

Easter Sunday, Year A

GOSPEL

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It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,' she said, 'and we don't know where they have put him.' So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

(John 20:1–9)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The Easter Triduum (which means 'three days'), lasting from Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday evening, is the climax of the Church's year.
- Holy Thursday is sometimes known as Maundy Thursday, a corruption of the Latin word for 'commandment', *mandatum*. This is to commemorate the 'new commandment' that Jesus gave his followers at the Last Supper: 'Love one another as I have loved you.'
- Good Friday and Easter Saturday are the only days of the year on which Mass is not celebrated.

EXPLORING THE WORD

You could perhaps allow time to read over some of the many Scripture texts used over these three days. You could point out the unity of the three days and how the readings fit together. It is essentially one liturgy with various moments. It is not simply a re-enactment of the past but a way of drawing people into the present reality of the mystery of God.

- The death and resurrection of Jesus are the fundamental pattern of life for the Christian. Give some examples, from your own life or the lives of the saints, of dying and rising.

- In what ways did the liturgy of these days draw you into the mystery?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'There is no need for you to be afraid.' How have your fears been laid to rest with the events of this night?
- Reflect together on the ceremonies of the Vigil. Share responses and recollections. What did it mean to you?
- Light a candle each time you pray during this Easter season as a sign of keeping the light of Christ consciously before you.
- Use this memorial acclamation as your prayer this week:
*We proclaim your death, O Lord,
and profess your resurrection
until you come again.*

SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

The neophytes now enter the period of mystagogy or post-baptismal catechesis. 'This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and in making it a part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity' (RCIA, §234).

- Explore the meaning of this and talk about how it may be carried out with the community.
- Identify opportunities available to the newly baptised to enter fully into the life of the community.
- What opportunities for the deepening of faith and exploration of the Word are offered in your parish?
- What ministries of service are available for the newly baptised to participate in?
- Explore the role of the sponsors in this period of mystagogy.

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

The cross and the paschal candle are the central symbols of these three days. Death is conquered in new life.

The darkness of the tomb is conquered by the light of Christ. Much of this symbolism is present in the baptism ceremony of the Easter Vigil. Explore it.

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- How will the community ‘rejoice in the resurrection’ in the weeks to come?
- Use a candle and yellow flowers (the colour traditionally associated with the Easter event) as a focus. Offer prayers of thanks for the gift of faith. Sing an Easter song. Conclude with the following prayer:

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people; praise God who called you out of darkness and into his marvellous light.

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