

New Beginnings

In this unit students explore the Catholic beliefs about death, resurrection and eternal life. They examine the Resurrection stories in the gospels and the symbols of the Easter Vigil that express light, hope and new life. They consider ways they may be a witness to resurrection, hope and life in their words and actions. Students prepare and participate in a liturgy that celebrates Easter hope and joy.

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:

#1010 Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning: 'The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we will also live with him'. What is essentially new about Christian death is this: through baptism, the Christian has already 'died with Christ' sacramentally, in order to live a new life; and if we die in Christ's grace, physical death completes this 'dying with Christ' and so completes our incorporation into him in his redeeming act.

(See *Compendium #206 What does it mean to die in Jesus Christ?*)

#995 To be a witness to Christ is to be a 'witness to his resurrection', to '[have eaten and drunk] with him after he rose from the dead'. Encounters with the risen Christ characterise the Christian hope of resurrection. We shall rise like Christ, with him, and through him.

(See *Compendium #204 What is the relationship between the Resurrection of Christ and our resurrection?*)

#776 As sacrament, the Church is Christ's instrument. 'She is taken up by him also as the instrument for the salvation of all', 'the universal sacrament of salvation', by which Christ is 'at once manifesting and actualising the mystery of God's love for men'.

(See *Compendium #152 What does it mean to say that the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation?*)

#2472 The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as *witnesses of the gospel* and to fulfil the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known.

(See *Compendium #190 How does the laity participate in the prophetic office of Christ?*)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Does the fact that as a Christian you have already 'died with Christ' in baptism change how you feel about physical death? How might you speak of death (and Christian hope) with the children?

The Eucharist is the place where we eat and drink the Risen Lord. How does your experience of meeting Jesus Christ in the Eucharist help you recognise him elsewhere?

Explore the various meanings of the word 'witness' (including the ones given in the Catechism quotation above). In what ways are you yourself a witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Students will have different experiences and understandings of death that they bring to this unit. *What are they?*

Students come to know the presence of God through ordinary life experiences and key people in their lives. *What do they understand by the term 'witness'? How might they see themselves as a witness to the Risen Christ?*

Students are developing a continuing awareness of relationships and the importance of commitment, love and being present to others.

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Jn 20: 1–10, 11–18, 24–29

The religious experience communicated in this chapter is the 'coming' of the risen Jesus to his disciples. It reflects the faith of the early Christian community. It reflects the faith of many of the students. The main theme of the gospel continues: Jesus Christ reveals himself, this time as the risen 'Lord', and the disciples respond in faith; they 'believe' just as we want the students to believe. There are three main scenes: at the tomb, Jesus Christ coming to the gathered community, and finally coming to Thomas. At the end there is a shout of faith in the credo of Thomas: 'My Lord and my God'. The darkness (v.1) before the dawn of Easter conveys that the light of Jesus Christ's presence is gone for the disciples. Mary Magdalene suffers a profound sense of absence as she is deprived of her Lord who has been taken away. She has been at the Cross and has now become a witness to his resurrection. There is a growth from darkness to 'seeing' and 'believing' in Jesus Christ as risen. For the beloved disciple Jesus Christ is physically absent from the tomb and all that he 'sees' physically is an empty tomb with some cloths, but he comes to 'see' in faith and 'believe'.

Thomas is a keen follower of Jesus Christ, but is slow to grasp the mystery of his person and looks for concrete and clear 'proofs' of faith. He is still a pre-Easter disciple as he is taken up with establishing the miraculous aspect of Jesus' appearances. He has rejected the faith of fellow disciples who had 'seen the Lord' but he is brought to 'see' the risen Jesus Christ, and to realise that he is 'my Lord and my God'.

Jn 21: 1–14 Jesus Christ's Appearance on the Shore of Tiberias

The disciples' fishing expedition takes place at night – the usual time for a good catch of fish. Night represents darkness, while Jesus Christ is the Resurrection and the Light. As the morning light breaks Jesus goes to meet them. They confess they have caught nothing. However, under his guidance they make a miraculous catch of fish. Only in and through Jesus Christ can the disciples bear fruit. The breakfast on the shore – cooked and served by Jesus Christ – has overtones of the Eucharist.

It is important for teachers to understand that the Gospel of John can be both more historical and more symbolic than the synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke). It was written later and has many layers – some quite early and some quite late. John's Gospel also appears to have two endings, and this text comes from the second ending or appendix to the gospel.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was an experience of Jesus' presence and life with his early followers that continued long after Easter Sunday. So the stories are full of symbolism as well as the current experience of Jesus Christ some years after the

events happened. But the events are as real to John's Christian community as they should be for us today. In fact it was no easier for them to believe than it is for us. We all need a strong Easter faith.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Prepare the prayer table for Easter. Use white and yellow cloths, flowers, a large candle and a bowl of newly blessed water.
- Slowly read the scripture passage Lk 24: 36–43 (*KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 7, pp. 78–79) as a guided meditation. Allow two or three minutes of silence following the meditation. Conclude by singing 'The Peace of God' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications).
- Using the Scripture passage Lk 24: 36–43 (*KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 7, pp. 78–79), introduce the technique of a prayer mantra. Use the words of Jesus Christ 'Peace be with you' as a mantra. This can be linked to breathing. The mantra can be prayed silently on the 'out' breath.

- Prepare a class celebration to proclaim Christ, the light of the world. Highlight the lighting of the large candle in prayer. Prepare a Litany of the Light, e.g:

Leader: Jesus Christ, you show us the way.
All: *You are the light of the world!*

Leader: Jesus Christ, you give us hope in dark times.
All: *You are the light of the world!*

Invite the class to add further phrases to the litany.

Conclude by singing an appropriate song such as 'Share the Light' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications).

- During the Unit Content on the Easter Vigil, organise periods of contemplative prayer (*Prayer Strategies: A Teacher's Manual*, Beth Nolen, pp. 94–97). Use the guide on page 97 to assist in organising journal writing on the events of Easter and in response to the Resurrection accounts. Alternatively use the symbols of the Easter Vigil as stimulus for silent prayer.
- Pray the 'Renewal of Baptismal Promises' (*KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 7, pp. 81–82). Ask God's Holy Spirit to strengthen our commitment to living the promises made at baptism. Invite the students to bless themselves with the Easter water as a reminder of their baptisms.
- Establish a simple pattern of daily prayer during the Easter season:

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

Sing a short hymn or antiphon such as 'We Sing Your Glory' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications).

Recite one or two verses of a psalm, e.g. Psalm 118.

Leader: Let us give thanks to God.
All: *We give you thanks and praise!*

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 5: Chapter 7, He is Risen!

Faith concepts: death, resurrection, change, transformation, hope.

Seeking understanding:

How is the Resurrection a new beginning?
 Where do we see signs of resurrection and new life?
 How can I bring the message of hope and new life ?

Understandings:

Death is an end to life and also a new beginning.
 For all God’s people, life is changed, not ended, in death.
 Through his resurrection Jesus Christ’s followers were able to recognise his presence among them in a new way.
 Heaven is eternal life with God.
 Christians are called to recognise and celebrate signs of the Resurrection and new life in the world.

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"> Experiences of hope and a new beginning in the midst of loss and sadness. The disciples’ meeting with the risen Jesus. The symbols and rituals of transformation and new life in the Easter vigil: fire, light, water, Baptism. How the Church believes and describes death and everlasting life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on their own or others’ experiences of hope and new beginnings in the midst of sadness and loss. Identify signs of new life and hope in their own life or world. Represent their own ideas, perceptions, feelings and beliefs about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and about death and eternal life in light of new learning from Scripture, Church teaching and liturgy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in meditation and prayer. Prepare and celebrate a liturgy using the symbols, stories and experiences of the Resurrection and of new life and new beginnings. Identify ways in which they can be a sign of hope and new life in their words and actions.

PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

Additional Reading for Teachers	Orientation to Inquiry <i>What do students already know, think or feel in relation to the topic? What are students' questions about the topic? What experiences and reflections can we offer students to become engaged with the topic?</i>	Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and Listen: Stories about Death, Memory and Presence Read with students children's literature about grief and loss such as <i>Passing On</i> by Mike Dumbleton, or <i>Meggie's Magic</i> by Anna Dean. Focus: Presence after death. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What are the ways in which each character responds to death? What feelings do they show? Who supports them? – Do you know someone who has had a similar experience? – In what ways do the characters feel the presence of (or feel close to) the dead person? – Have you had a similar experience? What kind of feelings did you have? – What is death? – Do you think death is a new beginning? <p>At this stage accept all responses from students and do not seek to correct. This task is simply a way to begin to</p>	<p>Assessment for Learning Students' responses to the questions will indicate the experiences, perceptions, understandings and beliefs about death that they bring to the unit.</p>

	<p>explore students' own experiences and thinking about death.</p> <p>Students record a personal response to the story and their own experiences in their journals.</p>	
<p>The Passion, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ are the centre of the Christian faith.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Stories about People experiencing New Beginnings</p> <p>Teachers share personal or well-known stories of people who have experienced hope and new beginnings in the midst of loss and sadness, e.g. through the loss of another person, one's homeland, health, an ability, a prized possession. The Young Australian of the Year website has some profiles on young people who have experienced a loss that has been transformed into hope for others (see websites below).</p> <p>Alternatively, use examples of new beginnings and signs of hope after a natural disaster, e.g. tsunami, bushfires, drought.</p> <p>What new beginnings have students experienced? e.g. shifting house, starting a new school, changes in friendships or family relationships.</p> <p>What did you have to <i>let go</i> of?</p> <p>What are the feelings you associate with these changes? Have your feelings changed over time?</p> 	

	In their journal students illustrate or describe a new beginning they have experienced or describe someone else who has experienced hope in the midst of loss.	
Additional Reading for Teachers	Development <i>What experiences and religious texts will provide new learning for students? What skills will students need in order to work with these resources? What strategies and tools will enable students to think and reflect on these experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?</i>	Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning
Though Jesus Christ bore the marks of his Passion, the gospels show that his disciples did not always recognise the Risen Lord immediately. This suggests that there was both continuity and discontinuity with their experience of Jesus Christ before his death.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Beginnings – Meditation on the Death and Resurrection Students participate in a meditation based on Mt 28: 1–10; Mk 16: 1–8; Lk 24: 1–11; viewing the Resurrection from Mary Magdalene’s perspective (See Reehorst, J. <i>Guided Meditations for Children</i>, ‘Easter Morning’ p. 289). Discussion for class or journal reflection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How did you feel when Mary thought someone had taken Jesus? – Why do you think Mary didn’t recognise Jesus? – How did you feel and what did you think when Mary found out Jesus has been raised from the dead? 	
Resurrection is the word Christians use to describe Jesus Christ’s victory over death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KWHL Chart About Resurrection Students complete a KWHL chart 	Assessment for Learning KWHL will assess students’ prior knowledge

<p>when he rose again in his own body. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was not simply a return to earthly life, but the taking on of a new and glorified life not confined by the limitations of the body. St Paul says that faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the heart of Christian faith. 'If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing useless' (1 Cor 15: 14).</p> <p><i>What do we know about the Resurrection ?</i></p> <p>We know some gospel facts about the circumstances of the Resurrection and the new life of Jesus.</p> <p>We know the effect it had on the disciples and friends of Jesus.</p> <p>We know the hope that Jesus' rising from the dead gives to all of us who will also die.</p>	<p>(What we Know, What we Want to know, How we might learn, What we have Learned) about the Resurrection stories/new beginnings. The last section is filled out the at end of the unit.</p> <p><i>How might students learn further about the Resurrection ?</i></p> <p>The Resurrection is a mystery of faith. It is not something that can be proved or demonstrated like a maths problem or a scientific experiment. Therefore some students' questions will not have straightforward answers; some may have no answers. Students can learn further about the Resurrection by reading and thinking over the post-resurrection accounts of Jesus and what they mean both in class and with their families.</p> <p>They can learn about resurrection in the context of class and personal prayer.</p> <p>They can also learn about resurrection by talking over experiences of death, reading stories, attending funerals and/or funeral Masses, asking questions of each other and talking with parents or members of their community who are strong in faith.</p>	<p>of the Easter story and their understanding of the Resurrection . When students respond to the fourth question at the end of the unit they will be able to monitor how their learning has developed over the unit.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring Change, Transformation and New Beginnings in the Resurrection Stories Students form small groups. Each group is given one of the following stories: Jn 20: 24-49 Thomas doubting Jn 21: 1-14 Jesus preparing breakfast for disciples Lk 24: 13-35 Jesus meeting disciples on the road to Emmaus Ask students in each group to consider what each character may have been feeling and thinking throughout the story and how those emotions and thoughts may have changed by the end of the story. Explore the use of contrasting colours to express confusion and fear/joy, death/life, despair and grief/hope. Ask each student in the small group to portray a different part of the story they read using colour to depict the emotions of the characters in one of the following modes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – painting – plasticine/clay sculpture – freeze frame using coloured fabrics Display the portraits and ask the class to comment on how the chosen 	<p>Assessment of Learning This will demonstrate how students understand the Resurrection as transformation and the experience of hope and new life amidst death and sadness.</p>
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	<p>colours signify the change and transformation in the disciples' feelings and thinking about Jesus' death and resurrection.</p>	
<p>The Easter Vigil always takes place in darkness. It should begin after sunset and before the dawn of Easter day. Darkness symbolises the world and our lives without the light of Christ. In the dark we can lose our way, we don't recognise each other and we can be frightened.</p> <p>Fire is a symbol of warmth and conviviality. Human beings have gathered around fires since the dawn of civilisation to warm themselves, to keep each other company and to be protected from dangers of the night. The origin of the Easter fire might be Celtic but for centuries it was practical since every light in the church was extinguished on Good Friday and remained extinguished until the new fire was struck from flint at the beginning of the Easter Vigil.</p> <p>Each Easter a new Paschal candle is made and lit in each church. The Paschal candle is blessed and lit from the Easter fire. It is a large candle into which five grains of incense (representing the five wounds of Christ) are inserted in the form of a cross. The candle represents Christ who spent himself to give light to the world. The first and last letters of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbols of Transformation and New Beginnings in the Easter Vigil <p>The teacher, parish priest, parish liturgist or someone from RCIA talks to the grade about the symbols and rituals of light and water in the Easter Vigil. Go to the Church to see the Paschal candle and the baptismal font. Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Year 5, Chapter 7, pp. 80–83. Discuss the symbolism of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – darkness, fire and light – the Paschal candle – water in the Liturgy of Baptism <p>What scripture texts do these symbols remind us of?</p> <p>Create a wall display with the symbols of the Easter Vigil. Using wax crayons and black paint, students depict light breaking through the darkness.</p>	

the Greek alphabet, *alpha* and *omega* represent Christ as the beginning and end of all things and all time. The numerals of the current year are inscribed into the candle as a sign that Christ reigns over present time too. From the single flame of this candle, the candles of all present are lit. The members of the Church extend the light of Christ into the world. The candle remains lighted at all worship services through the season of Easter. Throughout the remainder of the year, the Paschal candle is lit at all services that include baptism and for the worship services surrounding death (funeral, Mass of Burial, and Mass of Requiem) as a sign of the hope of the resurrection into which Christians are baptised.

The **Baptismal Font** contains water which is blessed and used for Baptism. The font itself is often referred to as the 'womb' of the Church because new Christians are born here. **Water** is the primary symbol during the Liturgy of Baptism. Water represents both life and death. Without water there would be no life on earth. Water enables life and growth, it cleanses, refreshes and revives. At the same time it has the potential to take life away. All of these attributes are symbolically significant in Baptism. In the water, those being baptised 'die' to their old way of life and are born anew in Christ. In water they are cleansed from sin and begin afresh. The waters of Baptism bring about new life and growth.

<p>Life after Death: Heaven, Hell and Purgatory</p> <p>Christians believe and hope that the new and glorified life of the risen Jesus Christ will be their existence after death. At funerals we pray that those who have been baptised into the death of Jesus Christ will share in his resurrection.</p> <p>The Church has traditionally used the concept of heaven to describe the state of joyous and everlasting union with God, the concept of hell to describe the desolation and agony of everlasting separation from God, and the concept of purgatory to describe the purifying completion of conversion required before we can be truly united to God.</p> <p>It is important to understand that heaven, hell and purgatory are not geographical locations. They are beyond time and space. Harps and clouds on the one hand, and sulphur and flames on the other, are simply ways in which humans have sought to picture the joys and pains of heaven and hell respectively.</p> <p>When students ask about what happens to those who die, especially those who have died apart from the Church or after an openly sinful existence, we can only say that God will be the judge of their lives, not human beings. They will know in that moment of judgment the extent of God's mercy and love and justice with regard to themselves, and will</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everlasting Life Invite students to illustrate, write, talk with a friend or create a 3D representation of how they imagine life after death. Share responses with a partner. Ask students to identify something that struck them in their partner's description. <p>Read <i>If Only</i> in <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Year 5, Chapter 16, pp. 163–164. Discuss and compare the images of heaven presented in the story with those descriptions of life after death created by students.</p> <p>Read <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Chapter 16, pp. 157–160 and compare the images and descriptions of heaven, purgatory and hell with students' descriptions of life after death. Identify and record statements from the text that identify the Christian belief in heaven and everlasting life.</p> <p>Through words, images and scripture references students record their ideas and feelings about everlasting life.</p>	<p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>This task will enable students to represent their ideas, perceptions, feelings and beliefs about death and eternal life in light of new learning from Scripture and Church teaching.</p>
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<p>also know the extent to which they have responded to it or rejected it.</p> <p>God does not punish. 'God wants everyone to be saved and to come to full knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:5). Purgatory will bring about our recognition of the extent of our turning away from God. Its pain will be our distress at falling so short of such a just, merciful and loving God.</p>		
<p>Additional Reading for Teachers</p>	<p>SYNTHESIS</p> <p><i>How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic? How will students take action based on their learning? What strategies and tools will enable students to discern their action, to plan and implement action and to evaluate their action?</i></p>	<p>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</p>
<p>There are two meanings of the word witness that are important for us. The first meaning is someone who sees an event take place, e.g. a witness to an accident. The disciples of Jesus Christ were witnesses to him because they saw him and listened to him. The second meaning of the word 'witness' relates to the giving of evidence or testimony. Christians witness to Jesus Christ when, by their words or actions, they show that they know him and have been deeply influenced by him.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we also be a Witness to the Resurrection? <p>How can we, in word and action, be a sign of hope and new life?</p> <p>As a class identify ways we can bring the Easter message of new life, hope and a new beginning through our words and actions.</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can we Celebrate Christ's Resurrection as a class? <p>Students prepare a liturgy incorporating the symbols, stories and experiences they have explored. Each student could have a candle which is lit from the Paschal candle by another student who affirms their classmate as a person of hope and new life. See 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship' for ideas.</p>	
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RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Year 5: Chapter 7, He is Risen!

Teacher Resources

Murdoch K 1998, *Classroom Connections: Strategies for Integrated Learning*, Eleanor Curtain Publishing, Australia.

Nolen, B 1998, *Prayer Strategies. A Teacher's Manual*, Harper Collins, Melbourne.

Reehorst, J 2002, *Guided Meditations for Children*, Harcourt Religion Publishers, USA.

White, D, et al. 2003, *Into the Deep: Rich Teaching Strategies for the Religious Education Classroom*, KD Publications, NSW.

Student Resources

Dean, A 1991, *Meggie's Magic*, Penguin Viking, New York.

Dumbleton, M & Denton, T 2001, *Passing On*, Random House Australia, Milson's Point, NSW.

Music and CDs

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

Websites

The Young Australian of the Year website has some background to young people who have courageously made new beginnings, such as Tricia Broadbridge, Tan Le and Khoa Do.

<<http://www.australianoftheyear.gov.au/pages/page127.asp>>

The *Behind the News* page is located at the ABC website. It has current stories from the Australian community. The following links lead you to specific stories of hope and new beginnings.

<<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/btn/stories/s1954048.htm>>

<<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/btn/stories/s1396328.htm>>

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 4 standards.

Students express the significance of ritual in the Catholic Tradition by planning and evaluating prayer, liturgical and sacramental experiences. Students explain Christian signs and symbols drawing on personal insights that are informed by Scripture, Tradition, liturgy, culture and life.

