

WE BELIEVE IN JESUS' DEATH & RESURRECTION

Generations of Faith

April 10 and 13, 2011

*This **Professing Our Faith** session explores the Paschal mystery, including the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we profess in the Creed: "For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end" (Nicene Creed). This session engages the participants in the journey with Jesus through the liturgies of the Triduum from the Last Supper through Good Friday to the Easter Vigil, helping participants discover the meaning of the Paschal mystery and its significance for their faith as Catholics.*

BACKGROUND READING:

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 571-682, 988-1019

U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults: *Triduum* 173, 530

Rediscovering Catholicism By Matthew Kelly: Chapters 19, 20 and 21

THE EASTER TRIDUUM

*The Easter Triduum (trih-dyoo-um) is the "mother of all feasts." All other feasts of the year hinge on this great feast. While each Sunday stands on its own as an observance of the paschal mystery, the entire liturgical year is in forward motion toward the fundamental commemoration of our Christian faith: the redemptive action of Jesus Christ's passion, death, and resurrection" (Mary Birmingham, **Word and Worship Workbook**, page 204).*

*The Triduum is a single celebration of the paschal mystery presented, over three days, under different aspects. Christian remembering is more than retracing the Lord's steps during his last days in Jerusalem. At the Holy Thursday Eucharist, the church is already drawn into the whole event of Jesus' death and resurrection. The Good Friday celebration of the Lord's passion is austere but never sad, for the risen Lord already reigns triumphant. On Holy Saturday the church waits for the celebration of Christ's resurrection and its own at the Easter Vigil, when the Spirit hovers over the waters of the font and the community of faith drinks deeply again of the mystery of Jesus' passage from death to life. (**Roman Missal**).*

The Church has a shorthand way of referring to the mystery of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. It is the phrase "paschal mystery." The "paschal" comes from the Greek "pascha" meaning the Passover, a Jewish festival that celebrates the Exodus, the liberation of the Jews from captivity in Egypt.

The festival gets its name from two aspects of the Old Testament story. First, an angel of death "passes over" the homes of the Israelites. The Lord, through Moses and Aaron, instructed the Israelites to slaughter a lamb and use the animal's blood to mark their houses. "The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13)

The other passing takes place when the Israelites "pass over" the Red Sea. God gives them safe passage through waters of death. When they reach the opposite shore they gain a new life of freedom. In both cases the passage that takes place is associated with life overcoming death. When the Church uses the phrase "paschal mystery" it intends to capture the idea of a mysterious passage from life through death to new life. Every time we participate in the Eucharist we celebrate this mystery.

"The paschal mystery is Jesus' story, but it is also our story. The passage from life, through death, to new life is

*the pattern of human existence. Through Jesus, God has revealed that death is not the end for us. Physical death – the end of life on earth as we know it – is a passage to a new life. The anticipation of life after death is a source of great hope even though its nature remains shrouded in mystery" (Maura Hagarty, "We Believe in Jesus' Death and Resurrection," **Professing Our Faith Magazine**).*

Matthew Kelly Discussion Questions

(From Matthew's book *Rediscovering Catholicism*)

Matthew asks, "Are we willing to change? I hope so. Every person I speak to says, 'The Church really needs to change.' What we perhaps forget in making this statement is that we are the Church. And so, the real question becomes, are you willing to change? Are you willing to become the change the Church needs? (P. 274)

Matthew says, "Fear stops more people from doing something with their lives than lack of ability, contacts, resources, or any other single variable. Fear paralyzes the human spirit...I have felt the chilling winds of fear and self-doubt rush against my skin. I have discovered that courage is learning to recognize and master that single moment. That moment is a prelude. A prelude to courage or a prelude to fear. So much can be accomplished in one moment of courage. And so much can be lost to one moment of fear. (pgs. 297-298)

Question: Where will this courage we so desperately need come from? (Matthew suggests that "Perhaps the answer lies in the lives of our spiritual ancestors – the saints. They were not timid, whimpering, and non-committal.

They were brave and bold. Why? They knew their essential purpose....Where did they get all this from? Prayer. In its many forms, prayer nourished their lives.” (pgs. 299-300)

Matthew says, “The great fallacy of the lukewarm moral life is to believe that our sole responsibility is to eliminate vice from our lives. In the absence of a sincere and focused effort to grow in virtue, vice will creep into our lives unawares in the form of a hundred different self-destructive habits. No man is born virtuous. Good habits are not infused. Virtue must be sought out and can only be acquired by continual practice.” (p. 306)

Question: What virtue are you presently practicing?

Matthew says, “God doesn’t always need or use the most talented people. Most of the time, he uses those who make themselves available.” (P. 312)

Question: How available are you willing to make yourself to God?

HOLY THURSDAY

On Holy Thursday we remember the Last Supper that Jesus had with his friends. There he broke bread and shared it, saying it was his body. He shared the cup of wine, saying it was his blood. He told them to do the same, to share the bread and the cup, after his death, and to remember him each time they shared the special meal. We continue to remember Jesus in this way each Sunday when we break bread and share the cup.

The Last Supper that Jesus celebrated with the disciples was the traditional Passover meal, also called a Seder meal. This meal is celebrated in the Jewish faith at temples and in homes today. Passover recalls the time when the Hebrew people were enslaved in Egypt. As Moses was trying to persuade Pharaoh to let the people go, an angel of death came over the Egyptian households. By marking their houses with the blood of a lamb, Hebrew families were spared from death. This is called the passing over. Passover celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from the slavery of Egypt.

In the same way, the Eucharist delivers us from the slavery of our sins, as we remember Jesus' death and resurrection.

Take some time to read the Gospel of John 13:3–15 where the washing of the disciples' feet is presented. Ask yourself the following questions:

- *Why did Jesus wash the feet of his Apostles?*
- *What do you think he wanted them to learn?*
- *What did Jesus mean when he said that we should wash each other's feet?*
- *How are we "foot washers" – servants to others, especially those in need? How can we be servants all year long?*

┌ In Jesus' time people wore sandals and walked on dirt roads. People in Jesus' day walked everywhere, so their feet got very dirty. It was customary upon entering a home to have your feet washed. In Jesus' time the servants who worked in the house washed the feet of the guests who came to the house for dinner or to visit. Jesus takes on the role of the servant – he actually gets on his knees and washes dirty feet – to give his disciples a demonstration of what real love and service mean. Then Jesus asked his disciples – as us – to follow his example by loving and serving one another. Jesus asks us to serve others, to put other people first, to love other people, and to be willing to sacrifice for others.┐

GOOD FRIDAY'S VENERATION OF THE CROSS

One of the great paradoxes of Christian faith is that an instrument of death is for us a symbol of love and a sign that we identify ourselves with Christ.

Whenever we gather for liturgy we begin by making the sign of the cross. Our church buildings have crosses or crucifixes displayed in prominent places. We hang them in our homes. We wear jewelry with cross shaped pendants. Parents bless their children's foreheads with the sign of the cross at Baptism and

some make it a daily bedtime ritual. These objects and actions remind us that we belong to Christ and to one another.

Why the cross? Because of Jesus, the cross is a symbol of self-sacrificing love and a sign of victory over death. The cross reminds us that the life of love God calls us to is not easy street. It has a cost. As Christians we are joined to the whole of Christ's Paschal mystery.

We die with him, but we also rise with him. At the Easter Vigil we are reminded of this when we hear these words from Paul's letter to the Romans: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

*Whenever we make the sign of the cross or see the image of a cross we are reminded that the paschal mystery is Jesus' story and that it is the story of our own lives too. (Maura Hagerty, in **People of Faith Magazine: We Believe in Jesus' Death and Resurrection**).*

OVERVIEW OF THE LITURGY OF THE EASTER VIGIL

BLESSING OF THE FIRE AND LIGHTING OF THE EASTER CANDLE

*Blessing of the New Fire ~ "Make this new fire holy, and inflame us with new hope...
Bring us one day to the feast of eternal light (Sacramentary, p. 246)*

*Procession of the Candle and the Passing of New Light ~ Christ be our light...Thanks
be to God. We process with the Easter Candle through the darkened church to the
baptismal font and Eucharistic table.*

The Singing of the Exultet ~ "Rejoice, O heavenly powers! Sing choirs of angels! Exult all creation Around God's throne! Jesus Christ our King is risen! Sound the Trumpet of salvation!" We give thanks and praise for Christ our Light. In darkness we listen To the stories of our salvation.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading: Genesis 1:1-2:2 We hear the story of creation. God's Generative power has influenced human experience and history from the Very beginning.

Second Reading: Genesis 22:1-18 God calls Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. The story challenges each one of us to place our lives in God's hand.

Third Reading: Exodus 14:15-15:1 For Jews, the Passover is the premier Saving event of God. For us, Jesus is the new Passover, and Baptism is our Emergence from the Red Sea.

Fourth Reading: Isaiah 54:5-14 No matter what, God's covenant with Israel stands. God remains ever faithful, and true justice remains a Possibility.

Fifth Reading: Isaiah 55:1-11 God cares for Israel, promising a lavish Banquet. We too are invited to the banquet, provided we genuinely seek And thirst for God.

Sixth Reading: Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4 When we stray, God's wisdom leads Us back. Through the scriptures, we come to know God's wisdom.

Seventh Reading: Ezekiel 36:16-28 When the people thought they had no Need for God, they found themselves in exile. Only God can gather the Lost and scattered, and form them into a community.

Gloria

Prayer

Epistle: Romans 6:3-11 We turn on all the lights. We emerge from Darkness. We die to our sins and become a new creation in Christ.

Alleluia

Gospel: Mark 16:1-7 When the Resurrection is revealed, all the disciples are Scattered and lost. It is the women who remind them that they will meet Jesus in Galilee, where they will remember all that Jesus taught, and they Will recall their ministry of love, healing, and reconciliation.

Homily

SERVICE OF BAPTISM

Litany of the Saints ~ We pray with the entire Church – past, present, and Future.

Blessing of Baptismal Water ~ The Easter Candle is plunged three times Into the baptismal water as it is blessed. We recall the awesome, saving Power of water.

Renunciation of Sin and the Profession of Faith ~ We renew our Baptismal promises.

Celebration of Reception into Full Communion ~ Those who seek full Communion with the Catholic Church renew their baptismal promises And make a profession of the Catholic faith.

Baptism ~ The celebrant baptizes each candidate, either by immersion or By the pouring of water. The catechumens are baptized and become Neophytes. They are incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Paschal Mystery, and the communion of saints. All rejoice!

Clothing with a Baptismal Garment ~ The neophytes don white Garments, symbolizing that they have put on Christ and risen with Christ.

Presentation of a Lighted Candle ~ In Scripture when light or fire Appears, God is present. The newly baptized are given a lighted candle, Signifying that they have been enlightened by Christ.

CELEBRATION OF CONFIRMATION

Laying on of Hands ~ Laying on of hands indicates the action of the Holy Spirit, placing the person under God's care and protection.

Anointing with Chrism ~ With chrism oil, the baptized are sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the sign of salvation. They are marked with The Sign of the Cross and challenged to take up their own cross and Follow Jesus.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The whole community rejoices as the newly baptized are welcomed to the Table of the Eucharist.

REFLECTION: The Paschal Vigil is unique among the celebrations of the Church. It is a time to wait, to watch, to look, to listen, to meditate, to spend time with other Christians and not be restrained by the demands of the Hour. The observance is not an anticipated Mass of Easter Sunday. St. Augustine indeed addressed the heart of the matter: "Watch, I tell you and pray. Let us celebrate this vigil internally and externally. Let God speak to us in these readings. Let us speak to him in our prayers. If we hear his words obediently, he to whom we pray will dwell in us" (Sermon 219).

KEEP HOLY THE SUMMER

For Some families all routine seems to go out the open windows during summer vacation. If you're not careful, spiritual life will take a holiday too. Here are some suggestions for remembering the Eleventh Commandment – Keep Holy the Summer:

- 1. CULTIVATE A SENSE OF GRATITUDE ~ Greet each child with a smile in the morning, thanking God aloud for the gift that a child is. Summer offers innumerable examples of the glory and abundance of God's creative genius. From a sprouting seed to the beauty of full bloom, model for your children appreciation of God's gifts.*
- 2. REDEDICATE YOURSELVES TO MEALTIME PRAYER ~ Whether it's a picnic at the park or hotdogs on the run, begin with bowed heads and thanksgiving. Light a candle. A citronella can do double duty – God is present; bugs aren't! A simple ritual like holding hands, saying "Thank you, God," together and blowing out the candle can be a graced moment for your family.*
- 3. COMMIT TO SUNDAY MASS EVEN WHEN TRAVELING OR CAMPING ~ This speaks powerfully to your children about the centrality of your faith. Sunday best dress isn't always necessary.*
- 4. EXTEND YOUR FAMILY CIRCLE ~ Whether it's the new child on the block or the elderly neighbor you don't see all winter, summer is the perfect time to reach out and include them. Don't fuss about making special plans; just invite others to join whatever you're already doing.*
- 5. SERVE OTHERS ~ Teens can mow lawns; grade-schoolers can walk dogs or pick up mail. Kids are often more than willing to do chores for someone else than to do them at home. Volunteer service works wonders for boredom. Older teens may even be able to volunteer for a week away from home in programs helping disadvantaged children or underprivileged communities.*
- 6. DON'T FORGET VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (VBS) FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN ~ VBS curriculums teach faith lessons in creative, fun and kid-centered ways. They are also great opportunities for both children and parents to make new friends.*

If this list sounds like a six-point plan for stressing out your summer – relax. Spirituality is a journey taken one step at a time. You never know – some of these ideas may become habits you'll carry into the school year next fall.

*(Both sides of this page are taken from **Celebrating Faith: Year-round Activities for Catholic Families** by Mary Cronk Farrell, pgs. 57 - 59)*

THANK GOD FOR WATER!

There is nothing more refreshing on a hot summer day than cool water. Water is one of those blessings we often take for granted, whether it's a shower in the morning, a way to keep our lawn green, or a place to water-ski on vacation. Not every kid in America has access to a swimming pool, but in most homes you can turn on a faucet and water comes out – cool, clear water that's fit to drink.

An important part of living a Christian life is recognizing and appreciating the gifts we've been given. Water is a precious gift necessary to sustain life. In baptism it is the symbol of our new life in the Body of Christ. Water is an aid to cleanliness. It's used to produce electricity to power machinery, bring light in the darkness and heat in the cold. People and goods are transported great distances on rivers and oceans. Water offers uncountable ways of recreation and celebration.

Summer is a great time to acknowledge and be grateful for the many blessings of water. Look for ways to celebrate and give thanks, or follow some of these suggestions:

- 1. When washing or bathing your child make the sign of the cross on her forehead and remind her that she was baptized into the Christian family with water.*
- 2. While your children play in the sprinkler or battle with super-soakers ask them to pause for a moment, hold hands and briefly thank God for the gift of water and the fun it provides.*
- 3. On car trips identify lakes, rivers or streams you pass. Make an unplanned stop and have the whole family hop out and wiggle their toes in the water for just five minutes.*
- 4. Check the library for a book of science experiments. Find some using water that are age appropriate for your children. Spend an afternoon doing hands-on learning.*
- 5. For one day be conscious of each time you use water, and be grateful. Plan a quiet prayer time next to a fountain, bubbling stream, duck pond or fishbowl. Look. Listen, and give thanks.*
- 6. Ask your family to help come up with ways to conserve and respect water. If the kids volunteer to cut back on taking baths, accept the suggestion in good fun and help keep the discussion enjoyable. Focus on the idea of how we take care of a special gift given to us by someone we love. Children can turn off the water while brushing their teeth. Teenagers can read labels on products used in the home to determine if any contain chemicals that contribute to water pollution.*

Parents might install water-saving showerheads or consider landscaping part (or the entire yard) with native plants and grasses which do not require watering.

In the beginning, according to Genesis, there was water. With our stewardship this gift will continue to sustain life, provide recreation and lend power for generations to come.

Easter ~ Discovering New Life

Alleluia! Christ is risen! Easter is the most ancient and the single most important feast day of the year for Christians. The Resurrection of Jesus is the central tenet of our faith. On this day we celebrate the Passover of Jesus from death to new life and through our baptism, our own share in the Resurrection. This includes our hope in eternal life and the spirit in which we live this earthly life. It means we live with a mindfulness that Christ is present in each person we encounter as well as those we'll never meet who live on the other side of the world. It means recognizing the Spirit is present in all creation, in every circumstance of our lives, even every breath we take. This is the gift and challenge of our inheritance as Easter people.

We celebrate Easter on a Sunday between March 22 and April 25, on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. The stories, songs, customs and foods of Easter serve as symbols, which remind us of the meaning of the holiday. We don't have to pack them all in on Easter Sunday but can carry on our celebration over the next fifty days until Pentecost.

One of the most popular traditions of the holiday is decorating Easter eggs. This custom stems from the time when eating eggs was forbidden during the Lenten fast. Families brought eggs out in abundance on Easter day, dyed red to symbolize joy. Eggs, as well as bunny rabbits and budding flowers, are also a sign of springtime and new life. Hunting for eggs can remind us of the way in which we seek to become new creations in Christ. Dyed in rainbow colors, the eggs remind us of God's promise to Noah after the great flood. The white lily is another symbol of Easter and the Resurrection, its color a mark of purity.

The rejoicing of Easter has long been accompanied by feasting. Serving lamb on this day is a custom carried over from the Jewish Passover at which a lamb was sacrificed and eaten. Christians understand Jesus to be the new sacrifice, the Lamb of God who, by his death, atoned for the sins of the world. Ham is another traditional Easter dish, and a sign of the new covenant in Christ whereby all foods are clean.

Eating pork is forbidden by Jewish dietary law as it is considered unclean. Other Easter fare includes fresh spring vegetables and berries and sweet, rich breads, which traditionally had been given up for Lent.

RESURRECTION EGGS

Any rendition of the Easter story, beginning with the Last Supper and continuing through the glorious day when the friends of Jesus found His empty tomb, is the best story of all to share with children. The following activity, however, can excite and instruct even young children about the “greatest story ever told.”

Collect a dozen plastic eggs and an old egg carton to put them in. Number the eggs one through 12 with a marker or paint and put the following small items inside the eggs. Your children can find these symbolic Easter gifts when opening the eggs as you tell the Resurrection story:

Egg	Inside	Represents	Scripture
1	Image of a chalice	Last Supper	Luke 22:20
2	nickel	piece of silver	Matthew 26:14-15
3	feather	cock crowing	Mark 14:72
4	piece of wire	scourging	Mark 15:15
5	thorn from rose	crown of thorns	Mark 15:17
6	nail	crucifying Jesus	Luke 23:33
7	die	casting of lots	John 19:23
8	piece of sponge	wine to Jesus' mouth	John 19:29
9	toothpick	piercing Jesus' side	John 19:34
10	sterile gauze	Jesus' body wrapped in linen	Matthew 27:59
11	small rock	stone in front of tomb	Mark 16:4
12	leave empty	empty tomb	Matthew 28:6

After you use these special Easter eggs, your children will be able to retell the story of Jesus' death and resurrection with ease. You can save this activity until the final 12 days before Easter, with the “empty tomb” egg dramatically opened on Easter

morning. You may also choose to tell the entire story and use the props several times throughout Lent. Remember to let your children open the eggs all by themselves. This is helpful because kids tend to remember things they touch or do with their hands. You might also consider doing this activity as a scavenger hunt. Simply tell the children that you have hidden 12 items representing the Last Supper.

What we learned...

The Pre-K, Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 students all learned about the Triduum, the most holy three days of the year. Holy Thursday is the day Jesus gave us the gift of the Eucharist, made the apostles priests, and washed the feet of his apostles as a sign of service to one another. Good Friday is the day Jesus dies on the cross for us because of his great love and desire to save us from sin. Easter, what a glorious day! Jesus rose from the dead and went about bringing joy and great peace to Mary his mother, the women, especially Mary Magdalene and the apostles as well as his disciples and followers. They learned about these events in an age appropriate way. They also did an Easter project. They closed their class with a short prayer service celebrating Easter Resurrection.

Grades 3, 4, 5, and 6 discussed the movie clip of *Jesus of Nazareth* by answering the following questions: What point do you think Jesus was trying to make by washing the feet of his disciples? How can we do what Jesus did? & How does this kind of service show love for God and others? The students learned that we continue to serve others and follow Jesus every day when we show patience, forgiveness, and a caring attitude. The students then washed each others' hands and prayed the prayer from John 13:34. They went on to learn that the Church celebrates its three holiest days during the last three days of Holy Week. Those three days are called the Triduum (pronounced trih-dyoo-um with the accent on the first syllable), a word that means "a period of three days." The Triduum is the holiest of all celebrations. It starts with the Holy Thursday Mass, moves into Good Friday, continues through the Easter Vigil, and ends with evening prayer on Easter Sunday. This was followed by an

activity that taught the symbols of Lent, another activity that tested their Triduum knowledge, the reading of the Passion story from Mark 15:6-41, and a final discussion where they shared what they will do on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday/Easter Sunday to show they are followers of Jesus.