

## **Easter Sunday, Year A, catechist - RCLB Lectionary**



### **Catechist Background and Preparation**

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Acts 10:34, 37-43

Psalms 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

John 20:1-9

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading that appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

### **Word in Liturgy**

Peter's preaching in the first reading presents the entire scope of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and its meaning for the world. Beginning with John the Baptist, Peter recounts the essential story of Jesus' coming, preaching, overthrow of the powers of evil, his passion, Death, and Resurrection, and the forgiveness of sins, which results from these events. He speaks as one of the chosen witnesses who ate and drank with Jesus after his resurrection, thus emphasizing the real, physical nature of the resurrection.

In its context in Acts, Peter's speech is momentous. It provokes an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon its hearers. Peter delivers it to Gentiles gathered in the home of Cornelius, who is a virtuous and devout non-Jew. In the context of its Easter Sunday proclamation, the passage retains its urgency and eruptive power. It both announces the whole message of the Good News of Jesus, centering on his resurrection, and states the universal import of that message in the Good News of forgiveness of sins for Jew and Gentile alike.

Set in the darkness of Mary Magdalene's early morning pilgrimage to the tomb, the gospel passage is an account of several lights dawning: daybreak itself, the disciples' discovery that the tomb is empty and their dawning awareness of what that fact meant, and, finally, the beloved disciple's coming to believe that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

Most striking in this account is the role of the beloved disciple (assumed in the tradition to be John). Having heard the story of Mary, he outruns Peter to the tomb, yet allows Peter to enter



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first. Both enter the tomb, but the beloved disciple alone is described as believing. Why is John the first to reach the tomb and to believe? The simplest explanation is the most likely one: the author of John's gospel wished to show the power of love to put the believer in touch with the truth of the resurrection. The figures of Peter and John are not in competition with one another. The beloved disciple, however, because of his love for Jesus, comes more quickly to discern and to believe that Jesus is risen.

The empty tomb, though important, is not the sole basis for Christian belief in the resurrection. John's account, like that of the synoptics, shows that the disciples did not expect the resurrection, and found it hard to believe on the evidence of the empty tomb alone (for "they did not yet understand the scriptures . . ."). Crucial to their faith in the resurrection were their subsequent personal encounters with the Risen Christ, encounters described in various ways in the gospels proclaimed throughout the Easter season. Thus we have, alongside the full proclamation of the resurrection in Acts, a gospel account today that is something like the first act in a longer drama.

## **Catholic Doctrine**

***"On the third day he rose again, in fulfillment of the scriptures . . ."***

The unconditional and overwhelming love of God for us made visible in the incarnation does not disappear and fade with the death of Jesus on the cross. That passionate love of God for us is enthroned upon the cross which becomes the pulpit of God's truth. That message of divine love is deepened in the death and entombment of Jesus. That love transcends the tomb in Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

The chains of death are truly broken. Just as the divine nature took on our humanity (in all things but sin), so too the resurrection of Jesus was accomplished in a real human body. The Risen Lord is not a ghost who returns to haunt the disciples, nor some sort of resuscitated corpse (CCC 645). The resurrection of Jesus is a passing over from death into a new life, a new existence.

That Jesus rose from the dead is an actual historical event and not a psychological or spiritual experience of the disciples (CCC 643). This is not some myth or wish fulfillment on their part, or ours. Those first disciples witnessed something totally unexpected and surprising and which they only gradually understood. And in understanding it, they were willing to be martyred in telling the Good News of the resurrection. The implication for us believers is that by the resurrection God ratifies Jesus' whole life and teaching (CCC 651). Baptized into his death by our plunging beneath the waters of the font, we rise as adopted children of God



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whose inheritance is the resurrection. Even now we taste the promise of new, risen life in the Eucharist.

