

**Easter Vigil Cycle A**    Saturday, April 11, 2020  
**Readings & Background**

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**Today's Reading**

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**First Reading**

Genesis 1:1—2:2 (shorter form: Genesis 1:1,26–31a)  
God creates the heavens and the earth.

**Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 104:1–2,5–6,10,12–14,24,35 or Psalm 33:4–7,12–13,20–22  
A song of praise to God, the Creator

**Second Reading**

Genesis 22:1–18 (shorter form: Genesis 22:1-2,9a,10–13,15–18)  
God puts Abraham to the test.

**Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 16:5,8–11  
The Lord shows us the path of life.

**Third Reading**

Exodus 14:15—15:1  
The Israelites pass through the Red Sea.

**Responsorial Psalm**

Exodus 15:1–6,17–18  
The song of praise that the Israelites sang after crossing the Red Sea

**Fourth Reading**

Isaiah 54:5–14  
The Lord promises to redeem Israel.

**Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 30:2,4–6,11–13  
A prayer of thanksgiving for redemption

**Fifth Reading**

Isaiah 55:1–11  
A call to return to the Lord who is merciful

**Responsorial Psalm**

Isaiah 12:2–6  
The Lord sends his Salvation.

**Sixth Reading**

Baruch 3:9–15,32—4:4  
Israel is told to follow the way of God's commandments.

**Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 19:8–11  
A prayer of praise for God's commandments

**Seventh Reading**

Ezekiel 36:16–17a,18–28  
The Lord will cleanse Israel for the sake of his holy name.

**Responsorial Psalm**

Psalms 42:3,5; 53:3–4 or Isaiah 12:2–3,4bcd,5–6 or Psalm 51:12–15,18–19  
A prayer of praise for God who saves us

**Epistle**

Romans 6:3–11

Those who have been baptized have died with Christ.

### **Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 118:1–2,16–17,22–23  
God's mercy endures forever.

### **Gospel Reading**

Matthew 28:1–10

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who carry the message that Jesus has risen and will meet his disciples in Galilee.

### **Background on the Gospel Reading**

All four Gospels have an account of the ***Death and Resurrection of Jesus***. Although the accounts differ depending on the point each Evangelist wishes to make, two points of the Resurrection testimony are ***common to all four Gospels***: 1) ***The tomb of Jesus was found empty and***

2) ***The risen Christ appeared to certain persons***. Matthew tells us that, as Mary Magdalene and the other Mary approached the tomb, there was a great earthquake, and ***“an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.”*** The guards stationed at the tomb were terrified and ***“became like dead men.”*** The angel then assured the women that ***Jesus “has been raised just as he said.”*** The women, “fearful yet overjoyed,” left the tomb as the angel instructed to tell the disciples. On their way, Jesus met and greeted the women who ***“embraced his feet and did him homage.”*** ***Jesus*** himself then sends the women to

“tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

The mention of a great earthquake is peculiar to Matthew's account of the Resurrection. Metaphorically, ***it indicates the coming of a new and final age brought about through the life, teaching, ministry, and particularly through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus.***

Notable also is the fact that Jesus' first appearance is to women, the women who came to minister to him. Finally, not to be overlooked, is ***Jesus' use of the word “brothers” to refer to his disciples.***

It seems to be indicative of a new and different relationship that Jesus has with them. The disciples are now entrusted with the message and mission of the risen Jesus Christ

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Young children respond well to concrete images. They will be open to experiencing Jesus' Resurrection through tangible symbols of new life.

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### Materials Needed

- Symbols of new life (in pictures or objects) arranged on a table, such as an egg, seeds or seedlings, chick, bunny, or baby doll
- Bible

### Preparation for Scripture Readings

1. Point out to the children the objects or pictures that are displayed. Invite them to come around the table and tell what they know about each one.
2. Say: ***All the things we just saw and touched are signs of new life. They are the beginnings, the start, of life, and each will change as it grows. Seedlings will turn into flowers or grass or fruits or vegetables; bunnies will grow into rabbits; babies will become adults one day. They will all grow and change. These signs of new life help us discover something about the special feast we are celebrating this week.*** Ask: ***Can anyone tell us what feast it is?*** (Easter)
3. Say: ***Easter is also called the Feast of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let's listen quietly and carefully to what the Easter Vigil Gospel tells us about this special day.***
4. Read aloud Matthew 28:1–10 with expression.
5. Ask: ***What were Mary Magdalene and the other Mary looking for?*** (the tomb or place where Jesus' body was laid) ***What did they find instead?*** (an angel) ***What did the angel tell them?*** (Jesus has been raised from the dead.)
6. Say: ***At Easter we celebrate the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead. And because Jesus has risen and is in Heaven, we know that one day we, too, can live in Heaven with God. That is the good news of the Gospel.***
7. Invite the children to stand. Say: ***Raise both your hands above your head and pray with me three times: Jesus has risen. Alleluia!***

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

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Children at this age love to tell and be told stories. Emphasize the narrative of Jesus' life that culminates in the Resurrection. They are also curious and like to be challenged and to challenge. Be prepared for questions.

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Materials needed - 3 Bibles

### Preparation for Scripture Readings

1. Say: ***Listen carefully as I read aloud the first line of the Easter Vigil Gospel, Matthew 28:1.*** Then ask: ***What are some of the events in Jesus' life that led up to the two women's appearance at the tomb?*** (Possible answers: Jesus was born; he studied and was found in the temple; he chose Apostles; he preached and healed the sick; he was arrested and beaten and hung on the cross; he died.)
2. Say: ***Let's continue our reading of the Gospel.*** Indicate that you will read the narration and choose volunteers to read the words of the angel and of Jesus.
3. Then ask: ***Have you ever lost something that was valuable or important to you? Maybe you yourself were lost, or you lost sight of someone you were caring for. What was it like? How did it feel?*** Allow time for the children to tell their stories.
4. Say: ***Anyone who has experienced loss can imagine the sadness and fear that the women at the tomb and the disciples of Jesus felt at the time of his death. Think now of the joy they experienced when the angel assured them that Jesus had risen and wanted to talk with them!***
5. Ask: ***What is the feast we celebrate today?*** (Easter or Jesus' Resurrection) ***What are some of the things we associate with Easter?*** (coloured eggs, new clothes, flowers) Ask: ***What do these symbolize?*** (new life, everlasting life we have in Jesus because of his Resurrection) Say: ***Jesus' Death and Resurrection are our assurance that we, too, will one day know joy in Heaven.***
6. Say: ***Let us now sit quietly, close our eyes, and use our own words to speak with Jesus in our hearts. Allow time for silent prayer.***
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### Making the Connection (Grades 7 and 8)

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Young people of this age are not quite children but not yet adults. Often they are not sure how they fit in with what is going on in the world about them. Regarding their religious commitment, they begin to question what they believe and why and want to examine issues in detail.

### **Materials Needed**

- Bible
- Copies of list of Easter Vigil readings and their summaries found in this Sunday Connection (one for each young person)

### **Preparation for Scripture Readings**

1. Pass out the list of the Easter Vigil readings. Invite several volunteers to read the summaries provided for each reading. Then ask: ***How would you characterize this group of readings?*** Allow time for discussion. Say: ***The readings for the Easter Vigil are a synopsis of God's activity in the world, beginning with Creation and ending with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.***
2. Ask: ***Why do you think we review the history of God's activity in the world for this particular celebration?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.) Conclude the discussion by saying: ***The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the culmination of God's promise of Salvation. Let's listen to the Gospel Reading.***
3. Invite one of the young people to read Matthew 28:1–10.
4. Ask: ***Who went to visit Jesus' tomb?*** (Mary Magdalene and the other Mary) ***Who greeted and spoke with them?*** (an angel) ***What message were they given?*** (Jesus was raised from the dead; go and tell the disciples; Jesus will meet them in Galilee) ***To whom did Jesus appear?*** (the two women) ***What was their reaction?*** (They embraced his feet and did him homage.)
5. Say: ***The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest feast in the Church Year. It is, so to speak, God's seal of approval on Jesus' life. It is also our assurance of a heavenly reward. Let us pray together the Act of Faith.***

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### **Gospel Reading**

Matthew 28:1–10

Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who carry the message that Jesus has risen and will meet his disciples in Galilee.