

## Sunday Connection



## Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord

Sunday, April 12, 2020

### Readings & Background

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This Sunday's Readings

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First Reading

*Acts of the Apostles 10:34a,37-43*

Peter preaches about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Responsorial Psalm

*Psalm 118:1-2,16-17,22-23*

Rejoice in this day of the Lord.

Second Reading

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

Colossians: Having been raised by Christ, be concerned with what is above.

1 Corinthians: Let us celebrate this feast with new yeast.

Gospel Reading

*John 20:1-9*

Mary of Magdala finds that the stone has been removed from Jesus' tomb.

Background on the Gospel Reading

Today we begin the Easter Season, our 50-day meditation on the mystery of Christ's Resurrection. Our Gospel today tells us about the disciples' discovery of the empty tomb. It concludes by telling us that they did not yet understand that Jesus had risen from the dead. Thus, the details provided are not necessarily meant to offer proof of the Resurrection. The details invite us to reflect upon a most amazing gift, that is faith in Jesus and his Resurrection.

Each of the four Gospels tells us that Jesus' empty tomb was first discovered by women. This is notable because in first-century Jewish society women could not serve as legal witnesses. In the case of John's Gospel, the only woman attending the tomb is Mary of Magdala. Unlike the Synoptic accounts, John's Gospel does not describe an appearance of angels at the tomb. Instead, Mary is simply said to have observed that the stone that had sealed the tomb had been moved, and she runs to alert Simon Peter and the beloved disciple. Her statement to them is telling. She assumes that Jesus' body has been removed, perhaps stolen. She does not consider that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

Simon Peter and the beloved disciple race to the tomb, presumably to verify Mary's report. The beloved disciple arrives first but does not enter the tomb until after Simon Peter. This detail paints a vivid picture, as does the detail provided about the burial cloths. Some scholars believe that the presence of the burial cloths in the tomb offers evidence to the listener that Jesus' body had not been stolen (it is understood that grave robbers would have taken the burial cloths together with the body).

The Gospel passage concludes, however, that even having seen the empty tomb and the burial cloths, the disciples do not yet understand about the Resurrection. In the passage that follows, Mary of Magdala meets Jesus but mistakes him for the gardener. In the weeks ahead, the Gospel readings from our liturgy will show us how the disciples came to believe in Jesus' Resurrection through his appearances to them. Our Easter faith is based on their witness to both the empty tomb and their continuing relationship with Jesus—in his appearances and in his gift of the Holy Spirit.

## Grades 1-3

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### Gospel Reading

John 20:1-9

Mary of Magdala finds that the stone has been removed from Jesus' tomb.

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### Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)

Although the disciples are slow to recognize the significance of Jesus' empty tomb, they come to realize that Christ is still with them. Help younger children understand that we feel joy at Easter because Jesus has given us the gift of salvation and the peace that comes in knowing we can be saved.

### Materials Needed

- none

### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Ask: *What is today?* (Easter Sunday) Say: *Yes, today we celebrate Jesus' Resurrection!* Ask: *What is Jesus' Resurrection?* (when God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day after he died on the Cross) Say: *We rejoice because through his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven, Jesus brings us the gift of salvation. In today's Gospel, we'll hear what happened when Jesus' disciples went to his tomb three days after he died.*
2. Read today's Gospel, John 20:1-9.
3. Say: *When Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb, she saw that the stone had been removed. She ran to get Peter and the beloved disciple. Ask: Did they find Jesus in the tomb? (No.) What did they find? (Jesus' burial clothes and the cloth that covered his head rolled up in a different place). How do you think they might have felt? (Accept all reasonable answers, including confused and upset.)*
4. Say: *The disciples did not yet understand that Jesus had risen from the dead and left the tomb. In the days ahead, they will see the risen Christ, and he will give them the gift of peace. We can be peaceful*

*knowing that Jesus has saved us from sin and is with us always.*

5. Conclude in prayer together by praying today's psalm, Psalm 118: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad."

## Grades 4-6

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Gospel Reading

John 20:1-9

Mary of Magdala finds that the stone has been removed from Jesus' tomb.

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### Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

During Lent we invited our young people to reflect upon and enter into the Paschal Mystery through their Lenten sacrifices of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. Now we must invite the children to reflect and meditate on Jesus' Resurrection and the gift of eternal life that he gives to us.

Materials Needed

- None

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Remind the group that last Sunday we heard and reflected upon the events of Jesus' passion and death on the cross. Ask: *How do you think the disciples felt on the day of Jesus' death and during the days that followed? What do you think they were doing on these days? (gathering together to comfort one another, remembering Jesus' life and his importance to them)*
2. Tell the group that today's Gospel reading is about what happened on the morning of the third day after Jesus' death. Invite one or two volunteers to read today's Gospel, John 20:1-9.
3. Say: *Mary of Magdala found something unusual when she visited Jesus' tomb. What did she find? (The stone had been removed.) What did Mary do next? (She ran to tell Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved.)*
4. Ask: *If you were Mary of Magdala, Simon Peter, or the Beloved Disciple, what would you have thought when you found the stone removed and Jesus' tomb empty? (Accept all reasonable answers.)* Say: *Today's Gospel tells us that Mary of Magdala thought that someone had taken Jesus' body. The disciples did not yet understand that Jesus had been raised from the dead.*
5. Say: *During Lent we prepared ourselves to remember and celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection. During the season of Easter, the Church asks us to reflect and meditate upon Jesus' Resurrection and what it means for us as Jesus' disciples today. We can spend time during the Easter season thinking about Jesus' Resurrection and the gift of eternal life that he gives to us.*
6. Conclude in prayer together by praying today's psalm, Psalm 118.

## Grades 7-8

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Gospel Reading

John 20:1-9

Mary of Magdala finds that the stone has been removed from Jesus' tomb.

## Making the Connection (Grades 7 and 8)

During Lent we invited our young people to reflect on the Paschal Mystery by their Lenten sacrifices of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. Now we invite them to reflect on Jesus' Resurrection and the gift of eternal life that he gives to us.

### Materials Needed

- None

### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Tell the young people about a subject in school that you had a hard time understanding.
2. Invite the young people to share examples of subjects that they have difficulty with. Then ask them to give specific examples of a concept that they have difficulty grasping (e.g., how the stock market works).
3. Explain that all of us have difficulty understanding certain things. Say: *We sometimes have a hard time understanding things that happen in life. For example, we don't understand why a relationship ends, why someone gets sick, or why someone chooses a particular person as his or her friend. In the Gospel for Easter Sunday, we encounter several people who had a hard time understanding what was happening in their lives.*
4. Invite one or two volunteers to read aloud John 20:1-9.
5. Say: *Mary of Magdala found something unusual when she visited Jesus' tomb. What did she find? (The stone had been removed.) What did Mary do next? (She ran to tell Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved.)*
6. Ask: *If you were Mary of Magdala, Simon Peter, or the beloved disciple, what would you have thought when you found the stone removed and Jesus' tomb empty? (Accept all reasonable answers.)* Say: *The Gospel for Easter Sunday tells us that Mary of Magdala thought that someone had taken Jesus' body. The disciples did not yet understand that Jesus had been raised from the dead.*
7. Say: *During Lent we prepared ourselves to remember and celebrate Jesus' death and Resurrection. During the season of Easter, the Church asks us to reflect on Jesus' Resurrection and what it means for us as his disciples today. We can spend time during the Easter season thinking about Jesus' Resurrection and the gift of eternal life that he gives to us.*
8. Conclude in prayer together by praying today's psalm, Psalm 118.

## Family

### Gospel Reading

John 20:1-9

Mary of Magdala finds that the stone has been removed from Jesus' tomb.

### Family Connection

In the Easter Gospel we hear about how the disciples found the tomb empty three days after Jesus' death. We are also told that they do not yet understand the Scriptures or that Jesus had been raised from the dead. That understanding gradually unfolded for the disciples as they began to experience the risen Lord. Similarly, our

understanding of Jesus' Resurrection unfolds for us throughout our lives. In the weeks ahead, we will hear how the first disciples moved from confusion, doubt, and skepticism to faith. Their experience can teach us how we too might receive this gift of faith from God.

Gather your family members and ask them to share what they know about the events that happened in the days after Jesus' crucifixion. Invite your family to imagine that they are among Jesus' first disciples. Read together today's Gospel, John 20:1-9. Reflect together on the Gospel with questions such as these: If you had been among the first disciples who heard that the stone had been removed from Jesus' tomb and that Jesus' body was no longer there, what would you think? What did Mary of Magdala, Simon Peter, and the disciple whom Jesus loved think had happened? Recall that this experience is the first indication Jesus' disciples have that he is risen. Throughout the Easter season, we will learn more about how the disciples came to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

Pray together using today's psalm, Psalm 118: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad."