

## Jesus is Alive! Alleluia!

In this unit students learn about Jesus Christ's passion, death and resurrection and the sending of Jesus Christ's Spirit through New Testament stories which explore these events and 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:**

**#571** The Paschal mystery of Christ's cross and Resurrection stands at the centre of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world. God's saving plan was accomplished 'once for all' by the redemptive death of his Son, Jesus Christ.

(See *Compendium #118 Why was the death of Jesus Christ part of God's plan?*)

**#654** The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life.

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

**#2157** The Christian begins his day, his prayers, and his activities with the Sign of the Cross: 'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen'. The baptised person dedicates the day to the glory of God and calls on the Saviour's grace which lets him act in the Spirit as a child of the Father. The Sign of the Cross strengthens us in temptations and difficulties.

(See *Compendium #351 What are the sacramentals?*)

**#657** The empty tomb and the linen cloths lying there signify in themselves that by God's power Christ's body had escaped the bonds of death and corruption. They prepared the disciples to encounter the Risen Lord.

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

**#645** By means of touch and the sharing of a meal the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognise that he is not a ghost, and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion.

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

### SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

In what way does the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ stand at the centre of Christian life?

What do Jesus Christ's death and his rising teach us about dealing with our own suffering and loss so that it can be meaningful rather than devastating?

How do our experiences of emptiness and loss lead to further searching?

Why does the Risen Lord still bear the wounds of his passion?

Touch and the sharing of meals are the way Jesus Christ leads the disciples to recognition and belief. How do these simple experiences affect us even now?

How can you teach little ones something meaningful for them about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

## LINKS WITH STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Some students may have experienced death and sadness within their family context.

Students will come to this unit with diverse understandings of the meaning of Easter and with diverse understandings of death.

They are able to explore story through imagination, play, drama and reflection. This exploration begins to shape their image and understanding of God's presence in today's world.

Celebration is an important aspect of many children's lives. *How can you assist students to link the celebration of Easter with celebrations in their own lives?*

## EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

### **Mk 15: 21 and Lk 23: 26–27**

In both of these cameos we hear about Jesus Christ having been beaten and whipped by the Roman battalion, and unable to carry the cross to the place of execution, as was the custom. Instead, Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry it for Jesus. Cyrene, located in modern day Libya, identifies Simon as a foreigner, an outsider, a non-disciple (Mark). Here was this man from the country helping Jesus. He is doing what Jesus Christ said those who would be his disciples must do.

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

The disciples' fishing expedition took 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 broke Jesus went to meet them. They confessed they had caught nothing. However, under his guidance they made 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 – 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 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.

## 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 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 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 divine 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 Spirit 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

### From Death to New Life

- During Holy Week, decorate the prayer table with a red cloth and put the cross in a central place. Gather the children for prayer and invite them to look at the cross. Play some quiet, reflective music. Read Lk 23: 44–46. Give them time to pray aloud a prayer of love for Jesus Christ. Conclude by singing 'We Remember You' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications).
- Introduce the Jesus prayer: Allow the children time to be still and aware of their breathing. Invite the children to silently say the name of Jesus on each 'in' breath. The breathing meditations in *To God on a Magic Carpet* (Sr Anthony, Spectrum Publications) are very helpful for the purpose of introducing this kind of meditation to children.

### Jesus Christ Is Alive

- Decorate the prayer place in white and gold. Place there a large, white, decorated candle. This candle will be lit whenever you gather for prayer during the Easter season. Choose an Alleluia verse that can be sung regularly during the season, e.g. 'Finger-Snap Alleluia' (Paul Inwood, *Children At Heart*, OCP Publications).
- Establish a pattern of daily prayer in a responsory style, e.g:

Leader:       The Lord be with you.  
All:            *And also with you.*  
Leader:       Jesus is alive!  
All:            *Jesus is alive, Alleluia!*

- Pray with movement: Choose a joyful Easter song, e.g. 'Sing For Joy' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications). This song involves clapping, jumping and dancing.
- Give the children paper fish shapes on which to write their names. Place a fishing net on the floor in the prayer place. Gather the children around it. Invite them to place their fish into the net as they pray: 'Jesus Christ, we belong to you!'

### **The Holy Spirit Comes**

- Decorate the prayer table with a red cloth and place there a number of tea lights. These will be lit for prayer during this part of the unit.
- Pray the prayer in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten Chapter 8, p. 57 throughout the week.
- Take the children outside for prayer (preferably on a slightly windy day). Sit in a circle and invite them to close their eyes and be very still, in order to feel the movement of the breeze on their faces. Lead them through a breathing meditation. 'Imagine you are breathing in God's Holy Spirit ... Feel God's Holy Spirit inside you ... Breathe out all your worries ... Feel God's Holy Spirit making you strong ...' (Allow a few moments of silence according to the children's capacity for it.)

**Related Chapters** – *KWL*, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 6, From Death to New Life; Chapter 7, Jesus is Alive; Chapter 8, The Spirit Comes.

**Faith concepts:** death, resurrection, presence, symbol.

**Understandings:**

Some special people were with Jesus in his suffering and death.

Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

After Jesus rose he showed himself to his disciples.

After Jesus Christ returned to the Father the Holy Spirit came to be with the disciples.

**Unit specific learning:**

<b>Students will learn about</b>	<b>Students will learn to</b>	<b>Students will undertake to</b>
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning &amp; Responding</i>	<i>Personal &amp; Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The main parts and characters of the story of the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.</li><li>• The meaning of the word 'Alleluia'.</li><li>• The season of Easter as a time of new life.</li><li>• The main parts of the Pentecost story.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ponder and make a personal response to the story of Jesus' resurrection.</li><li>• Wonder about the power of God's Holy Spirit.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ponder and make a personal response to the story of Jesus' resurrection.</li><li>• Wonder about the power of God's Holy Spirit</li></ul>

## Part 1: From Death to New Life

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>For younger children in particular, <b>death</b> is an incomprehensible mystery. They are too young to appreciate successive phases of human existence and the fragility of human life. But they are at least beginning to see death as separation and sadness. The experience of the death of a relative may be rare at this stage, but even the death of a pet animal might offer some sense of the partings involved in our journey of human existence.</p> <p><b>Jesus Christ's Death</b> Should we teach younger children about the crucifixion? Even in an age when they see much violence through the media this has to be handled wisely and sensitively. We cannot avoid explaining the symbol they encounter in our Catholic tradition – the cross. Jesus was put on trial and unjustly executed. Yet his death led to new life. Let the children appreciate the radical contrast between the dying and the rising of Jesus.</p>	<p><b>Telling the Story</b> Use concrete materials to tell the death and burial of Jesus, Luke 23: 26–56.</p> <p><b>Wondering</b> Explore the story with the wondering statements from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten Chapter 6, p. 42.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p><b>Responding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the story of Jesus Christ’s death and burial from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten Chapter 6, pp. 36–39.</li> <li>• Invite each student to respond to and explore the story more deeply for themselves by portraying a part of the story that stays in their mind. They choose from the following options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– painting</li> <li>– playdough or plasticine</li> <li>– Godly play concrete materials</li> <li>– pastels and crayons</li> <li>– This response is a form of further exploration and contemplation of the story.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment as Learning</b></p> <p>This task will indicate if students are able to make a personal response to the story.</p>
	<p><b>Praying the Word</b></p> <p>Teacher gathers a red cloth and a candle. With the students prepare the prayer place for the death and burial of Jesus Christ (see <i>Possibilities for Prayer and Worship</i>).</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p><b>Liturgical Colours</b> Colours are used in the Church's liturgy to symbolise a feast or season in the Church's year, e.g. white is for joy and is used at Christmas and Easter; purple is for darkness or sorrow and is used during Advent and Lent. Association with colour and symbol reinforces the significance of the liturgical celebration.</p> <p><b>The Resurrection</b> is the climax of the Incarnation (God taking our human nature in Jesus Christ). It reminds us that life overcomes death, and light overcomes darkness.</p>	<p><b>Wondering</b> Make changes to the classroom prayer place, e.g. replace red cloth with white, add candle and flowers, and drape a white cloth over the class cross made by the students.</p> <p>Invite the students to wonder with you: I wonder what is different about the prayer place? I wonder why the cloth is white? I wonder why there are flowers and candles?</p> <p><b>Telling the Story</b> Use concrete materials to tell the story of Jesus' appearance to the disciples from Jn 21: 1-14.</p> <p><b>Wondering</b> Explore the story further with the wondering statements in <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten Chapter 7, p. 50.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p><b>Responding</b>  Invite each student to respond to, and explore, this story more deeply for themselves by portraying a part of the story or a character that stays in their mind. They choose from the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– painting</li> <li>– playdough or plasticine</li> <li>– Godly play concrete materials</li> <li>– pastels and crayons</li> </ul> <p>This response is a form of further exploration and contemplation of the story.</p> <p><b>Telling the Story</b>  Read the story of Jesus Christ meeting his disciples after the Resurrection from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten Chapter 7, pp. 44–49.</p> <p><b>Wondering</b>  Invite students to name their own wonderings about this story.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p><b>Alleluia:</b> The Hebrew word <i>Alleluia</i> means praise the Lord. It is used to rejoice and give voice to the surprise and joy of the resurrection. The equivalent sentiment is expressed in our shout of 'Hurrah' or 'Well done'. It expresses the response to an overwhelming and unexpected experience. This word is not present in the liturgy during Lent, but comes back at Easter.</p>	<p><b>Responding</b> Students choose to respond to the story and explore it further through one or two of the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students draw their own image of what Jesus Christ looked like after the resurrection.</li> <li>• Students retell the story with a partner using 2D and 3D materials.</li> <li>• Students search through magazines to find images of new life.</li> <li>• Students use a listening post to listen to songs about resurrection.</li> <li>• Create a banner or mural with the text, <i>Alleluia! Jesus is alive!</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment of Learning</b> The first and second tasks will indicate how students are beginning to understand and interpret the Resurrection for themselves.</p>
	<p><b>Praying the Word</b> Using an Easter song or hymn students participate in praying with movement (see 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship').</p>	

## Part 2: The Holy Spirit Comes

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p><b>The Holy Spirit</b>            The Hebrew word for spirit is <i>ruah</i>, for breath or wind. It refers to the life-giving movement of air in and out of our bodies, and all around us. This is a symbol for God's Holy Spirit, unseen yet constantly with us, giving us life, breathing in us and in all creation. Breath is essential for language and communication. The Holy Spirit is the <i>breathing</i> of God's word, in us and through us. At Pentecost the disciples of Jesus Christ were filled with the Holy Spirit and were given languages to communicate God's living word.</p>	<p><b>Wondering</b>            Take the students outside. Students close their eyes and feel the wind around them. Ask the students how they know the wind is there. Ask if they can see the wind, hear the wind, feel the wind.            Ask:            I wonder if you have ever felt scared?            I wonder what helped you feel safe?</p> <p><b>Telling the Story</b>            Use concrete materials to tell the story of Pentecost from Acts 2: 1–4.            As you tell the story, light a candle to symbolise the coming of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p><b>Wondering</b>            Invite students to respond to the wonder statements on <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten Chapter 8, p. 56.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>Fire is a symbol of God's Holy Spirit. Fire is powerful and uncontrollable. It consumes, destroys and transforms. In the form of a <b>flame</b> it gives light in the darkness. It is also a symbol of the <i>faith</i> that we need to keep burning brightly in the midst of the darkness we encounter in our world.</p>	<p><b>Responding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a small group, students explore the meaning of the Pentecost experience more deeply for themselves by retelling the story using concrete materials.</li> <li>• Give the students a coloured circle of paper. Students illustrate their own faces on the circle. Stick circles onto a large display space to signify the disciples gathered in the upper room. Students then decorate a flame outline. Cut out the flame outlines and stick them above students' faces on the display. Create a title for the display, e.g. 'The Holy Spirit With Us'.</li> <li>• Using the format of a four-frame cartoon strip, students sequence the events of Pentecost (afraid in room, wind, fire, outside talking to people about Jesus Christ).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment of Learning</b> This task will indicate if students know the main events of the Pentecost story.</p>

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>The Church uses <b>red</b> to celebrate the Holy Spirit. It is the lively colour of fire.</p> <p>St Paul says that ‘we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit’ (Rom 8: 26–27). In other words, when we feel we cannot pray, the Holy Spirit prays within us.</p>	<p><b>Praying the Word</b></p> <p>In the prayer place drape a red cloth and light a candle. Lead the students through a guided meditation about Pentecost to reinforce the emotions of the disciples and the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Reehorst, J, ‘Jesus Sends the Spirit’, <i>Guided Meditations for Children</i>, p.129).</p> <p><b>Suggested Home Activity</b></p> <p>With their families students pray the prayer from <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edn, Prep/Kindergarten, Chapter 8, p. 57.</p>	

## RESOURCES

### ***To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition***

Prep: Chapter 6, From Death to New Life; Chapter 7, Jesus is Alive; Chapter 8, The Spirit Comes.

### **Teacher Resources**

Reehorst, J 1986, *Guided meditations for Children: How to Teach Children to Pray Using Scripture*, Brown-ROA Publishing Media Religious Education Division, Dubuque.

Reehorst, J 1991, *Guided meditations for Children 2: How to Teach Children to Pray Using Scripture*, Brown-ROA Publishing Media Religious Education Division, Dubuque.

Macdonald, Sr Anthony 2004, *To God on a Magic Carpet – Meditating with Children*, Spectrum Productions, Richmond, Victoria.

### **Music**

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

Inwood, Paul 2000, 'Finger Snap Alleluia' in, *Children At Heart*, OCP Publications.

Mangan, Michael 1998, *Sing Your Joy*, Litmus Productions.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 1 standards.

Students relate to sacred story including the image of the Good Shepherd by making connections to their personal experiences. Students contemplate and reflect about God, themselves and the world by responding to their wondering, feelings and ideas through prayer and a range of media.