

Pascha

Objective: The students will review the events of Holy Week and Pascha and be able to tell the story of the women coming to the tomb.

For the Catechist

Each book of the series offers a lesson on Pascha. The students should be quite familiar with Pascha as celebrating the day Jesus rose from the dead. In this book the lesson expands the basic teaching to include more of the story. There are two names for the children to learn: Golgotha and Joseph of Arimathea. They are also introduced to the other icon of the Resurrection: The Myrrh-bearing Women. As with all lessons on the Resurrection, it presents the Good News that we will be fully united with God in heaven one day.

Joseph of Arimathea. The name of Joseph should be familiar to the students from the procession with the shroud on Good and Holy Friday. The hymn speaks of Joseph placing the body in a new tomb. This is noted also in the Gospel to say that only Jesus was in the tomb. No one else could have risen from the dead but Jesus Christ.

Gospel accounts. The four Gospel writers offer different expressions of the Resurrection story. No one saw the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What they saw and what all the accounts record is the empty tomb. Matthew's version of the empty tomb story is used in this lesson. Other accounts will be used in subsequent books of the series.

The Myrrh-bearers. The women accompanied Joseph to the tomb and saw the body of Jesus laid in the tomb. The women then came back after the Sabbath to anoint the body as was the custom. It is upon their return that they learn that Jesus has risen from the dead. Although Jesus chose 12 men to be His apostles, the joyful message of the resurrection was first heard by three women, who then transmitted it to the apostles. The icon of the Myrrh-Bearers is considered an icon of the Resurrection although less familiar than the icon

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: Paschal Greeting
[Refer to the "Liturgical Prayers According to Jurisdictions" in the section "Introduction to Grade 2" for the correct wording to use in your parish.]

Introduction: Discussion of the story of the Myrrh-bearers **Need:** folded white cloth

Read Text Aloud: Have students read text aloud.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- *Basic:* Jesus, Our Light
- *Group:* Interactive Story Circle
- *Craft:* Resurrection Icon" Frame

Closing: Paschal Greeting

Come Bless the Lord Icon Packets:

Packet I: Harrowing of Hades
Packet II

Teaching Pic:

#GL 17 Pascha- "Come Ye Take Light"
#GL 18 Pascha- "Open the Gates"
#GL 19 Pascha- "Christ is Risen"
#GL 20 Agape Vespers—Resurrection
Gospels

of the Descent into Hades. We recall the journey of the Myrrh-bearers in the procession of Resurrection matins.

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted.)

The Icon of the Resurrection

"The Icon of the Resurrection is either the 'Descent Into Hades' or the 'Myrrh-bearing Women.' The Icon of the Descent into Hades shows Christ as the Life-giver...

"Our Lord's entrance into Hades, into the depths of the earth, transforms it. Through death He entered the realm of Hades which in the icon is shown by the black gaping abyss. His presence in Hades showed that He took upon Himself every humility and degradation of mankind. His appearance in Hades is not as its captive, but as its conqueror. He is shown with a radiant halo, the symbol of glory. His garments are no longer those in which He was seen on earth, but they are brilliant and illumine the darkness of Hades. He fills the darkness with the light of His divine presence. He stands upon the broken gate of the kingdom of Death, thus indicating His victory over Death by His own death and resurrection. Through His humiliation and death He raised all creation to participate in Divine Life. Bolts, broken chains, and keys are scattered about to signify the freeing of those held captive and the breaking of Death's hold over men. By Christ's descent, Hades is destroyed and its gates trampled" (*CBL 22*).

"Having broken the bonds of Death's power, Christ is seen raising Adam and Eve from the grave. In freeing our first parents, Christ also frees those who put their faith in His coming. This truth is seen in the presence of Kings, David and Solomon, vested in royal robes and crowns. They stand together with John the Baptist at Christ's right. Moses and the Prophets of the Old Covenant stand at His left. With them, all of humanity is raised" (*CBL 23*).

Pascha's Liturgical Celebration

The services of Pascha begin in darkness—near midnight or just before dawn—and lead us to the joyful light of the resurrection. In (Slavic) churches where the tomb is outside the sanctuary, the holy shroud is removed quietly and brought to the holy table during the midnight service. Before matins in (Greek) churches the priest comes out of the altar/tomb with a decorated candle from which everyone takes light "from the Light that never fades." Everyone goes outside in a procession, which stops at the church door. The Gospel story of the resurrection is intoned and the paschal troparion ("Christ is risen from the dead ...") is chanted repeatedly as the church bells ring. Knocking on the door with the cross, the priest opens the way into the now brilliantly lit church as the canon and the rest of matins is sung.

At the end of matins or during the Divine Liturgy the paschal homily of St. John Chrysostom is read, and we hear this Father's inspired praise of the feast. At the Liturgy, or at the Paschal Vespers later in the day, the Gospel is chanted in many languages, a reminder that the message of salvation in Christ is for all nations and all peoples. People exchange the greeting "Christ is risen! ... Indeed He is risen!" and share the meat and dairy products, from which they had fasted during Lent, and which were blessed along with the Paschal bread ("Artos") at the end of the service. The joy of

Pascha remains long afterward, reflected in the omission of kneeling, the continued use of the paschal greeting and the frequent singing of "Christ is risen" in liturgical services for 40 days.

"The celebration of Pascha is the center of the movable cycle of feasts, that sequence by which we experience the meaning of Christ's gift of salvation. Periods of repentance, emptying us to feel our need for God's love, alternate with joyful celebrations of His wondrous deeds in our behalf giving us life. Immediately after Pascha, a period of fifty days—traditionally without fasting or kneeling—re-creates the time from the resurrection to the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-12)" (*LLII* 37).

Customs

"While secular custom favors no one way of decorating, the eggs blessed in our churches are customarily dyed red, in honor of the blood of Christ.

"Another explanation of this custom is that Mary Magdalen visited Pontius Pilate after Christ's resurrection. As was the custom, she brought a gift with her, a basket of eggs, the offering of a poor person. She greeted him with the news that Christ is risen. He said to her, 'I would not believe you even if those eggs turn red.' As she handed them to him, legend says, they were bright red.

"Customarily people greet each other after the paschal services with the Easter Greeting ['Christ is risen! Indeed He is Risen!'] and crack their eggs against one another, recalling Christ's bursting of the bonds of death. Popularly, the one whose egg survives collects the broken one!

"[Slavic people] also have the custom of preparing baskets of the fasting foods (meats, dairy products, sweets) and taking them to church on Pascha to be blessed" (*DC* 72-73).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

[Gather the students at the icon corner.] *Let's begin with the Paschal Troparion. Do you know what our Paschal greeting is? The greeting is "Christ is risen!" and the reply is "Indeed He is risen!" Let's try it. . .*

Introduction

[The lesson is intended to be taught after Pascha, so the Gospel reading is familiar to them.] *Our lesson today is on Pascha or Easter. What do we celebrate on Pascha? (We celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead.) Do you remember anything from the Paschal service? [Let children share their memories.] Do you remember the large candle? Why do we have candles in church? (Jesus is the Light of the world.) On Pascha Jesus was like a bright light coming forth from the dark tomb.*

I brought something to help introduce the lesson. Here it is [show folded cloth]. Today's lesson is on Pascha. Of what does this remind you? [Let students respond and recall the story they heard chanted in the Gospel. The white cloth should remind them of the folded linen cloth in the empty tomb. If someone has the correct response, ask them to tell more of what they remember from the Resurrection Gospel. Let others help retell the story. If they can't recall the resurrection story, prompt them with these questions, keeping in mind there are variations in the four Gospel accounts:]

- 1. What happened when the women came to the tomb? (An angel or earthquake caused the stone to be rolled back, OR an angel was sitting on the stone.) [Mk 16:3-5]*
- 2. What did the angel tell the women? (Jesus was not there, take a look into the tomb, and go tell the disciples He has risen and will meet them in Galilee.) [Mk 16:6-8]*
- 3. What did Peter see when he entered the tomb? (The cloth that Jesus was wrapped in lying on the ground, and the handkerchief that had been around Jesus' head folded neatly.) [Jn 20:6-7]*
- 4. What did the women do? (They ran and told the disciples. They met Jesus on the way. He told them not to touch Him but to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee.) [Mt 28:6-10]*

The folded cloth reminds me of the empty tomb. Did anyone ever see Jesus rise from the dead? (No) All Peter saw was a folded cloth where Jesus had lain and the empty tomb. Let's read about Pascha.

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Pascha

Jesus shared a meal with His disciples. It was a special meal called "Passover." That night He was arrested. He was taken to Pontius Pilate.

The next day Jesus was crucified. He was crucified at a place called "Golgotha." He was crucified between two thieves. Jesus died on the cross. A soldier came to make sure He was dead and pierced Jesus' side with a spear. Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body from the cross.

Joseph took Jesus to a tomb in a cave. Jesus was wrapped in a linen shroud and a large stone sealed the cave.



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Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

He was taken to Pontius Pilate.

To whom was Jesus taken? (To Pontius Pilate) Pilate was the Roman governor of the area. What is the day of Holy Week when we remember that Jesus shared a meal with His disciples? (Holy Thursday)

Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body from the cross.

What day of Holy Week do we remember Jesus' crucifixion? (Good and Holy Friday) Where was Jesus crucified? (Golgotha) Who took Jesus' body from the cross? (Joseph of Arimathea)

... a large stone sealed the cave.

People were often buried in caves where Jesus lived. In what was Jesus wrapped? (A linen shroud) How was the cave sealed? (With a large stone)

"Come and see for yourself."

Would you have gone into the tomb? [Allow responses.]

The tomb was empty.

What did the women see where Jesus was before? (The linen shroud neatly folded.) How do you think they felt? What would you have done then?

The next day the women came to anoint Jesus. An angel appeared to them. The angel rolled back the stone. "He is not here," the angel said. "Come and see for yourself."

The women went into the tomb. What do you think they saw?

Where Jesus was before, they saw only the shroud. It was folded neatly. Jesus was not there. The tomb was empty.



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Jesus conquered death!

We use many words to describe what Jesus did to death on Pascha. What does victory mean? (To win in a battle) We also say Jesus conquered death. What does conquer mean? (To overpower) We also say Jesus trampled death. What does trample mean? (To overcome by stomping on)

Jesus is the Light of the world!

During the Paschal season we see a decorated candle in church. The candle reminds us that Jesus, the Light of the world, came forth from the dark tomb to give us life everlasting.

When we die, we can have life eternal with God!

That is the Good News of Pascha. Christ has risen! Indeed He is risen! It is our Paschal greeting. We remember that because Jesus rose from the dead and we will have life forever with God.

Let's review some of the words in the lesson. Who was Pontius Pilate? (The Roman governor of the land) Where was Jesus crucified? (Golgotha) Who took Jesus' body and buried Him? (Joseph of Arimathea) What is one word we use to describe what Jesus did to death on Pascha? (Won the victory/trampled/conquered)

Activity Tracks

Basic: Jesus, Our Light

We learned this year that Jesus is the Light of the world. That is why we have candles in church. The darkness of death and the tomb did not win. Jesus won the victory over darkness. Jesus is our Light. Let's read the worksheet.

The women ran from the tomb. Then Jesus appeared to them. After that Jesus spoke to His disciples. They were filled with joy and wonder. Jesus conquered death!

We remember Jesus' victory over death every Pascha. Jesus came forth from the dark tomb. Jesus is the Light of the world!

Jesus gave us new life. When we die, we can have life eternal with God!

Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

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Jesus, Our Light

A. The dark tomb could not hold Jesus, the Son of God. Catholics remind us that the darkness did not overcome Jesus. How can you show the dark tomb in the drawing?

At Pascha, some churches have a special decorated candle. If your church has this tradition, decorate the candle in the picture.

Jesus, our Light, will guide us to union with God.

B. Unscramble the words in the dark blocks to complete the sentences.

1. Jesus was crucified at a place called Golgotha.
[a o g g t h a]

2. Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus.
[h e j p o s]

3. The women came to anoint Jesus.
[m o n e w]

4. They found that the tomb was empty.
[b m t o] [t m e y p]

5. We remember Jesus' victory over death every Pascha.
[v i c t o r y]

Group: Interactive Story Circle

Materials: Cloth from Introduction, parent to help

Our lesson today is wonderful for acting out. Let's see if we can act it out as I read the story. Let's get in a circle. We'll need Jesus, three women, Joseph of Arimathea, and the disciples. [Assign parts. Read the story below so students know what to expect. Then, as you read the narrative again, enact it cueing the students as to what they should do. Read their speaking part, and then have them say it right after you.]

[Jesus, you'll need to be on the cross. Stand at the other side of the circle with your arms out-stretched. The tomb will be here, next to me.]

Joseph asked to take Jesus' body from the cross to bury it. He took Jesus down from the cross as the women watched. [Joseph and women approach Jesus, Joseph takes Jesus body off the cross, and Jesus puts arm around Joseph's shoulders so they can proceed a few steps to the tomb. Women follow, looking very sad and perhaps holding each other for comfort.]

Joseph took Jesus' body to a new tomb and the women watched where Jesus was taken. [Women stand back a few steps. Joseph makes Jesus lie down, and covers him with cloth (from Introduction).] Joseph rolled a large stone in front of the tomb. [Joseph pretends to roll heavy boulder.]

Joseph and the women went home. [All return to their seats, including Jesus who first folds cloth and leaves it.]

On the first day of the week, the women went back to anoint the body. [Pretending to carry flasks, women come back into circle towards tomb.]

An angel appeared and rolled back the stone. [Angel appears at tomb; women look frightened; the angel rolls back the stone.]

Angel: *Do not be afraid. Jesus is not here. He is risen. Come see where He lay.*

Women: *The tomb is empty. He is risen!*

Angel: *Go now, and tell His disciples He will meet you in Galilee. [Women enter the tomb and see only the cloth. They run from the tomb. Jesus steps in front of them.]*

Jesus: *Rejoice! Do not be afraid. Tell my brothers I will meet them in Galilee.*

The women ran to tell the disciples that Jesus had risen. [Women run and tell disciples.]

Women: *Jesus has risen! He will meet you in Galilee! [Disciples all stand as if ready to depart.]*

Jesus met the disciples in Galilee. He indeed risen from the dead. We will rise with Him to be united forever to God! Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

Craft: "Resurrection Icon" Frame

Materials: Empty frames from Great Fast lesson, "Resurrection Icon" worksheet, markers, glue stick, scissors

[Have sample ready to show children.] *Remember our empty frames? Of what were they to remind us? (We were fasting or "empty" so we could be filled with joy.) Now we've finished the Great Fast, and Pascha has come and we are filled with joy! SO, we'll fill our frame today with the icon of the Resurrection. The icon is on your worksheet. You can look at the icon I have at the icon corner to see the colors you want to use. Jesus is always shown in white for the Resurrection. When you're done, cut out the icon on the dark line, and I'll help you paste it onto the back of the frame. When you see it in your room, remember that it was empty for a long time, and remember that during our Church year there are times of emptiness when we get ready to be filled with joy.*



Closing: [Gather the students at the icon corner.] *Let's begin with the Paschal Troparion. Do you know what our Paschal greeting is? The greeting is "Christ is risen!" and the reply is "Indeed He is risen!" Let's try it.*

(Cutting Line)

