

GATHERING...

**“Grant us, O Lord, we pray,
that we may participate
worthily in these mysteries.”**

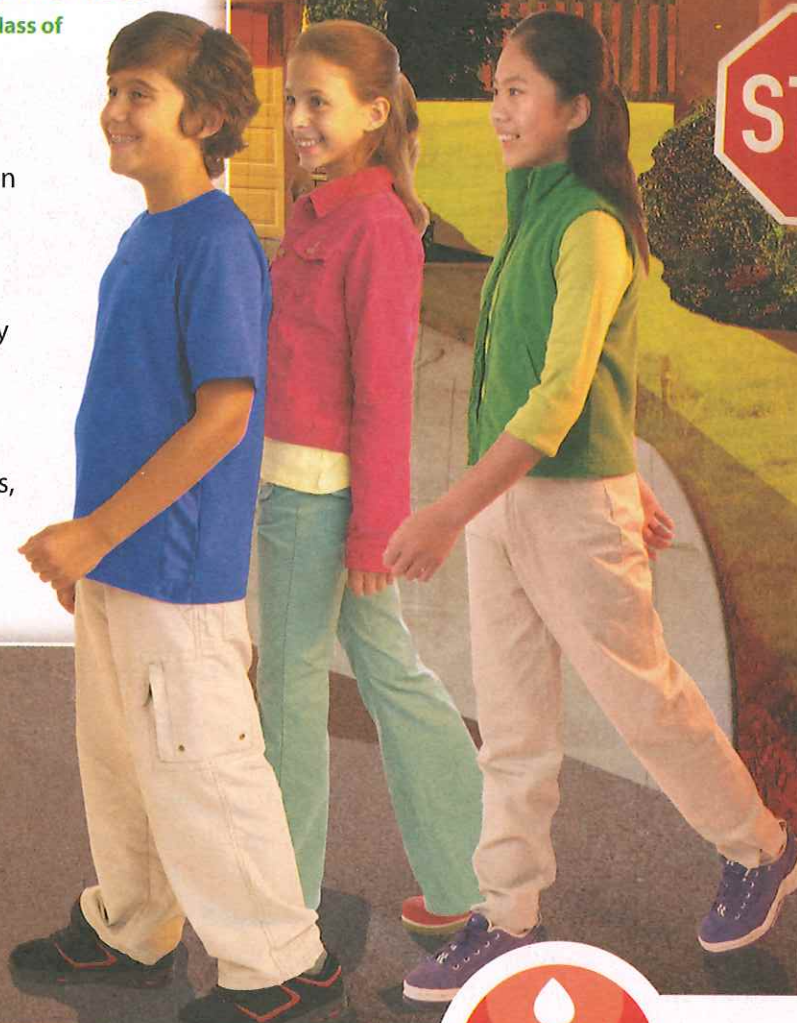
*(Prayer over the Offerings, Evening Mass of
the Lord's Supper)*

Three Days

Three days our world was broken
and in an instant healed,
God's covenant of mercy
in mystery revealed.

Two thousand years are one day
in God's eternal sight,
and yesterday's sorrows
are this day's delight.

Though still Christ's body suffers,
pierced daily by the sword,
yet death has no dominion:
the risen Christ is Lord!



Triduum



In everyone's life, there are turning points—events signifying that a big change has occurred, that we are “turning” toward something new. Such events might include graduating from school, moving to a new home, gaining a new responsibility, or even experiencing a change of seasons. Sometimes people mark the turning points in their lives by gathering together for a special meal or celebration. For example, they hold “going-away,” graduation, housewarming, retirement, or birthday parties.

And, at school or in your community, there may be spring festivals, winter dances, or other celebrations marking seasonal turning points.

Activity Recall a family gathering or celebration that had great meaning for you. What was the reason for the gathering or celebration? Why was the experience meaningful? Share your thoughts.

The Triduum recalls the turning point in the history of our salvation.

The Easter Triduum recalls and celebrates a great turning point—Jesus Christ’s journey from death to new life, his offering of his life for our salvation. This event marked a turning point in humankind’s relationship with God.

The word *triduum* means “three days.” During the Easter Triduum we follow a practice for counting days that comes from our Jewish ancestors in faith: counting the period from one sunset to the next as one day. Thus, the Triduum begins on the evening of Holy Thursday and extends to the evening of Easter Sunday—a total of three days from sunset to sunset. And when we celebrate the Triduum, we are celebrating the three most important days of the year for Christians. The liturgical celebrations of these three days are seen as one connected liturgy during which we celebrate Christ’s passing from death to new life. We focus our celebration on the Paschal Mystery of Christ—his Passion, or suffering and Death, his Resurrection, and his Ascension.

The Triduum begins with the evening of Holy Thursday, when we recall Christ’s giving of his Body and Blood at the Last Supper. It continues through Good Friday, when we remember Jesus’ suffering and Death for humankind. And it extends through Holy Saturday, when we reflect and pray about his Death and then celebrate the Easter Vigil. The Triduum concludes on the evening of Easter Sunday. Then the joyful season of Easter, in which we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, begins. Each liturgical celebration of the Triduum heightens our awareness of and gratitude for Jesus Christ, who brought about the great turning point in the history of our salvation.

On Holy Thursday, we celebrate the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper. This liturgy recalls Jesus’ last meal with his Apostles before his Death. While he and the Apostles were gathered together to celebrate Passover, he shared the bread and wine with them, saying, “This is my body, which will be given for

you” and “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you” (Luke 22:19, 20). And he assured them that he would be with them always. This meal, the Last Supper, also marked a turning point: Jesus, on the night before his suffering and Death, was offering to his disciples the everlasting gift of himself, his Body and Blood.

Through his words and

actions that night, Jesus gave us the Eucharist that we celebrate today. And through the Eucharist, Jesus continues to be with us always.

Jesus also gave us an example of love and service that night: He washed his Apostles’ feet as a sign of his love for them. In the Mass on Holy Thursday evening, we not only recall all of these events, we celebrate in a special way Christ’s giving of his Body and Blood, which he shared then and still shares with us today in the Eucharist. We praise and thank God for this great gift. And, as a reminder of the love and service that Jesus calls us to, the priest may wash the feet of others as Jesus did when he washed the feet of his Apostles. We also contribute to a special collection for those who are in need.



The Last Supper by Frans the Younger Pourbus (1569-1622)

Activity How will you and your family celebrate the Triduum this year? Make a chart recording the times your parish will gather for each day’s liturgy. Include a prayer for each day in your chart. Display your chart at home. Encourage your family to pray these prayers and to attend the Triduum liturgies.

The Triduum leads us to the celebration of Christ's Resurrection.

On Good Friday, we remember Jesus' Passion. By his Death on the Cross, Jesus demonstrated God's love for all humankind. As Saint Paul wrote, "God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The liturgy of Good Friday of the Lord's Passion often takes place around three o'clock in the afternoon, in keeping with Gospel accounts of Jesus' Death: "And at three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice . . . and breathed his last" (Mark 15:34, 37). This liturgy has three parts: the Liturgy of the Word, the Adoration of the Holy Cross, and Holy Communion. In the Liturgy of the Word, we hear a reading from the Gospel of John telling of the Passion of Christ. "The message of the liturgy in proclaiming the passion . . . is to enable the assembly to see vividly the love of Christ for each person, despite their sins." (*God's Mercy Endures Forever*, 22) The Liturgy of the Word concludes with a special Prayer of the Faithful in which ten prayers for the whole world are prayed.

The Adoration of the Holy Cross, the second part of the liturgy, is a ritual in which we show reverence for the Cross, because upon it hung the Savior of the world. The Cross is a sign of Christ's Death, a symbol of the salvation that he offers to the world. To show reverence for the Cross, we approach in a kind of procession. We genuflect before the Cross or show another sign of reverence. The Liturgy of the Eucharist is not celebrated, so a brief Communion service, the third part of the liturgy, takes place. Then all depart in silence.



On Holy Saturday, we gather in the evening with our parish for the celebration of the Easter Vigil. In the

Church, a vigil is a liturgy celebrating Sunday or another solemnity, but which takes place the night before. The Easter Vigil begins after sunset on Holy Saturday, the night before Easter Sunday. It is the most important vigil of the year, and the high point of the Easter Triduum. It celebrates the new life Jesus has given us by his Death and Resurrection.

The Easter Vigil liturgy has four parts. The first part is the "service of light." We assemble with the priest and other clergy in front of a fire that has been made outside of or in the back of the church. This fire is blessed, and the Easter, or Paschal, candle is lit from it. The lighted Paschal candle represents the Risen Christ among us and our own passing with him from death to life, from darkness to light. The candle is carried with great reverence into the darkened church. We may light small candles from it. Then, the deacon, priest, or a parish member chants the *Exsultet*, or Easter Proclamation. The *Exsultet* is a joyful proclamation of our Easter faith. It announces that this is the most beautiful and exciting night of the year.

The second part of the vigil is the Liturgy of the Word. A series of Scripture readings encourages us to meditate on all the wonderful things God has done for his people from the beginning of time.

The third part of the vigil is the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. New members of the Church are baptized, confirmed, and receive the Eucharist for the first time. All present renew their baptismal promises and are sprinkled with the baptismal water, a sign of new life in Christ.

The fourth part of the vigil is the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The whole Church is called to the table that the Lord prepared for his people by his Death and Resurrection.

Then, on Easter Sunday, we celebrate the day that Christ rose from the dead. The Triduum concludes with the evening prayer on this day.

Activity Design an insert for your parish bulletin encouraging others to celebrate the Triduum liturgies.



+ **Leader:** At the Easter Vigil, during the singing of the *Exsultet*, or Easter Proclamation, we stand and hold our lighted candles. We rejoice in the great turning point from death to new life that Jesus experienced and that he offers to us as well. Let us pray some words from the *Exsultet* together.

All: Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven,
exult, let Angel ministers of God exult,
let the trumpet of salvation
sound aloud our mighty King's triumph!

Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her,
ablaze with light from her eternal King,
let all corners of the earth be glad,
knowing an end to gloom and darkness.

Rejoice, let Mother Church also rejoice,
arrayed with the lightning of his glory,
let this holy building shake with joy,
filled with the mighty voices of the peoples.

It is truly right and just,
with ardent love of mind and heart
and with devoted service of our voice,
to acclaim our God invisible,
the almighty Father,
and Jesus Christ, our Lord, his Son,
his Only Begotten.

This is the night,
when once you led our forebears,
Israel's children,
from slavery in Egypt
and made them pass dry-shod through
the Red Sea.

O truly blessed night,
when things of heaven are wed to those
of earth,
and divine to the human.
(from the *Exsultet*, Easter Vigil)

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“Jesus came and stood in
their midst and said to them,
‘Peace be with you.’”

(John 20:19)



Christ Is Here

Refrain:

Christ is here; the risen Savior greets us.
Here the body of Christ is revealed,
here in word and sacrament and people.
Here the wound of the world in Christ is healed.

Verses:

Strength from God above, peace and holy love:
these the gifts for us to share. (Refrain)

Earth rejoices; raise your voices:
celebrate God's Holy Day. (Refrain)

Easter



When peace is present in people's lives, they are able to come together as a community and experience harmony, acceptance, and love. They are able to reconcile their differences. Often we see the need for peace in various places around the world. Peace may also be lacking in situations in our own lives. When have you helped to promote peace? Think of times when you brought people together or helped to reconcile differences with people in your own life.

Activity

Work in a group to make a map of the places in today's world where peace is lacking. In the key for your map include symbols representing different ways that people in each individual place can find peace. Sketch your ideas for these symbols here.

At Easter we celebrate our new life in the Risen Christ, who shares his peace with us.

Jesus lived in the spirit of peace. He showed his disciples the way to spread peace to others. And, when he had risen from the dead, he appeared to his disciples and gave them the gift of his peace. "He stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'" (Luke 24:36) He calmed their fears, saying, "Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself" (Luke 24:38-39). The Risen Christ's message that day gave the disciples peace and comforted them with the knowledge that Jesus Christ was truly alive and would remain with them forever. This same message is meant for us today, at Easter, and throughout our lives.

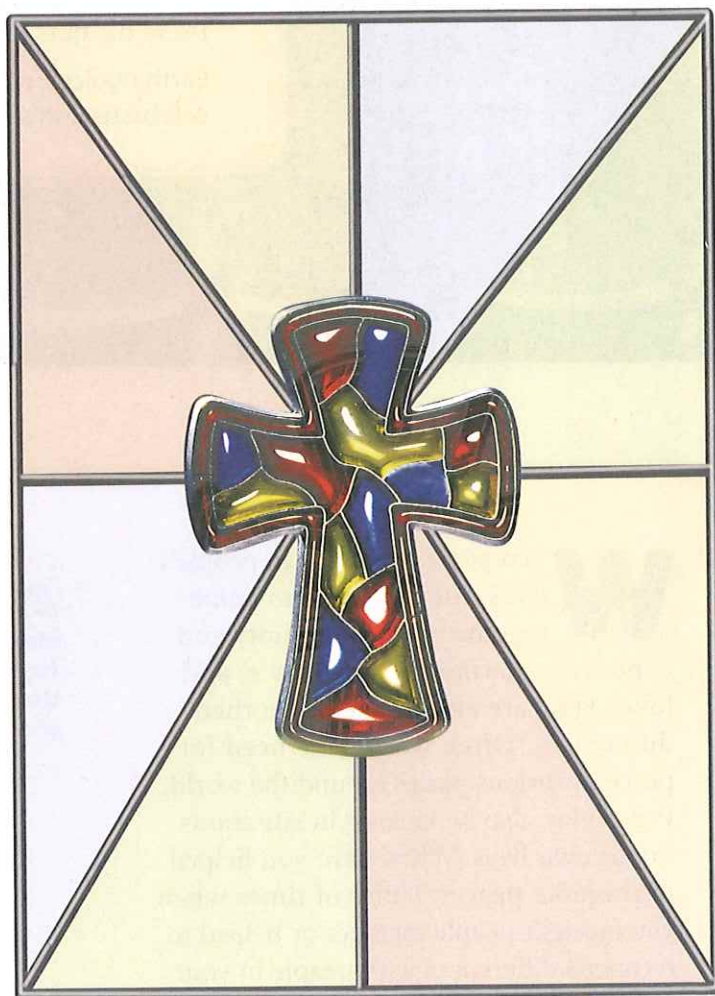
When we celebrate Easter, we celebrate Christ's Resurrection and rejoice in the new life that we have because of him. With Jesus we have passed from death to life, from sadness to joy, from hopelessness to the fulfillment of our deepest hope: everlasting life. At Easter we celebrate that we too can share everlasting life with Christ—we too can rise from the dead and have endless glory with the Lord. And when that time comes, our peace will be everlasting.

The Church sets aside an entire season, the Easter season, to celebrate all the meaning that Christ's Resurrection has for us. The Easter season begins with the Easter Vigil and concludes with Pentecost Sunday, which is the fiftieth day after Easter Sunday.

Between Easter Sunday and Pentecost, there are seven weeks of celebration. The first week of the Easter season, called Easter week, begins with Easter Sunday and ends on the Second Sunday of Easter. Thus, this week consists of eight days of celebration. For this reason, it is also called the Easter *octave*, a word that means "eight." Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, every Sunday is a *solemnity*, an especially important day of celebration in the Church. But every day of the Easter octave is also considered a solemnity. Easter week, then, is eight special days of celebrating the day that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

The readings for Easter week give us a glimpse into the different ways that the Resurrection affects the lives of all Christians. For example, at Mass during the Easter octave, the first reading comes from the Acts of the Apostles, not from the Old Testament as is customary during the rest of the year. These readings from the Acts of the Apostles help us to meditate on various ways that the truth of the Resurrection was lived out among the Apostles and the early Christian communities. The second reading comes from the insights and observations written in the Epistles, or letters, of John, known as the "beloved disciple" of Jesus. And the Gospel readings are accounts of the Resurrection as told in the four Gospels.

Activity These are the Gospel readings for the octave of Easter: **John 20:1-9; Matthew 28:8-15; John 20:11-18; Luke 24:13-35; Luke 24:36-48; John 21:1-14; Mark 16:9-15; John 20:19-31.** Read them. Illustrate the scenes in the panels below.



The Easter sequence celebrates the Resurrection of Christ.

Four special hymns are part of the liturgies of four important celebrations in the liturgical year: Easter Sunday, Pentecost, the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, and Our Lady of Sorrows. The words of these four special hymns, or *sequences*, as they are called, express joy over the events celebrated at each of these liturgies. Each sequence is sung, or may be read, immediately after the second reading in the Liturgy of the Word.

The title of the sequence for Easter Sunday is *Victimae Paschali Laudes*, which is Latin for “Praise to the Paschal Victim.” This sequence describes the events that unfolded on the first Easter Sunday, when Jesus rose from the dead. The words at the beginning of the sequence are addressed to us Christians, calling us to offer praises because Christ, the “Prince of life,” has redeemed us and now reigns as King forever. Then the words address Jesus’ disciple Mary Magdalene, who found his tomb empty. Mary is asked to proclaim what she saw. The words that then follow are meant to express Mary’s reply, giving an account of the Resurrection of Christ. The sequence ends with a proclamation and a prayer. Christ is risen from the dead and gives us new life, the sequence proclaims. We pray for Christ’s mercy and end with, “Amen. Alleluia.”

The music for this sequence, as well as the other three sequences, was originally sung in Gregorian chant, an ancient form of singing. Chant continues to be used for the sequences today. However, throughout the years, well-known composers have also set the words of all four sequences to their own musical scores.

We do not know who originally wrote the beautiful Easter sequence, or any of the other sequences.

We can only be grateful that this writer used God’s gift of creativity to help millions of Christians throughout the ages celebrate the Resurrection of Christ and the peace and new life he offers to all who have faith in him.



Activity Celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Write a song or a poem, or draw something, to help you to remember and celebrate the new life that Jesus brings.

RESPONDING...



+ Leader: Let us celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus by praying the sequence for Easter Sunday.

Group 1: Christians, to the Paschal Victim
Offer your thankful praises!

Group 2: A Lamb the sheep redeems:
Christ, who only is sinless,
Reconciles sinners to the Father.

Group 3: Death and life have contended in that
combat stupendous:
The Prince of life, who died, reigns
immortal.

Group 4: Speak, Mary, declaring
What you saw, wayfaring.

Group 1: "The tomb of Christ, who is living,
The glory of Jesus' resurrection;

Group 2: Bright angels attesting,
The shroud and napkin resting.

Group 3: Yes, Christ my hope is arisen;
To Galilee he goes before you."

Group 4: Christ indeed from death is risen,
our new life obtaining.

All: Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!
Amen. Alleluia.

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