

Alleluia Is Our Song!

Alleluia Is Our Song! is about Easter. In Part 1 students recall and explore the accounts of the women at the empty tomb. In Part 2 students ponder the meaning of Easter through the symbols of darkness and light. In Part 3 students recall and explore the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and how the Holy Spirit is active in their own lives in their own gifts and talents.

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:

#1169 Therefore *Easter* is not simply one feast among others, but the ‘Feast of feasts’, the ‘Solemnity of solemnities’, just as the Eucharist is the ‘sacrament of sacraments’ (the Great Sacrament). St Athanasius calls Easter ‘the Great Sunday’ and the Eastern Churches call Holy Week ‘the Great Week’. The mystery of the Resurrection, in which Christ crushed death, permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him.

(See *Compendium* #126 *What place does the resurrection of Christ occupy in our faith?*)

#641 Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus were the first to encounter the Risen One. Thus the women were the first messengers of Christ’s resurrection for the apostles themselves.

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

#1085 The Paschal mystery of Christ cannot remain only in the past, because by his death he destroyed death, and all that Christ is – all that he did and suffered for all men – participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times while being made present in them all. The event of the Cross and Resurrection *abides* and draws everything towards life.

(See *Compendium* #128 *Why is the Resurrection at the same time a transcendent occurrence?*)

#1223 ...After his resurrection Christ gave this mission to his apostles: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’.

(See *Compendium* #150 *What is the mission of the Church?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Easter transcends time and space. It is right here and now that Christ frees you and leads you to life; this is true too for each child in your care. What are the possibilities of actually realising the power and love and closeness of Christ?

Who are the women who have been messengers of life for you?

How do you see your work with your class as a response to Jesus Christ’s command, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations ...’?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Students observe and experience change through the natural world and key relationships within their lives. They also experience the Holy Spirit of God through nature and key relationships.

Although metaphor is difficult for students to understand at this stage, they may identify with the concept of darkness through their experiences of loneliness, sadness and broken relationships. Students may identify with the concept of light through their experiences of friendship, joy, happiness and right relationships.

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Mk 16: 1–16 The Women at the Tomb

The women traditionally are the first to be trusted with the good news that God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. They are reminded that they will see Jesus back in Galilee. This is a profound theological and spiritual insight. Galilee is home for them. It is the place of the ordinary. Thus it is in our ordinary lives that we will meet and experience Jesus Christ. Their initial response is fear, they run away 'frightened out of their wits' (16: 8). It is comforting for us that they were afraid and anxious as we often are. The gospel says they 'told no one', but then we read that Mary of Magdala told Jesus' companions and they did not believe her (16: 10). It is important for teachers to note this apparent contradiction in the text. Many scholars agree that the verses after 16: 8 are a later addition to the Gospel of Mark as they differ quite remarkably in style. So the original ending may have been at 16: 8. See *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (1990), p. 629, for more information on the lost ending of Mark.

Jn 8: 12 Jesus, Light of the World

In the Gospel of John the themes of light and darkness occur over and over again. Light is life-giving. Plants need sun to grow. We, who depend on the plants for food, are dependent on the light. Similarly, Jesus Christ is our life and the light of our life. Children are often afraid in the dark or of the dark. Jesus Christ, our light, wants us never to be afraid. This is an important theme in the Easter message, hence the use of candles in our liturgies over the Easter season.

Acts 2: 1–11 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 fifty 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 literally 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 Spirit also means wind and breath, as does the Hebrew *ruach* which is used in Gen 1: 'And God's Spirit hovered over the waters' (Gen 2: 1). 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.

Another noteworthy feature of this event is the emphasis on speaking and hearing. Not only were the apostles gifted with languages, but also those who listened were gifted to hear them speak in their own tongue. An important possibility of the coming of the Holy

Spirit then seems to be excellent communication where speaking and listening are accurate and in harmony, as in this first Pentecost experience. The courage to speak and listen clearly would seem to be part of the gift of Pentecost.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Decorate the prayer space in the Easter colours of white and gold. Add a large candle decorated with a cross, the 'A' and 'Ω' symbols, and the numbers signifying the year. A bowl of holy water with a green branch could be placed on the prayer table. This may be used for a simple Sprinkling Rite, or simply so that the children may bless themselves as a reminder of their baptism.
- Learn an 'Alleluia' song, such as 'Sing For Joy' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications). Sing this regularly during the Easter season, particularly to welcome the reading of the gospel as part of class prayer. The children may wish to devise actions to accompany the song.
- Lead the children through a guided meditation using the story in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 6, pp. 72–76. Play some very quiet, reflective music. When the children are still and aware of breathing/heartbeat, read the text slowly and in short phrases, pausing to allow the children to *imagine* the events in the story. Conclude with the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 6, p. 79.
- Light the large candle each day for class prayer. Each time it is lit, pray the following response:

Leader: Jesus Christ is our light!
All: *Jesus Christ is the light of the world!*

- If possible, dim the lighting in the classroom and focus only on the light of the large candle. Stand in a circle around the candle. Invite the children to pray to Jesus Christ, the light, in their own words. Conclude with the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 7, p. 85.
- Pray a simple Prayer of the Church every morning during the Easter season. This tradition of prayer follows a pattern which can be simplified for young children:

Introduction (*with your right thumb, trace a small cross over your lips*):

Leader: Lord, open my lips.
All: *And my mouth will sing your praise!*

A simple psalm may be sung or recited in an echo fashion. The small book *Children's Psalms to Pray, Sing and Do* by David Haas has a collection of psalms translated for children. Psalm 150 (Praise God!) can be prayed with the accompaniment of percussion instruments.

Conclusion:

Leader: Let us give thanks to God, Alleluia!
All: *We thank you God. Alleluia, Alleluia!!*

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Book 2: Chapter 6 Part 3, A Journey to New Life; Chapter 7, Jesus, the Light of the World; Chapter 12, Pentecost People.

Faith concepts: death, life, darkness, light, symbol, sign, gift.

Understandings:

After Jesus' death on the Cross he was placed in a tomb.

The women were the first witnesses to the Resurrection.

Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Darkness and light are Easter symbols about death and new life.

At Pentecost the disciples received the Holy Spirit who helped them tell others about Jesus Christ.

Each person has gifts and talents that are signs of the Holy Spirit.

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 role of the women at the empty tomb. • The symbols of darkness and light in the Easter season. • The events of Pentecost. • The qualities that reveal the gifts of the Holy Spirit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wonder about the role of women in their own lives. • Express their feelings, perceptions, thoughts and ideas about the empty tomb. • Represent their feelings, perceptions and thinking about Easter darkness and light through the creative arts. • Identify their own personal qualities that reveal the Holy Spirit. • Create their own spontaneous oral prayers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in a guided meditation. • Prepare and participate in a Liturgy of the Word.

Part 1: Women As Witness

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>In Scripture, women are often portrayed as significant at the pivotal moments of God's relationship with the people. Both testaments have stories of significant women involved and acting in the history of the chosen people. Mary, the first disciple, is an example of the significance of women in salvation history.</p> <p>Mk 16: 1–16 is one of the evangelising stories where women play an important role in proclaiming the Good News. The women who encountered the empty tomb after the Resurrection are sent on a mission of evangelisation. Despite their fear they proclaim the message that Jesus Christ is indeed risen.</p> <p>The Resurrection is the climax of Jesus' life and mission. After the Resurrection the disciples were changed. The memory and understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ began to be viewed in the light of his resurrection.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Students find pictures of women from newspapers and magazines to be presented as a class collage. Brainstorm words which describe women, e.g. compassionate, strong, mother, leader, nurturer. These can be written around the collage and discussed.</p> <p>Suggested Home Activity Students look for a photo of a special woman and share with their family why this woman is special to them.</p> <p>Telling the Story Students bring a photo of a woman who is important to them. Organise talking circles where students talk about this important woman. 'What does this woman do and why is she important and special to me?'</p> <p>Responding Photos can be mounted on A4 cover paper. Underneath the photo children complete the phrase: '... is important to me because ...'</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>After giving the students some time to engage with the story, move into the relationship between Easter and proclaiming the Good News as the women did.</p> <p>Our vocation, as baptised Christians, is to give witness to the Good News – the mystery of Jesus: his life and teaching; his death and resurrection.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Use 3D materials to tell the story of the women at the empty tomb, Mk 16: 1-16.</p> <p>Wondering In small groups students share their wonderings with each other. They report back to the class about their wonderings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I wonder how the women felt walking to the tomb? I wonder why the women were scared when they saw Jesus? I wonder why the disciples didn't believe Mary Magdalene? I wonder what would have happened if the women didn't go to the tomb? I wonder what would have happened if the women didn't tell anyone that they saw Jesus? I wonder what would have happened if the disciples believed that the women had seen Jesus? 	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Responding</p> <p>Students choose two tasks from the following to explore the meaning of the story further for themselves as well as their own thoughts, perceptions, ideas and feelings about the story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students create a puppet play or use 3D materials to retell the story. • In pairs students read and talk about 'A Journey to New Life' <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 6, p. 72–77. • Using a listening-post, students listen to songs/hymns about the empty tomb. 	<p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>This task will enable students to demonstrate that they can express their own thinking, feelings and ideas about the story.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word</p> <p>Lead students through the guided meditation suggested in 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship'.</p>	

Part 2: Easter: Jesus Christ, Light of the World!

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The Easter Triduum is the most significant liturgy in the Church’s year. It is one liturgy celebrated over three days, beginning on Holy Thursday evening. It reaches its peak with the celebration of the Easter Vigil, and concludes on Easter Sunday evening.</p> <p>The Easter Vigil is particularly rich in symbolism and ritual. In this unit we focus on the symbol of light. At the Vigil the Paschal candle is lit to symbolise Christ the light of the world.</p> <p>The Church begins the Vigil in darkness, the Easter fire is blessed and, from it, the Paschal candle is lit. From the Paschal candle the community lights candles and then processes into the church. The phrase ‘<i>Christ our Light</i>’ is proclaimed three times; each time the community responds by singing, ‘<i>Thanks be to God</i>’. The lighted candle, entering the darkened church on the Easter Vigil, reminds us that the darkness of death has been overcome and that the light of new life has entered our midst. The Service of Light can be explored briefly with children as we tell the story of how and why the Church uses these symbols.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Read ‘Jesus the Light of the World’. <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 7, p. 80–81.</p> <p>Wondering Students respond to the questions: What do you think of when you hear the word <i>dark</i>? How do you feel? What do you see? What do you hear?</p> <p>What do you think of when you hear the word <i>light</i>? How do you feel? What do you see? What do you hear?</p> <p>I wonder what Jesus means by light of the world? I wonder what Jesus means by darkness?</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Light is an important metaphor in the Christian tradition. The Old Testament begins with God creating light. Fire and light are often used to symbolise the presence of God. In the New Testament Jesus refers to himself as the light of the world. Hence he gives sight to the blind. To be blind means not to see the truth and presence of God.</p> <p>This unit also draws the children's attention to the Liturgy of Baptism in the Easter Vigil. While not focusing specifically on the sacrament of Baptism, we are exploring the connection between baptism, Easter and living the Good News; that is, giving <i>witness</i> and <i>being</i> the light of Christ in the world.</p>	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students learn a song about Jesus as Light of the world and create actions/movements to accompany the song. <p>Telling the Story</p> <p>Light a candle and read from the Bible Jn 8: 12 'Jesus, Light of the World'.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Through baptism we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. New Christians are immersed in water (a symbol of going down into the tomb with Christ) and emerge into a new life. They are clothed in white to symbolise the new life of Christ they have put on. They are given a lighted candle, lit from the Paschal candle, to symbolise the light of faith that is to be kept burning in their lives.</p> <p>In this way, new Christians are initiated into the Church community. They receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. This practice goes back to the early Church. Help students to make the link between the Resurrection, Easter and baptism, as our <i>sharing</i> in the light of Christ. The symbols can help to make this link, especially the symbol of light. Through baptism we become Christ in the world today. <i>We are the light of Christ.</i></p>	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using any seed, allow children to plant their seeds in a small container of soil or cotton wool. Place several plants in a dark cupboard, while others are left in the light, e.g. the windowsill of your classroom. <p>Write and draw observations throughout the week.</p> <p>Discuss the results and make connections with the story in Jn 8: 12, e.g. plants need light to bloom and grow, we need Jesus Christ to guide us as we learn and grow in life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and list images, actions and symbols of light and dark in our world, e.g. rising sun, candle, light bulb, torch, sky at night. 	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>To be in darkness means to move away from God. To be in the light means to be close to God. Students identify times in their lives when they have experienced both darkness and light (e.g. Darkness – loneliness or sadness. Light – love, friendship, peace).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students make an image or symbol for Easter that uses light and dark. <p>Suggested Home Activity With your family light a candle and pray together during the season of Easter.</p>	<p>Assessment of Learning This activity will indicate students' understanding of the symbols of darkness and light in the season of Easter.</p>
<p>Easter is the 'feast of feasts'. The season is celebrated for fifty days, concluding with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.</p>	<p>Praying the Word Dim the lighting in the classroom and focus only on the light of the large candle. Stand in a circle around the candle. Invite the children to pray to Jesus Christ, the light, in their own words. Conclude with the prayer in <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 7, p. 85.</p>	

Part 3: Send Out Your Holy Spirit

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Jesus Christ promised his disciples that he would send an advocate, or helper. An advocate is one who speaks on behalf of another, particularly on behalf of those who lack the knowledge, skill, ability, or standing to speak for themselves.</p>	<p>Telling the Story Tell the story of Pentecost using concrete materials.</p> <p>Suggested Home Activity Students learn the prayer from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 12, p. 137, 'Come, Holy Spirit, Come ...' Pray and learn together at home with the family.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>At Pentecost it was the Holy Spirit of God that inspired and <i>spoke</i> through the disciples of Jesus Christ. People who had never heard the message of Jesus began to hear it from the disciples, and began to understand that Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God.</p>	<p>Wondering I wonder what the disciples did after Jesus Christ appeared to them? I wonder where they went? I wonder how the Holy Spirit helped the disciples? I wonder what the disciples would have said about Jesus? I wonder how the Holy Spirit can help me?</p>	
<p>If there is only one message that comes from this story it would be: <i>the Holy Spirit of God is always with us</i>, giving us the words and the courage to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Pentecost reminds us that God continues to be present with us.</p>	<p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students choose to retell the Pentecost story through one of the following modes: story map, comic strip, dramatisation or 3D materials. 	<p>Assessment of Learning This activity will indicate students' understandings and perceptions of the events of the Pentecost experience.</p>
<p>In order to explore ways in which the Holy Spirit of God is present in people, we can explore the 'fruits' of the Holy Spirit – qualities of holiness. These 'fruits', or gifts, in a person's life reflect the Holy Spirit of God at work in the person. How are these gifts present in people they know? (Fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, generosity, faithfulness, self-control.)</p>	<p>Telling the Story Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Book 2, Chapter 12, p. 134.</p> <p>Wondering I wonder what special gifts your mum or dad has? I wonder what special gifts or talents you have?</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Just as the disciples were inspired and helped by the Holy Spirit to go out and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, we too are commissioned to do the same. This is the mission of the Church – to do as Jesus Christ did – to give people hope, to set people free, to give light to those in darkness, to work for justice, and to proclaim to the world that the kingdom of God is in our midst.</p>	<p>Responding To identify the God-given gifts of each person, create a flame upon which students write or draw a special quality they possess (a gift or talent). Make the link for students that these qualities are a gift from God and a sign of the Holy Spirit. They help us to live a good life and give us the ability to help others live a good life too. They help us live in the light of Christ.</p>	<p>Assessment of Learning This activity will indicate students' ability to identify the qualities that reveal the Holy Spirit in their lives.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word Children prepare and participate in a Liturgy of the Word. Create a focus using a bible, a candle and the gifts of each student written on flames. Tell 'The Story of Pentecost' in Acts 2: 1–11. Each child takes a turn to thank God for their gift of the Spirit. Conclude with a song.</p>	

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Book 2: Chapter 6 Part 3, A Journey to New Life; Chapter 7, Jesus, the Light of the World; Chapter 12, Pentecost People.

Teacher Resources

White, D, O'Brien, K & Todd, S 2003, *Into the Deep*, KD Publications, Marayong, NSW.

Music, CDs, Tapes

Burland, J 2001, *One Family*, Ovation.

Farrell, B 2000, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications.

Flack, J 1987, *Jibes and Vibes*, Just Life.

Kendrick, G 1986, *Shine Jesus Shine*, Thank You Music.

Websites

Images of light and darkness

<<https://www.paulmyhill.com>>

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.