

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 8

Jesus Is Alive

FOCUS

Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion. Mary Magdalene was the first person to see him at the empty tomb. The learners should be able to tell what happened on Easter morning.

GETTING READY

We sometimes assume that the Easter news, like the Nativity event, is so well known and loved that it will simply “teach itself” and not require careful attention.

Children may know about the resurrection and some can tell the story in their own way. But it is important for teachers to reflect on the Gospels' witness to Jesus' rising from the dead. If that had not happened, we would remember little else about him. He alone is greater than death; in this, Jesus is truly the Son of God whom we confess in our creeds. It is this risen Christ who meets us and claims us in Holy Baptism. He is living and active, our host at every celebration of Holy Eucharist.

All four of the Gospel writers record stories about the resurrection. In *Matthew*, Jesus is placed in the tomb after his death by Joseph of Arimathea. The Pharisees remember Jesus' promise that he will rise in three days, and so they heavily guard the tomb's entrance. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary visit the tomb on the third day. After an earthquake, an angel rolls away the stone. The angel tells the women that Jesus has been raised and is on his way to Galilee. The women meet Jesus along the road and he asks them to bring the disciples to Galilee.

In *Mark*, the “Marys” go to anoint Jesus' body on the third day. They are worried that they will be unable to move the stone back. Upon arriving at the tomb, they discover that the stone has already been moved. A man wearing a white robe tells them not to be afraid. He says that Jesus has been raised from the dead and that they should go and tell His disciples.

Luke's story begins in the same way: the women go to anoint Jesus' body, only to find the stone already rolled away. The women go in and find the tomb empty. Two men in dazzling clothes appear suddenly and tell the women to tell the apostles.

In *John*, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb and sees the stone removed on the third day. She runs to Simon Peter and another disciple and says that Jesus' body has been stolen from the tomb. The two men go to the tomb and when they see the discarded linen cloths, they believe. Mary Magdalene later confronts the risen Jesus at the tomb.

Primary-age children are not too young to understand that the resurrection is the reason for the Church's being. It is important that they have an opportunity to hear and talk about Easter's good news.

Almighty God, whose blessed Son restored Mary Magdalene to health of body and of mind, and called her to be a witness of his resurrection: Mercifully grant that by your grace we may be healed from all our

infirmities and know you in the power of his unending life; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Saint Mary Magdalene
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 242

TEACHING TIP

Like Christmas, Easter is part of our commercial culture. It is an exciting day for children. Easter candies, bunnies, and egg hunts are likely to be on their minds. Eager expectancy is connected with the arrival of spring (now or just ahead on the calendar). For this class session, encourage active engagement and a spirit of thanksgiving for the good news of the resurrection.

GATHERING

As the learners arrive, invite them to share in building an empty tomb. As a base, use a cardboard box, florists' foam, or damp sand. Attach leaves, sticks, and grasses as a covering for the tomb.

Rocks and pebbles can be added. Include a larger stone that might have been at the tomb's door.

When all are present, gather the group and say the Apostles' Creed (using Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet):

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

At the conclusion, point out the phrase, "on the third day he rose again from the dead."

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Tell the story of Easter morning. Open the Bible and show the learners where *John 20:1-18* is located. Read aloud verse 18a:

"Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord.'"

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Read aloud the story to the children from the Bible (using John's account, cited above). Although the Easter Gospel will be read in worship, it can be very beneficial for the group to hear its joy in the comfort of their own class, with their church school teacher(s).

2. Following the reading, invite the learners to join enthusiastically in the Acclamation:

Teacher: Alleluia. Christ is risen.

Learners: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

3. Spend some time together discussing the congregation's celebration of Easter. Describe the celebrations happening in other churches and all around the world. This is the day we remember the victory won by our Lord over death itself.

4. If baptisms occurred at your church during the Easter Vigil, invite any children who were present to share details about the service or describe it in your own words.

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 8, describes the service of the Great Vigil of Easter. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Mosaics from Eggshells

Use broken, dyed eggshell fragments to create mosaics of Easter symbols: colorful eggs, butterflies, or blooming flowers. Provide sheets of construction paper, pencils, and glue. The learners will draw outlines of chosen symbols, then arrange and glue pieces of eggshell to form the mosaics. (Small bits of colored tissue or other paper could be used in place of the eggshells.)

Option 2. Illuminated “Alleluia!”

Make copies of the open-letter outline of the word, “Alleluia!” from Poster No. 16 in the Teacher's Packet. The learners can use wax or washable markers to add colors to the letters. It may be helpful to supply pictures of illuminated letters so that the class members can get ideas of how to do this kind of project. As the children work, talk about the Church's use of “Alleluia!” at Easter and through the liturgical year. (You may want to explain that it is not used in Lent, a time of preparation for the good news of Easter.)

EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Option 1. Game, “Easter Symbols”

Introduce four symbols of Easter: a sunrise, a butterfly, an Easter egg, and an Easter lily. Ask the group members to sit in a circle of chairs. Assign the name of a symbol to each one in turn. Let one person be the caller (or the teacher may take this role). The caller shouts out one of the four symbols. Everyone bearing that symbol's name rises and scrambles to change seats with the others. The game can continue as long as time permits.

Option 2. Puzzle, “Jesus Is Alive”

Use Puzzle Sheet III.8 titled “Jesus Is Alive.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

Option 3. Choral Reading

Choose an Easter hymn that will be, or has been, used in your church's Easter worship. Read the words together once or twice until the learners are familiar with them. Then assign parts so that one group reads the first stanza, another the second, and another the third. If there is a refrain, all can join together. (In a small group, the teacher can alternate with the learners for the choral reading.)

TALKING IT OVER (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Briefly review the events of the first Easter. Recall all the persons in the story. Talk about the fear and amazement of the visitors to the tomb, and the disciples' disbelief. Ask: If you had been there, how would you have felt? What would you have said? Where would you have gone to share the news?

Wonder aloud whether anyone in the class has experienced a surprise that involved fear or amazement. Allow the learners to share their own stories.

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Place an Easter lily in the center of the group. Ask the learners to describe the flower and its scent. Ask: Why is the lily a symbol of Easter? Has anyone seen the bulb of a lily at the time it was planted? What did it look like? Explain that the bulb can appear to be dead; it represents for us the burial of something that has died. When spring comes, the flower grows from the bulb to show us that new life comes from old.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "Early in the morning my friends and I heard that the tomb where Jesus was buried was empty. We . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations to discuss how the story could continue. What might they have seen or heard? What would they do?

Individual response. The children can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to finish the story.

Group role play. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: the visit to the empty tomb by the two Marys; Mary's announcement to the disciples about what had happened, and their response; or the surprise and joy of the followers of Jesus when they knew he was alive.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Listen to the refrain, "Hail thee, festival day" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 175; *We Sing of God*, 33) on the *Children Sing!* tape. Encourage exuberant movement as the learners sing.

CONTINUING ACTIVITY (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Easter Garden. Place an Easter lily and other fresh flowers in the Easter garden.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 26 has a picture of a font, Paschal candle, and banner, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

For the resurrection of Jesus.

(Encourage learners to share their own
thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Were the children able to enter into the joyous celebration of Easter? In what ways were they able to express their understanding of the resurrection? The meaning of the resurrection unfolds throughout our lives. Primary-age children are just beginning to grasp the importance of the story.

LOOKING AHEAD

The final session in this unit is on the concept of forgiveness and connects baptism to God's forgiveness for all people. Think about times in your own life when you needed to be forgiven and when you have been able to forgive others.