mark 16:1–7, or, at an afternoon or evening Mass, Luke 24:13–35

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Easter is the greatest celebration in the life of the Church, for it commemorates the resurrection of Jesus and his victory over sin and death! Yet it's fascinating that on this Easter Sunday, the Gospel reading makes no mention of an appearance of the risen Christ. It reveals an empty tomb and the lack of understanding among some of Jesus' followers that he would indeed rise from the dead. Mary Magdalene believed that someone had taken the body of Jesus. Her first experience on Easter morning was one of dismay and grief, not of joy. When we are faced with uncertain situations, we need to trust God, seek the assistance of other believers, and keep working to better understand the mystery of God.

FOCUS: *Jesus has risen from the dead! Alleluia!*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The octave of Easter is the eight-day celebration of Easter. It begins on Easter Sunday and ends the following Sunday. Easter Time lasts a total of fifty days, but special significance is dedicated to the octave of Easter. Some ways to enter more deeply into this eight-day celebration are to read the Gospel readings each day, sing songs with "Alleluia" in them, enjoy a special treat or meal, get up early and watch the sunrise, get out and enjoy nature, or journal about your blessings. This is truly the most joyful time of the entire year. Christ is truly risen and the Easter octave provides intentional time to mediate on the mystery and joy of the resurrection.

Church Teaching Connection

"The signs of the resurrection testify to the victory of life over death, love over hatred, mercy over vengeance. . . . Dear brothers and sisters! If Jesus is risen, then—and only then—has something truly new happened, something that changes the state of humanity and the world. Then he, Jesus, is someone in whom we can put absolute trust; we can put our trust not only in his message but *in Jesus himself*, for the Risen One does not belong to the *past*, but is *present* today, alive" (Pope Benedict XVI, Urbi et Orbi Message, Easter 2012).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 20:1–9

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still

dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

▶ Have you ever experienced something really unusual? How did you respond? Was it challenging to communicate what happened to others? Did they believe you?

Today's Gospel about the resurrection could be called an "unbelievable" event. In this first part of John's account of the resurrection, it appears to be more about the case of the empty tomb than the resurrection of Jesus. There is no mention of an appearance from the risen Lord; only the empty tomb and burial cloths give us reason to believe. It is easy for us to see these as signs of the resurrection, but for those disciples who were the first to encounter the empty tomb, they didn't quite understand. Even though we hear that the beloved disciple believed, we are left with remark that "they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead."

Because this passage does not state the obvious, nor do the disciples receive a clear message saying, "This is what happened," we are left that with the choice to believe or not. There are many times in our faith journey when we encounter a situation that might confuse us. Is there a hidden reality that the visible signs are pointing to? Are we missing something that God is trying show us? We are unsure how to proceed.

▶ What can we learn about facing these types of situations from the way Mary, Peter, and the beloved disciple act in today's Gospel?

Mary invites others into the situation so that she is not journeying alone. Perhaps together they can figure out what is going on. Peter and the beloved disciple investigate things further. The beloved disciple has faith. Each of these reactions helps us to respond in uncertain situations.

Even if we understand that the resurrection had taken place when we hear today's Gospel passage, it is important to remember that the resurrection is part of Jesus' paschal *mystery*. There are many theological works today that help us to understand this, but part of it will always remain a mystery because it is the action of God, and we can never fully know the mind of God. Our whole Christian life is about being more deeply immersed in that saving mystery. The Church spends the next fifty days, the length of the season of Easter, exploring the mystery of Christ's resurrection.

▶ What are some things you know about the resurrection and what Jesus did after he had been raised?

Without the resurrection sin prevails, our faith is ineffective, and we are a people without hope. Death, not life, is the end of our story. Through the resurrection our faith is life-giving and we are a people of great hope. We are shown that eternal life with God is our ultimate calling.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 164.

The resurrection of Jesus is the central truth of our faith.

Jesus is alive and we can place our full trust in him.

The Easter season is a time of great hope and joy.

Act on the Word

Easter Egg Hunt

For this activity, you will need plastic eggs filled with treats, copies of the Victimae Paschali Laudes for each student (found below), one copy of the Victimae Paschali Laudes that has been cut into strips of paper with two lines of the text on each strip, and one special set of nine eggs.

On Easter Sunday, a special sequence entitled *Victimae Paschali Laudes* is sung before the Alleluia and Gospel. The sequence began as part of the sung Alleluia, but is now separate from it. The Easter sequence is from an ancient liturgical hymn. The English text follows:

Christians, to the Paschal Victim
Offer your thankful praises!
A Lamb the sheep redeems;
Christ, who only is sinless,
Reconciles sinners to the Father.
Death and life have contended in that combat stupendous:
The Prince of life, who died, reigns immortal.
Speak, Mary, declaring
What you saw, wayfaring.
"The tomb of Christ, who is living,
The glory of Jesus' resurrection;
bright angels attesting,
The shroud and napkin resting.
Yes, Christ my hope is arisen;
to Galilee he goes before you."
Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining.
Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!
Amen. Alleluia.

After preparing all the eggs, including the ones that contain the lines from the Easter sequence, hide them before the young people arrive. When you are ready to start the Easter egg hunt, explain that the special eggs have phrases of the Easter sequence inside. Share briefly what the sequence is.

Once all the eggs have been found, invite the teens who found the special eggs to bring their slips of paper up and have everyone try and put the sequence in order. Once they are finished, pass out the copies of the *Victimae Paschali Laudes* and use it as prayer of praise to begin your gatherings during Easter Time.

Closing Prayer

Loving and creating God,
you have shown us the path to life,
and we celebrate it with joy and hope.
Free us from all that leads to death.
Keep us growing in goodness and holiness.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.