

Easter

In this unit students become familiar with the Easter story and are introduced to the Pentecost and Ascension experiences.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#647 But no one was an eyewitness to Christ's resurrection and no evangelist describes it. No one can say how it came about physically. Still less was its innermost essence, his passing over to another life, perceptible to the senses. Although the Resurrection was a historical event that could be verified by the sign of the empty tomb and by the reality of the apostles' encounters with the Risen Christ, still it remains at the very heart of the mystery of faith as something that transcends and surpasses history. This is why the Risen Christ does not reveal himself to the world, but to his disciples, 'to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people'.

(See Compendium #127 What are the signs that bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ?)

#1189 The liturgical celebration (of Easter and of all the rites of the Church) involves signs and symbols relating to creation (candles, water, fire), human life (washing, anointing, breaking bread) and the history of salvation (the rites of the Passover). Integrated into the world of faith and taken up by the power of the Holy Spirit, these cosmic elements, human rituals, and gestures of remembrance of God become bearers of the saving and sanctifying action of Christ.

(See Compendium #237 From where do the sacramental signs come?)

#1217 In the liturgy of the Easter Vigil, during the blessing of the baptismal water, the Church solemnly commemorates the great events in salvation history that already prefigured the mystery of baptism:

Father, you give us grace through sacramental signs
which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power.

In baptism we use your gift of water
which you have made a rich symbol
of the grace you give us in this sacrament.

(See Compendium #218 What is the liturgy?)

#731 On the day of Pentecost when the seven weeks of Easter have come to an end, Christ's Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Holy Spirit in abundance.

(See Compendium #137 Why are the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit inseparable?)

#684 Through his grace, the Holy Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us and to communicate to us the new life, which is to ‘know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ’.
(See *Compendium #146 How do Christ and his Spirit act in the hearts of the faithful?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a great mystery which, as the Catechism says, ‘transcends human history’. What is the place of mystery in your own life?

What do the core symbols of Easter, light/dark, water, oil, gesture, word, bread and wine suggest to you? Reflect on either (or both) their human and religious dimensions?

What evidence of the Holy Spirit do you see in the world, in yourself, in your pupils?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES

Students experience new life and transformation through change and growth in the natural world. *How can you draw on this experience of new life throughout the unit?*

At this stage students are growing in awareness of others and the world around them. *How can you assist students to live the Good News in realistic ways among friends and family and their local community?*

Baptism and Confirmation celebrate the presence of the Holy Spirit in human life. Through significant relationships and events students have the capacity to experience the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Lk 24: 1–12 Women at the Tomb

It would seem that the women expected to find Jesus’ dead body in the tomb. Why else would they go with spices? But when they arrived at the tomb they were confused – just as we are sometimes – ‘not knowing what to think’ (24: 4). They are also ‘terrified’ (24: 5), but the message they receive is comforting: ‘Why look among the dead for someone who is alive?’ (24: 5). Such a question gives us confidence in our own continued life after death. It is a deeply challenging question. The women later took on the important role given to them there at the tomb, as the first proclaimers and teachers of the Easter faith. Peter visited the empty tomb and returned ‘amazed’ and still uncertain. Three of the women are named. There are also unnamed women who backed up their story: it would appear quite a crowd of women (see also Luke 8: 3). Mary Magdalene is one of the women identified.

Lk 24: 13–35 The Journey to Emmaus

An exquisite story that is full of Lucan themes: journey, the richness of the Word, faith, recognition and meals. This story is only in Luke’s Gospel. We are not sure of the location of the village of Emmaus. Two followers of Jesus were travelling there on foot, a distance of about fifteen kilometres from Jerusalem. One of them is identified as Cleopas, the other remains anonymous. It is strange that they did not recognise the risen Jesus who joined them on the journey. Or is it so strange? Do we always feel that Jesus Christ is with us? Their experience might be much the same as ours. Jesus explained the Scriptures to them from the Pentateuch and the Prophets, no small feat. Their sense of hospitality caused them to insist that the stranger stay with them for a

meal. And it was in the breaking of the bread that they recognised Jesus Christ. Once they did, he was no longer there with them. Their faith enabled them to perceive Jesus Christ in what would be the eucharistic ritual. They immediately returned to Jerusalem, even though it was late. Jesus Christ is also with us on our journey with others in our everyday lives, even in the meals we share.

Acts 1: 6–11 The Ascension of Jesus Christ

The Acts of the Apostles, as the title suggests, is written as a history of the embryonic Church itself. Acts is not only an account of the twelve apostles spreading the gospel; it also includes other leaders in the early Church, such as Stephen, Paul, Barnabas and James, to name a few.

Luke is the only New Testament writer to record the Ascension of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Luke has a slightly different and simpler version of the Ascension at the end of the gospel (Lk 24: 50–53), and it is worth comparing the two versions. In this story of the Ascension the apostles are still asking questions about power. Even after the Resurrection they still have not understood the meaning of Jesus Christ's message. This is comforting for us. They even look somewhat foolish staring up into the sky (1: 10) and needing to be told to get on with their lives.

In the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, Luke shows the Good News moving to Jerusalem and then to Rome – representing the centre of the known world. The Ascension marks a new era in this journey. The historical Jesus is no longer with us. Yet Jesus Christ is with us always, until the end of time. Luke also shows concern for the present time. The reader is encouraged to improve by living the Good News of love and compassion.

Jesus Christ's ascension to heaven fills us with hope about our own resurrection and passage to heaven. As the Preface for the Mass of the Ascension says, 'Where he has gone, we hope to follow'.

Acts 2: 1–12 The First Pentecost

The feast of Pentecost is a Jewish festival called *Shavuot* or the Feast of Weeks as it occurs about 50 days after Passover. It was probably originally a feast to celebrate Summer and an early summer harvest (in the northern hemisphere).

The Acts of the Apostles was written some years after the events it describes here. So the author is relying on what has been passed down as he was not an eye witness. Thus the writer grapples with words to describe what happened. 'They heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven' (2: 2) 'and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire' (2: 3). The author suggests that it was not exactly a wind, nor flames of fire. These, of course, are symbols or metaphors for a reality and mystery we cannot fully describe. Furthermore, the Greek word *pneuma* that is used here for Holy Spirit also means wind and breath, as does the Hebrew *ruach* which is used in Genesis, 'And God's spirit hovered over the waters' (Gen 1: 2). Such language gives us an insight into an aspect of the identity and activity of the Holy Spirit – a creative life force within, the breath of life.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Alleluia, Jesus is Alive!

- Arrange the prayer space with the children. Use bright yellow, gold and white cloths. Place a large, decorated Easter candle on the prayer table. Explain why the colours are changed, and why some things are not changed, e.g. Bible, candle,

and crucifix. Light the candle and together sing an appropriate Easter hymn, e.g. 'Share the Light' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications). Say the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 7, p. 59.

- Lead the children in a meditation on 'Jesus Christ is with us'. For example, go through a relaxation exercise, and then ask the children to imagine they are in a safe place (their room, a garden) with Jesus. You might use 'Visualisation 2' in *To God on a Magic Carpet* (Sr Anthony, Spectrum Publications).
- Establish a pattern of daily prayer during the Easter season.

Light the large Easter candle and gather around it.

Sing an Alleluia verse, e.g. 'Clap Alleluia' (Michael Mangan, *Children of the Light*, Litmus Productions).

Read a brief passage of Scripture related to Jesus Christ's resurrection.

Repeat the Alleluia verse.

Jesus Christ Returns to His Father

- Use the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 8, p. 65 at various times. The prayer can be used alone or as an antiphon with spontaneous prayer.
- Use 'Visualisation 2' in *To God on a Magic Carpet* as a meditation on the presence of Jesus Christ/the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Comes

- Prayer service: use the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 9, p. 73 as a response. Children pray spontaneous petitions to God for themselves, others, the world. The teacher may need to provide a model, e.g.

Holy Spirit of God, help our class today ... (response)

Holy Spirit of God, help the sick today ... (response)

- Conclude with an appropriate song, e.g. 'Spirit Friend' (Rob Glover, *When Children Gather*, GIA Publications).
- Pray a circle prayer: children gather in a circle with pictures or drawings that represent the presence of God's Holy Spirit in their lives. After a brief scripture reading (Gal 5: 22–23) each child places the picture/drawing in the centre of the circle, e.g. a child places a picture of her grandfather in the circle and says: 'I see God's Holy Spirit in my grandfather'. Other children respond with 'Holy Spirit, we thank you'.

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edition, Book 1: Chapter 7, Alleluia, Jesus is Alive; Chapter 8, Jesus Returns to His Father; Chapter 9, The Spirit Comes.

Faith concepts: celebration, spirit, new life, discipleship.

Understandings:

On Easter Sunday Christians celebrate Jesus Christ being alive in a new way.

After his resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to his disciples on the road to Emmaus.

The Ascension celebrates Jesus Christ's return to the Father.

At Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus.

Unit specific learning:

| Students will learn about | Students will learn to | Students will undertake to |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Knowledge and Understanding</i> | <i>Reasoning & Responding</i> | <i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The season of Easter.• Times in the Scriptures when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection.• The story of the Ascension.• The story of Pentecost.• The symbols of Pentecost, e.g. Holy Spirit, wind and fire. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Express their feelings, perceptions or ideas about the story of the journey to Emmaus and the story of Pentecost.• Wonder about the Ascension and Jesus returning to his Father. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participate in times of prayer and liturgy. |

Part 1: Alleluia, Jesus Is Alive

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|---|---|------------|
| <p>The key event in the life of Jesus Christ is the Resurrection. It is the climax of the gospel. After the Resurrection the disciples were transformed. Their memory and understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ were all viewed through his resurrection. The Paschal Mystery refers to the death and resurrection of Jesus.</p> <p>Easter is the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. Easter follows Lent and continues for fifty days until Pentecost. It is a time when the Paschal candle is lit and the Easter water is used to baptise new Christians. White is the colour of the season.</p> <p>This season reminds us that life overcomes death, light overcomes darkness, and the Risen Jesus Christ is ever present in the community.</p> | <p>Telling the Story</p> <p>Decorate the prayer space with bright colours, images of new life, and a new candle.</p> <p>Ask students how the prayer place has changed since Lent and Holy Week, and why the change has taken place.</p> <p>Use concrete materials to tell the story of the women at the tomb, Luke 24: 1–12.</p> <p>Wondering</p> <p>Invite students to wonder with you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I wonder why the soldiers were guarding the tomb? I wonder what happened to Jesus Christ? I wonder how the disciples felt when they found the empty tomb? I wonder how you would have felt if you were there? | |

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|---|--|------------|
| <p>In Luke's gospel account for this unit there is a lot of movement. It gives the impression that this was indeed an eventful day! It is also the beginning of a number of appearances by Jesus Christ. Luke's account flows from the story at the tomb to the Emmaus journey.</p> <p>The disciples were unsure and yet were slowly coming to the realisation that Jesus was alive. The Resurrection is a mystery. We cannot understand it with our human understanding, but we believe nothing is impossible to God, and that Jesus Christ's human body attained the fullness of his divine life.</p> <p>The story of Emmaus shows how two disciples reflected and pondered on all they knew of Jesus. Jesus was with them, but they were slow to recognise him. Similarly with us. We are often slow to recognise Jesus Christ in our midst.</p> | <p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the story of the empty tomb from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 7, pp. 52–54. • Independent: The students further explore the meaning of the story through a personal or small group retelling of the story through various modes, e.g. dramatisation, using concrete or Godly Play materials, 2D or felt-board materials. • Teacher led: Students divide into groups and conduct an Echo Mime based on <i>the empty tomb</i>. A student from each group reads out a phrase, while the others in the group design an action/expression to act out the phrase. Students present to the whole class. <p>Telling the Story</p> <p>Use Godly Play concrete materials to tell the story of the journey to Emmaus, Lk 24: 13–36.</p> <p>Wondering</p> <p>Invite students to wonder with you:</p> <p>I wonder what this story reminds you of? I wonder why the disciples didn't recognise Jesus Christ? I wonder why Jesus broke the bread with them?</p> | |

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | <p>Responding</p> <p>Students choose a way to explore more deeply an aspect of the story that is significant to them. Students could choose one response from the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students complete a scriptural think pad (changes can be made to the sections, e.g. connections to other scripture stories or connections to Jesus Christ's life) to show their own understanding of the story. 2. Students use Godly play concrete materials or feltboard characters to retell the story. 3. Students create a musical rap depicting the events of the story. 4. Students use craft materials to build a simple diorama of the empty tomb or the journey to Emmaus. 5. Students produce a postcard describing the events they have witnessed on one side and illustrating a picture of the scene on the other, e.g. the tomb, the road to Emmaus, etc. Students are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings as if they too were a part of the experience. 6. Students read alone or with a friend the <i>KWL</i> version of the journey to Emmaus, <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 7, pp. 55-57. 7. Students view or read texts about change and new life in nature, e.g. life-cycles, butterflies. | <p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>Through the responses students will demonstrate if they are able to express their own ideas, perceptions and feelings about the scripture text. They will also demonstrate their own understanding and interpretation of the story of Emmaus</p> |

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|---------------------------------|--|------------|
| | Praying the Word Refer to 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship' | |

Part 2: Jesus Christ Returns To His Father

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|--|---|------------|
| <p>The story of the Ascension is recorded in Acts 1: 6–11.</p> <p>It was time for the disciples to give witness. It was the time of the Church. However, Jesus had not <i>gone</i>; he said he would be with us always. What follows in this book of the Bible is the account of the disciples building the early Church. The disciples were empowered to give witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his teachings. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit to reflect the presence of Jesus Christ and his message in the world.</p> | <p>Wondering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students: I wonder who cares for you? I wonder who you enjoy spending time with? <p>Telling the Story</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the story of the Ascension from Acts 6: 1–11. | |

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|--|--|---|
| <p>We too are empowered by the Holy Spirit to give witness to the Good News which is Jesus Christ.</p> <p>This is the first time in the curriculum that children are introduced to the account of the Ascension. Hence, the primary focus is the story itself: Jesus ascended into heaven. It is important to read the actual scripture passage and become familiar with the account in the Acts of the Apostles. While the story in <i>KWL</i> Chapter 8 is a blend of the Ascension accounts in Acts and Mt 28: 16–20, it is important for the teacher to know that the focus in this unit is on the Ascension where Jesus said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He will always be with them – Presence • The Holy Spirit will come • The Holy Spirit will give the disciples the strength and courage to give witness. | <p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder why Jesus went back to his Father? I wonder why Jesus wanted his disciples to tell everyone about him? I wonder why Jesus wanted his disciples to baptise people? I wonder how Jesus felt returning to the Father who loves him?</p> <p>Responding Invite students to explore the story of the Ascension for themselves through a choice of one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students draw a picture of Jesus Christ with his Father. • Individually or in pairs students use Godly Play concrete materials, feltboard or playdough to retell the story of the Ascension or to express what they imagine it is like for Jesus to be with the Father. • Students read about the Ascension from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 8, pp. 60–63 and from children’s bibles. | <p>Assessment of Learning Through the responses students will demonstrate if they are able to express their own ideas, perceptions and feelings about the scripture text. They will also demonstrate their own understanding of the story of the Ascension.</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Witness is an important theme in this story. How do you, as teacher, give witness to your faith and Christian beliefs? How do we show love, forgiveness, compassion?</p> <p>Jesus Christ promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to be with us always, until the end of time. In this is our hope: that one day we too will be with him.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Praying the Word See 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship' above. | |
|---|---|--|

Part 3: The Spirit Comes

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Pentecost is a feast, occurring fifty days after Easter, which celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost Sunday the liturgical colour is red.</p> | <p>Wondering Ask students: I wonder if you feel God close to you?</p> | <p>Assessment for Learning This task will indicate students' awareness of God's presence in their lives.</p> |
| <p>This is the first time in the RE curriculum that the children learn about the events of Pentecost. At this stage the focus is familiarity with the story of Pentecost. In exploring the story, help the students notice the moods, actions and images presented.</p> | <p>Telling the Story Using Godly Play concrete materials retell the story of Pentecost</p> | |

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Pentecost can be seen, in one sense, as the birth of the Church. The disciples received the Holy Spirit, as Jesus Christ had promised, and they began to proclaim the Good News. The disciples were filled with courage and strength to begin their work.</p> <p>In the same way, the Holy Spirit empowers the Church today to give witness to Jesus Christ who is the Good News, and empowers others to see God in the witness of Christians. This witness includes, not only preaching through words and actions, but also <i>living</i> the Good News. This involves speaking and listening to the truth. The Holy Spirit is with each person and is active in the life of each person as well as the Church community.</p> | <p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder why the disciples were scared? I wonder why the Holy Spirit came? I wonder what the Holy Spirit looks like? I wonder how they knew the Holy Spirit had come?</p> <p>Responding Students choose one or two of the following tasks in order to respond to and explore the story more deeply by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatising the story. • Sequencing the main parts of the story. • Using playdough to create characters and symbols to retell the Pentecost story • Using flashcards, write words describing how the disciples were feeling/behaving before the Holy Spirit came. On the reverse of the cards write words describing how the disciples felt/behaved after the Holy Spirit appeared, e.g. scared/brave, inside/outside, worried/happy, etc. Use the cards to tell the story (turning the cards over to show the effect the Holy Spirit had on the disciples). | <p>Assessment of Learning These activities will indicate students' knowledge of the main characters, events and symbols.</p> |

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|---|--|------------|
| <p>The story uses symbols for the Holy Spirit that are from the Old Testament tradition. Wind and fire are metaphors for the presence of God. The symbols demonstrate something of the excitement and greatness of the event of Pentecost. The story uses metaphors to paint a beautiful picture of the mystery of Pentecost, where God meets people. Allow time for the children to become familiar with the images of wind and fire. The Christian tradition also uses other symbols for the Holy Spirit; one of these is the dove.</p> | <p>Responding Take students outside to feel the wind on their faces and to hear it rustling through the trees.</p> <p>Wondering (while outside) Invite students to wonder with you: I wonder why we can't see the wind? I wonder how we know that the wind is really there? I wonder how the wind makes you feel? I wonder why wind and fire were used as symbols for the Holy Spirit? I wonder how you would have felt if you were there? How do wind and fire make you feel?</p> | |

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|--|--|------------|
| <p>The Presence of God is a difficult concept for children because it is abstract for them. How do we know God is with us? Here it is worth exploring people, events and places that might remind us of God. This reminder may come in the form of qualities: kindness, gentleness, joy ... here the fruits of the Holy Spirit might be helpful. Be aware that children are not necessarily learning about fruits of the Holy Spirit, but rather about the presence of God.</p> | <p>Responding Students rotate through the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play reflective music (nature sounds – wind, fire, rain, etc.). Students sketch images depicting their feelings and emotions when they hear the sound of wind or fire. Focus questions are placed on the table to stimulate drawings, e.g. How do these sounds make you feel? What do these sounds make you think of? Imagine? Remember? • Students make a simple windmill, fan or kite. Students take them outside to see/feel the effect of the wind on their creations. <p>Using a dropper, students place a few drops of coloured ink or paint onto a sheet of card. Invite the students to create patterns by blowing the ink gently through a straw. Use these patterns to cut into flames and display on a class Pentecost mural.</p> | |

| Additional Reading for Teachers | Learning & Teaching Sequence | Assessment |
|---|---|------------|
| <p>Fruits of the Holy Spirit Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, trustfulness, faithfulness.</p> | <p>Praying the Word Use the picture from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 9, pp. 70–71 as the basis for the prayer session. Students sit in a circle and reflect on the image from the text. Students write a word on a flashcard to describe how the image makes them feel or what they see. Students share their word and place the card around a lit candle. Sing a song about Pentecost.</p> | |

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd edition

Book 1: Chapter 7, Alleluia, Jesus is Alive; Chapter 8, Jesus Returns to His Father; Chapter 9, The Spirit Comes.

Teacher Resources

Macdonald, Sr Anthony 2004, *To God on a Magic Carpet – Meditating with Children*, Spectrum Productions, Richmond, Victoria.
Wintour, R 2000, *Just Imagine*, Mountjoy Enterprises, Brisbane.

Music and CDs

Farrell, Bernadette 2000, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications.
Glover, Rob, 'Spirit Friend' in *When Children Gather*, GIA Publications.
Mangan, M 2001, *Setting Hearts on Fire*, Litmus Productions.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 2 standards.

Students interpret biblical stories and stories in Church Tradition by making a response and expressing their own ideas, feelings and perceptions. Students distinguish the key objects, signs, symbols and actions of the sacraments of Initiation and seasons of the Church by explaining what they mean