

YEARS 5 & 6 – EASTER: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Good Friday to Easter Sunday

Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One... Thus, the women were the first messengers of Christ's Resurrection for the Apostles themselves. [CCC 641]

Jesus' death on the cross on Good Friday seemed to his followers that all of the previous three years of Jesus' public life had come to nothing. After his burial the Apostles went into hiding, fearing they would suffer the same fate. Although the death of Jesus brought great sadness to all around him, in John's Gospel we are reminded of God's plan.

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. [John 3:16][GNT]

The death and resurrection of Jesus was part of God's plan to save the world. Jesus freely gave his life for us, so that we would be saved from sin and death, and brought to eternal life. In this passage from John's Gospel, the focus is on Mary Magdalene as the first witness to Jesus' resurrection. She was one of his most loyal followers and, indeed, was one of the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and had looked after him. She had stood by the cross with Jesus' mother Mary, and witnessed his death.

Mary Magdalene visited the tomb on the morning after the Sabbath, and then came to the Apostles and said to them that the tomb was empty, and that an angel has told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. This was something that had never happened before, and it was some time before the Apostles were able to comprehend it. It was not until Jesus appeared to them that they were able to accept it. Jesus' resurrection means new life and this is evidenced in the fact that Mary Magdalene did not recognise him at first. It is only when he said her name 'Mary' that she realised who this person was. New life is one of the most important elements of Jesus' resurrection and with new life comes new hope. The Paschal (Easter) Candle, which is one of the symbols we use in the celebration of Easter, is a sign of that new life and its availability to us. It is sign that Jesus is alive and is the

Light of the World, and when we see it in our church we, too, can rejoice with the Apostles that Jesus has risen from the dead.

We now have the opportunity to join in these wonderful events through the liturgical celebrations of this time. Jesus is really present among us especially in the Eucharist and in the communion of people celebrating with us. We celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus as Alleluia people – people who praise God for this wonderful sign that proves that Jesus is both human and divine. His teachings will lead us to a meaningful relationship with our God who loves each of us in a very special way.

ABOUT THE SCRIPTURE IN THIS LESSON

John 20:1-18 | *The Empty Tomb*

The empty tomb is a statement that the resurrected life is not simply a new beginning. All that Jesus was, is caught up in the transforming mystery of grace. The episode of finding the tomb empty as narrated here by John, depicts for us the wonderful truth that death is robbed of its prey, that the whole of our human person will be transformed and that the final victory is not with darkness, but with light. On the cross, Jesus radiantly reveals the beauty of God as a God of unconditional love. The empty tomb is a sign, for those with faith to see, that Jesus' trust in his Father was not misplaced.

God's graces are always to be received with open hands. It may seem to her that he is back with her the way he was before. But she must know that he is going to the Father.

As he said at the last supper: 'If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father'. 'Sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you'. There is no need for Mary to try to hold on to Jesus. Through the gift of the Spirit he will take her to himself.

We have seen Jesus being 'lifted up' on the cross. We are now seeing him 'lifted up' in being raised from the dead. John reminds us of the goal of this being 'lifted up': it is his Ascension, his going up to the Father who sent him.

*The Gospel according to Saint John. An Introductory Commentary.
Michael Fallon MSC. Chevalier Press. 2008.*

Good Friday to Easter Sunday



MAIN TEACHING AND LEARNING POINTS

- Jesus died for us and God raised him to new life.
- On Easter Sunday, the faith community the Church, celebrates new hope through the resurrection of Jesus.

EASTER

Easter is the greatest celebration for Christians because through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the faith community the Church, has received the hope of new life; the life of God. The resurrection is the reason for our faith, hope and courage.

At the Easter Vigil Mass, (Saturday evening after sunset) the Paschal (Easter) Candle is lit (representing the Light of Christ) from the Easter fire outside of the church. It is a symbol of the risen Jesus, who is always with us. When the priest enters the darkened church, he holds the Paschal Candle up high and sings, 'The Light of Christ' to which all the people reply, 'Thanks be to God', and the people's candles are lit.

The symbols on the Paschal Candle include: the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet, alpha and omega meaning that Christ is the beginning and end of all things, the cross representing Jesus' death and resurrection, the five incense sticks representing the five wounds of Jesus through his hands, feet and side and the numbers representing the current year reminding us of God's presence here and now.

The Paschal Candle remains lit for the Easter season and is used at Baptisms and funerals.

GOD'S WORD

John 20:1-18 | *The Empty Tomb (Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene)*

Parent: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Child responds: *Glory to you, O Lord.* (While saying the words, trace a small cross

with the thumb on the forehead, lips and heart.)

Early on Sunday, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, 'They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'

Then Peter and the other disciple went to the tomb. The two of them were running, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and saw the linen cloths, but he did not go in. Behind him came Simon Peter, and he went straight into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth which had been around Jesus' head. It was not lying with the linen cloths, but was rolled up by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and believed. (They still did not understand the scripture which said that he must rise from death.) Then the disciples went back home. Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. 'Woman, why are you crying?' they asked her. She answered, 'They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!'

Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. 'Woman, why are you crying?' Jesus asked her. 'Who is it that you are looking for?' She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, 'If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned toward him and said in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (This means 'Teacher.') 'Do not hold on to me,' Jesus told her, 'because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father, my God and their God.'

So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Child responds: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

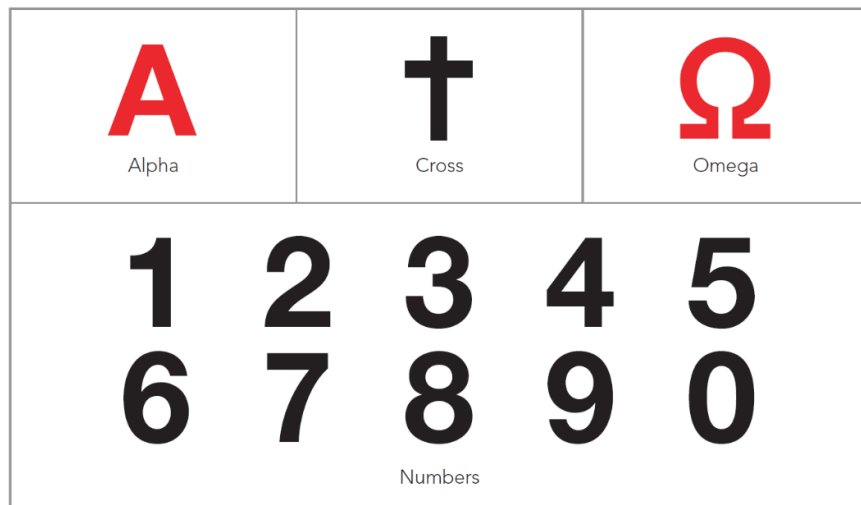
FOCUS QUESTIONS

Ask your child the following questions to help them reflect on the Scripture.

- Who arrived first at the tomb where Jesus was laid?
- What did Peter find when he reached the tomb?
- What happened when the other disciple entered the tomb?
- What did Mary see after the disciples had gone?
- What did she reply?
- Who was standing there when Mary turned around?
- Why do you think Mary did not recognise Jesus?
- What did Jesus say in order to reveal himself to Mary?
- What did Jesus instruct Mary to do?
- Why do you think Jesus revealed himself to Mary?
- What do you think this story reveals to us?

PRAYER FOR THE LIGHTING OF THE PASCHAL (EASTER) CANDLE

To help with the prayer, use a thick white candle, paper symbols of a cross, paper symbols of the Greek letters alpha and omega, the numbers of the current year, some drawing pins, matches and some paper glue. You can use the symbols provided below or find your own.



Begin the prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

Parent	Let us pray: Christ yesterday and today	<i>Place the cross on the candle.</i>
All	Christ yesterday and today	
Parent	the Beginning and the End	<i>Place the Alpha and Omega Symbols on the candle.</i>
All	the Beginning and the End	
Parent	the Alpha and the Omega	
All	the Alpha and the Omega	
Parent	all-time belongs to him; and all the ages.	<i>Place the numbers for the current Year on the candle.</i>
All	all-time belongs to him; and all the ages.	
Parent	to him be glory and power through every age and for ever.	<i>Light the Paschal (Easter) Candle.</i>
All	to him be glory and power through every age and for ever.	
Parent	Alleluia! Christ is risen!	
All	Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed!	



The Paschal (Easter) Candle

At the Easter Vigil Mass, the Paschal (Easter) Candle is lit (representing the Light of Christ) from the Easter fire outside the church, as a symbol of the risen Jesus, who is always with us. Design a Paschal (Easter) Candle by adding Easter symbols, and briefly explain in the margins your choice of symbols on the candle.

