

4. The Paschal Mystery



Know about Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem.
Reflect on how the Church celebrates this event on Passion Sunday.

What's in it for us?

Sometimes, our first thoughts when we are asked to do something are to consider what will we get out of it or what it will do for us, maybe even, 'Why should we?' or 'We'll do it if ...'.

I wonder what's
in it for me.



This is not unlike what two of the disciples said to Jesus:

"James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him. 'Master,' they said to him, 'we want you to do us a favour.' Jesus said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' They replied, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory'. 'You do not know what you are asking,' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup that I must drink?'" (Mk. 10:35-38)

Here Jesus was explaining to them that to be a close friend of his, it was not a matter of being granted favours but of following his example of total self-giving.

As we now approach the climax in the life of Jesus, we will understand in a new way what this involves.

Activity



- The disciples, James and John, asked Jesus for a favour. What was it?
- What was wrong with their request?
- What might be some of the favours you could or should ask Jesus for? Why?



Holy Week: The Most Important Week in the Year

Every year, Christians all over the world re-live the events which happened over 2,000 years ago. They re-trace the steps of Jesus during the last week of his life on earth, day-by-day, sometimes hour-by-hour, for a whole week. It is known as 'Holy Week' and it lasts from Passion Sunday to Holy Saturday. This is how it began.

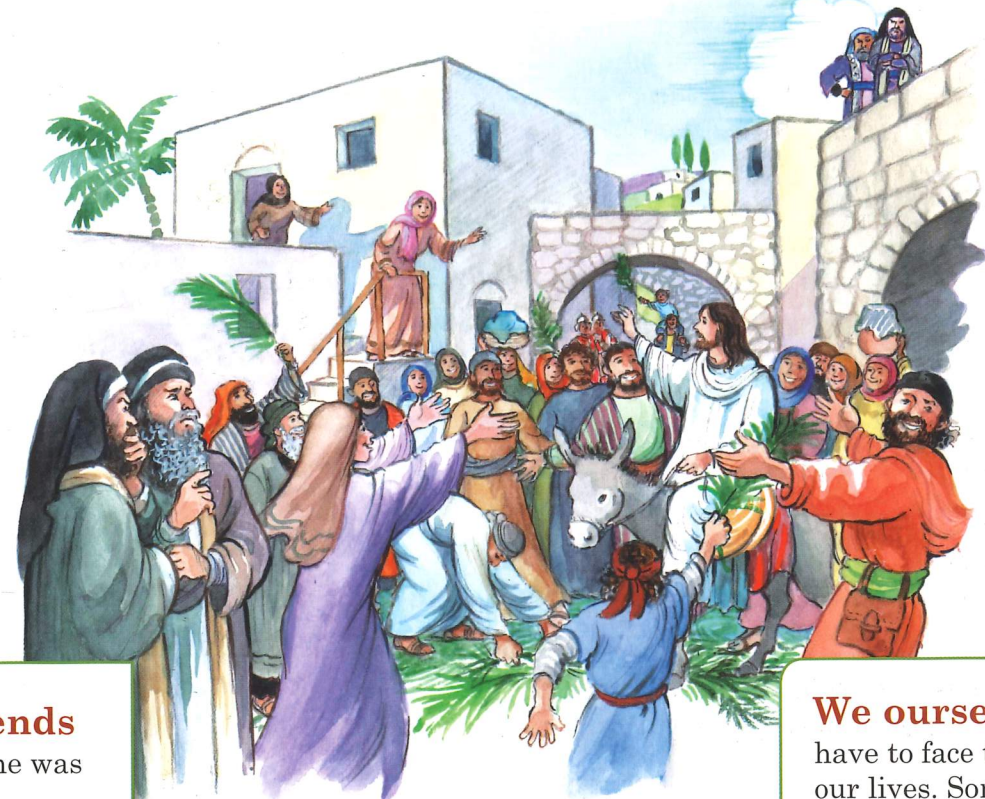


Use your Bible...

Triumphant entry into Jerusalem

Read Mark 11:1-11.

Note the mood of the crowds in verses 8 and 9.



Jesus' friends

thought that he was going to be triumphant once they reached Jerusalem. But Jesus himself knew that the only way he could bring us totally to God was to suffer and to die. Even though pain, humiliation and death lay ahead, Jesus was determined. This was God's will and he would fulfil it.

EXPECTATIONS

Religious leaders felt threatened and challenged by Jesus.

Political leaders believed Jesus was a threat to the nation. It was time he was tried for treason.

The people came out in droves to cheer for Jesus, the miracle-worker because they wanted him to overthrow their oppressors. They expected Jesus to lead an uprising of military and political liberation, not to lay down his life as a spiritual sacrifice for Romans as well as Jews!

We ourselves

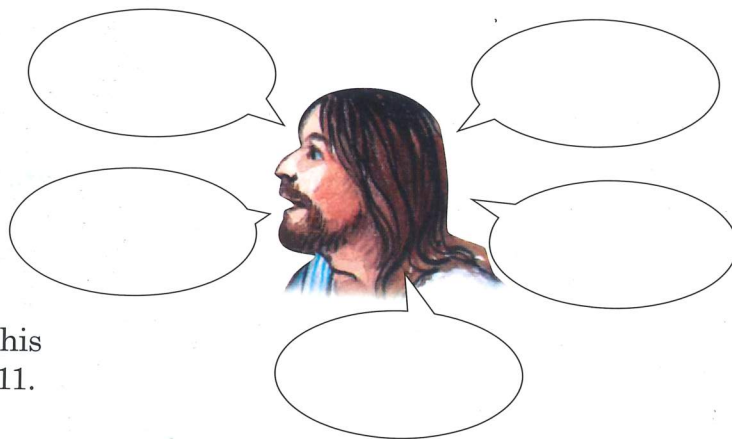
have to face troubles in our lives. Sometimes, we have to suffer for things we know are right or have to be done. But we have the example of Jesus to follow, and the knowledge that he is always there to give us strength and help us.

Activities



1. What do you think Jesus would have wanted to say to each group? Think carefully before you write each one and make your own diagram of the replies.

2. a) Watch the Power Point presentation of what happens in church on Passion Sunday.
b) Compare and contrast this liturgy with Mark 11:1-11.



**Deepen our understanding of the events of Holy Thursday.
Reflect on the importance of this day for us.**

Holy Thursday

Several memorable things happened at the Last Supper that Jesus shared with the twelve disciples. One disciple slipped away. The others wondered why. They thought he'd gone out to get something. The truth was Judas had decided to betray Jesus. He had accepted some money to tell the authorities where Jesus would be at a quiet time and how they could arrest him.



Pause to Reflect

Read and reflect on John 13:1-15. Jesus washes his disciples' feet.

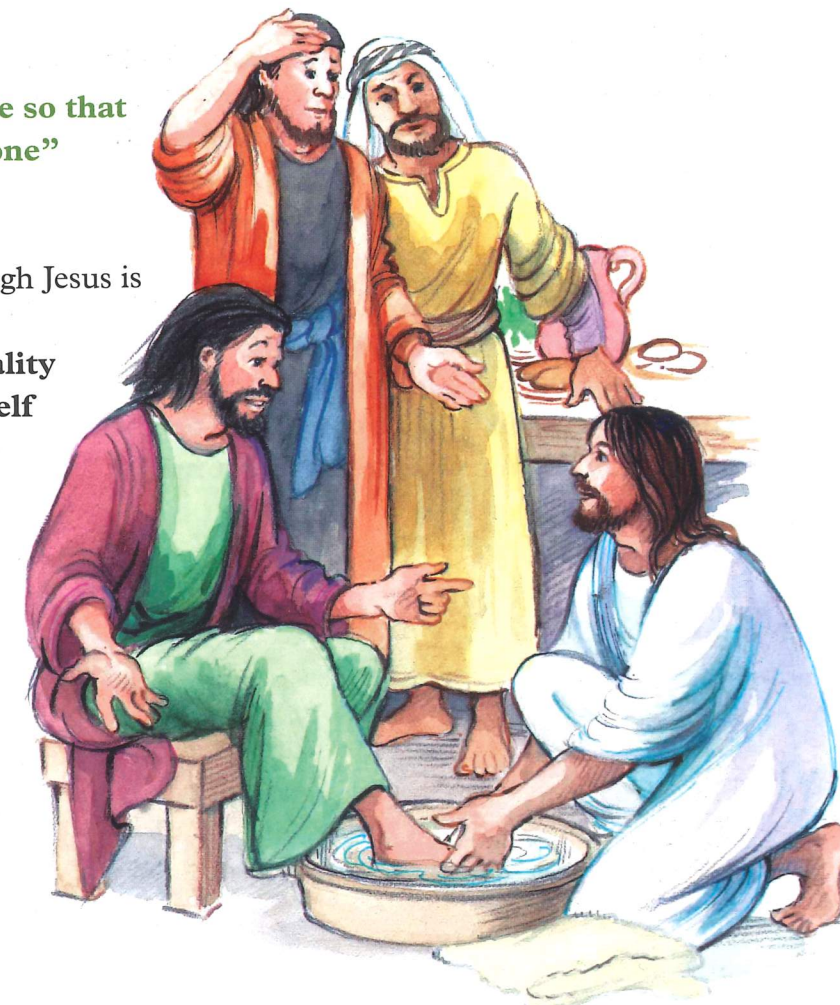
At the Last Supper, Jesus washed his disciples' feet. They were shocked at this! By doing this, Jesus was trying to get a very important message across to them which was that his role was to serve others and not to be served. Peter tried to stop him, but Jesus explained why he was doing it. He was not just performing an act of kindness; he was doing the work of the lowest servant. He did not claim any status for himself or high position of Lord and Master. This is why Jesus said:

"I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done"
(Jn. 13:15).

St. Paul explains that even though Jesus is God, while he was on earth

"He did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself (of his status as Son of God) to assume the condition of a slave..." (Phil. 2:6-7).

Jesus is not asking us to wash each other's feet, but rather to put our own selfish interests aside and to provide for the needs of others.



Activity



1. A Night to Remember

Imagine you were with the apostles at the Last Supper and had your own ideas about what you thought would happen.

In bullet points describe and explain:

- what your expectations were;
- what you witnessed;
- what you want to remember and why;
- the impact this experience is likely to have on your life.

2. Watch the Power Point presentation of Mass on Holy Thursday.
Using your knowledge about the Jewish celebration of the Passover, what is different and what is the same about this night's celebration?
3. Holy Thursday is a very special day in the Church's year.
Why do you think this is so? Think deeply.



**Know about the Agony in the Garden.
Reflect on how it may help people suffering today.**

The Garden of Gethsemane

After the last supper, aware that Judas was about to betray him, Jesus left with his disciples to go to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. There, he became deeply distressed and troubled. "He withdrew from them, about a stone's throw away and knelt down and prayed. 'Father,' he said 'if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine'."



Then an angel appeared to Jesus, coming from heaven to give him strength. In his anguish, he prayed even more earnestly and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.

When he rose from prayer he went to the disciples and found them sleeping. "Why are you asleep?" He said to them. "Get up and pray not to be put to the test" (Lk. 22:39-46).

Jesus knew what lay ahead of him; he willingly accepted it. But here in the garden, he felt totally alone.

His disciples had fallen asleep. He had asked Peter, James and John to watch and pray with him, but they too were asleep. There was no one around. Jesus knew what was going to happen. He knew that Judas was bringing the Temple guards to arrest him. He knew that this would result in his being condemned to suffering beyond human endurance. His words to his Father, "If it is possible take this cup from me?" shows the anguish he was going through.

At this time, Jesus was being tempted to get up and walk away. BUT he accepted the inevitable, and said "not my will but yours be done". It is through prayer that Jesus gained strength to fight the temptation to run away. And it is through prayer that he gained the strength to follow his Father's will.



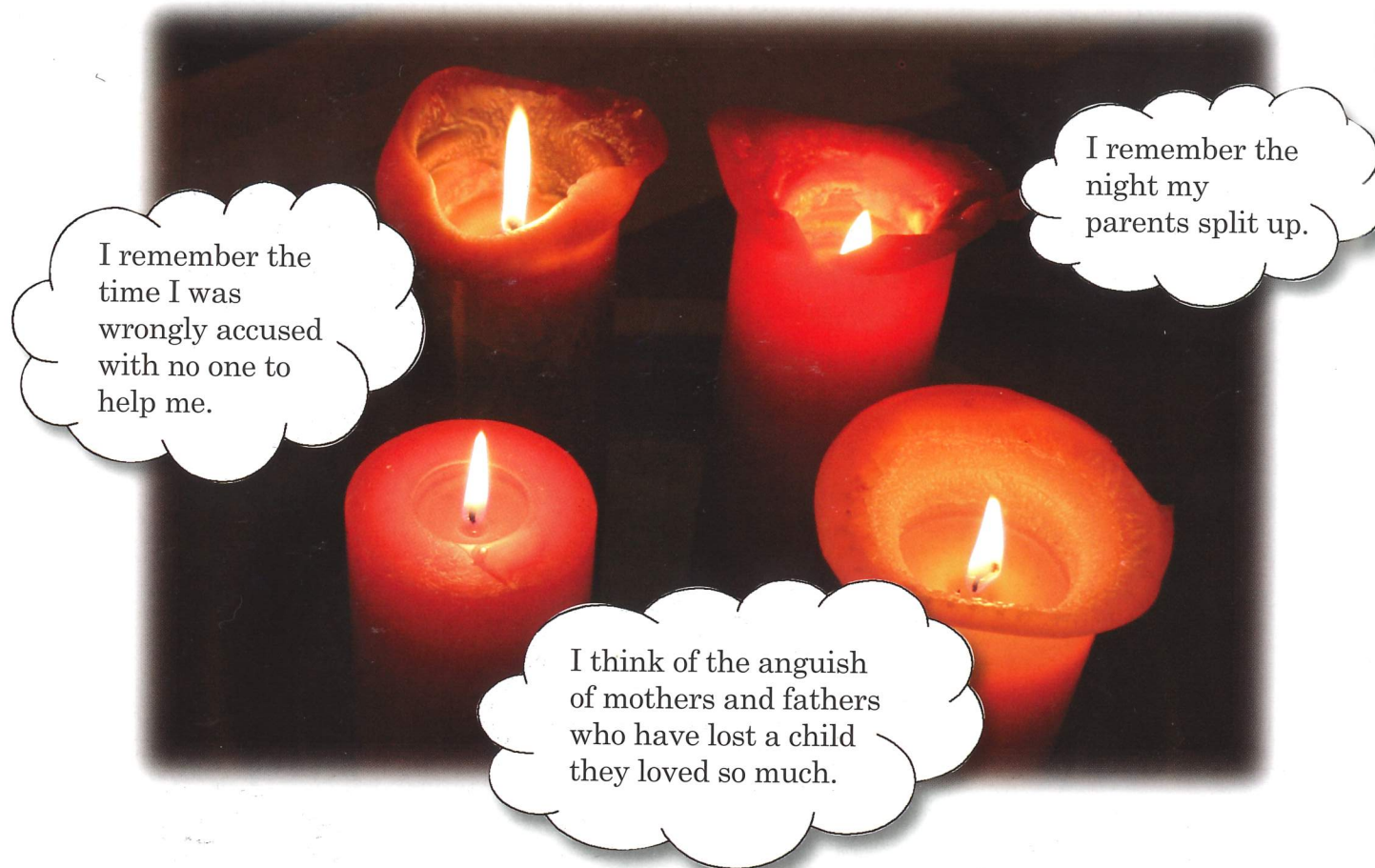
Activity



- What do you think caused Jesus to suffer most grievously?
- Explain in your own words the nature of the struggle Jesus experienced.
- How did he respond?



Pause to reflect on people suffering today.



Cardinal Basil Hume tells us that there are no quick answers to the problem of suffering. "The mystery of God is too great and our minds too small, too limited to understand His ways. But I cannot, and will not, doubt the love of God for every person, a love that is warm, intimate and true. I shall trust God, even when I find no human ground for doing so." (The Mystery of the Cross p.12)

Activity



1. a) Think about a time when you have been scared, lonely, or you have not wanted to do something that you knew you should.
b) What can you learn from Jesus' experience that might help you in the future?
2. Watch the Power Point presentation of the Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday.
 - a) Why do you think it is important to stay alone in prayer for a little while at this Altar?
 - b) Why do some people stay there till midnight?



Know about the betrayal of Jesus and his trial before the Sanhedrin.
Reflect on situations of betrayal.

Good Friday

The hour had come to arrest Jesus. "Judas, one of the Twelve, came up with a number of men armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the traitor had arranged a signal with them. 'The one I kiss,' he had said, 'he is the man. Take him in charge and see he is well guarded when you lead him away.' So when the traitor came, he went straight up to Jesus and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him.



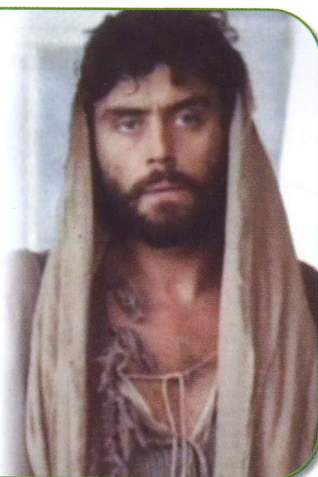
The others seized Jesus and took him in charge. Then one of the bystanders drew his sword and struck out at the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear.

Then, Jesus spoke. 'Am I a brigand' he said 'that you had to set out to capture me with swords and clubs? I was among you teaching in the Temple day after day and you never laid hands on me. But this is to fulfil the scriptures.' And **they all deserted him and ran away**" (Mk. 14:43-51).

Activities



1. What do you think motivated Judas to betray Jesus?
Do you think he had thought it through? Why?
What do you think he might have expected would happen?
2. a) Describe what you understand about 'BETRAYAL' and give examples.
b) When could it be right to divulge information?



The Trial before the Sanhedrin

The armed men led Jesus off to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes assembled there.

Use your Bible ...

Read Mark 14: 55-65 slowly and carefully.

Look to see if the following rules are observed.

Rules for Trials:

- Jewish trials had to be held during the hours of daylight.
- Two independent witnesses had to agree on their evidence, if not the defendant had to be acquitted.
- The High Priest sat in judgement but could not ask any incriminating questions.



Activities



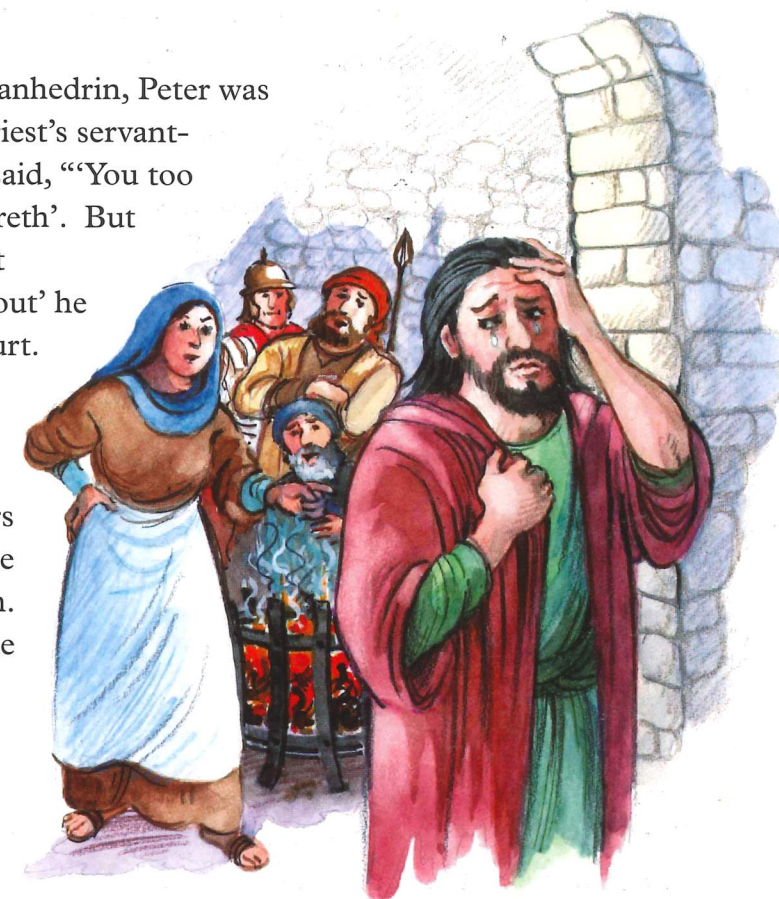
1. Do you think the Sanhedrin followed the rules above?
Give reasons using the scripture text to help you.
2. Work in groups. Each group divides into Teams A and B.
 - a) Prepare for a discussion on the following:
Team A: Write down as many reasons as you can why the Jewish authorities considered Jesus guilty or a threat.
Team B: List reasons why Jesus should have been released because he was innocent.
 - b) Based on the evidence of the groups would you have freed Jesus or declared him guilty?
Give reasons for your answer.



Reflect on the trial before Pilate and the Crucifixion.
Make links with the different types of suffering people experience.

Peter's denials

While Jesus was being tried by the Sanhedrin, Peter was in the courtyard. One of the high priest's servant-girls came along, stared at him and said, "You too were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth". But he denied it. 'I do not know, I do not understand, what you are talking about' he said. Peter went out into the forecourt. The servant-girl saw him and again started telling the bystanders, 'This fellow is one of them'. But again he denied it. A little later the bystanders themselves said to Peter, 'You are one of them for sure!' He denied it again. At that moment the cock crew for the second time, and Peter recalled how Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will have disowned me three times'. And he burst into tears" (Mk. 14:66-72).



Pause to Reflect

- Why did Peter say he didn't know Jesus?
- Why was he such a coward?
- Think of how he must have felt when he heard the cock crow.
- Are there times when we have good intentions and then find ourselves doing the exact opposite?

Activity



- a) Read Matthew 27:3-9.
- b) Compare and contrast the actions of Peter and Judas when they realised what they had done.

The Sequence of Events:

- Many had been celebrating the Passover meal the previous evening.
- Jesus and his disciples had gone to a secluded garden after the Passover meal.
- Jesus had been arrested in the garden.
- The disciples had run away and hidden themselves.
- Jesus had immediately been taken and tried in the house of Caiaphas the High Priest.
- Jesus had been found guilty of blasphemy.
- Early in the morning shortly after sunrise, the Jewish authorities had brought Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor.

The Trial before Pontius Pilate

At festival time, Pilate used to release a prisoner for the people, anyone they requested. Pilate asked them if they wanted him to release the king of the Jews because he realised that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests had encouraged the people to demand the release of Barabbas instead. Barabbas was a Zealot and had committed murder during an uprising. When Pilate brought both of these men forward, he asked the crowd who they wanted released. They shouted, 'Barabbas!' They called for Jesus to be crucified. 'Why?' Pilate asked them, 'What harm has he done?' But they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, anxious to please the crowd, released Barabbas for them and, having ordered Jesus to be scourged, handed him over to be crucified (Mk. 15:14-15).

It seems very strange that, only four days previously, Jesus had been welcomed into Jerusalem with shouts of praise, palms being waved and cloaks being laid on the floor in front of him. Suddenly, the crowd was now calling for his execution and the freedom of a murderer!



Activities



- a) Read the account of the trial in Matthew 27:11-26.
 - b) Explain the conflicting considerations that led to Pilate's verdict.
Think about:
 - Pilate's wife;
 - his duty to the Emperor;
 - the responsibility of his job;
 - the pressure from the Sanhedrin;
 - the emotion of the crowd;
 - the impression Jesus made on him.
 - c) What was the final verdict? Do you agree with it? Give reasons for your answer.

2. Listen to the audio recording 'From the house of the High Priest'. (DVD ROM)
Imagine you were there. Write a page in your diary to record events.

3. Plan an assembly for the school. You may wish to use:
Meditation on the Way of Sorrows (Audio recording DVD ROM)
Choose a hymn; write prayers of intercession and a closing prayer.

The Death of Jesus

It is virtually impossible for us to imagine the suffering that Jesus experienced on Good Friday.

His friends had deserted him.

He had been beaten, whipped and crowned with thorns.

People spat in his face in front of the crowd.

He had a heavy, wooden, rough cross forced on him and been made to carry it to Calvary.

He had been stripped and nailed to that cross.

And now, he was hanging there, with people all around insulting him, waiting for him to die.

Thief

I too, was nailed to a cross. 'Jesus,' I said, 'remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

Onlookers

We thought he was the Son of God – our hopes are now shattered!

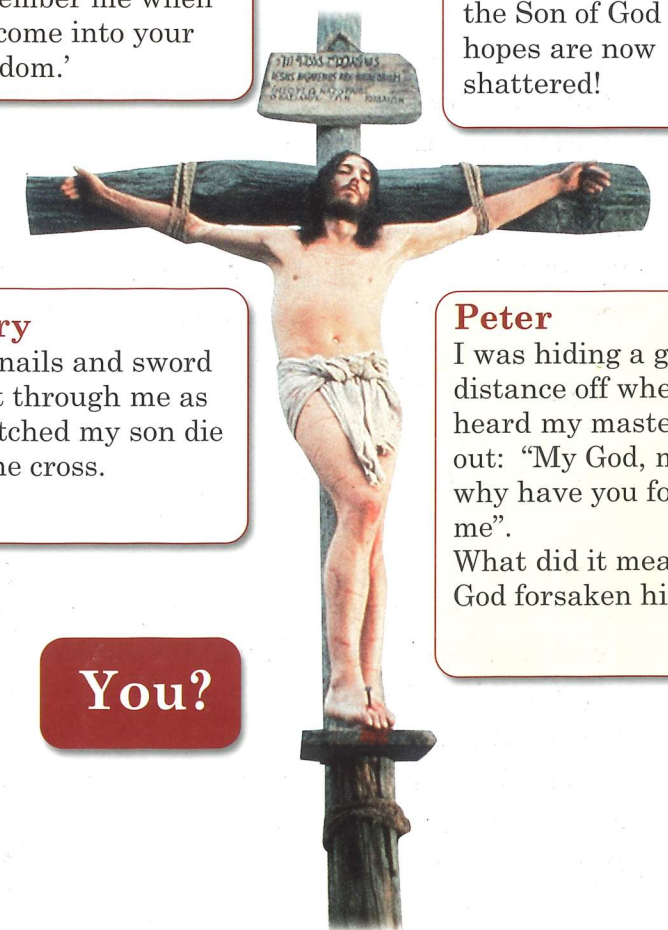
Mary

The nails and sword went through me as I watched my son die on the cross.

Peter

I was hiding a good distance off when I heard my master cry out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me". What did it mean, had God forsaken him?

You?



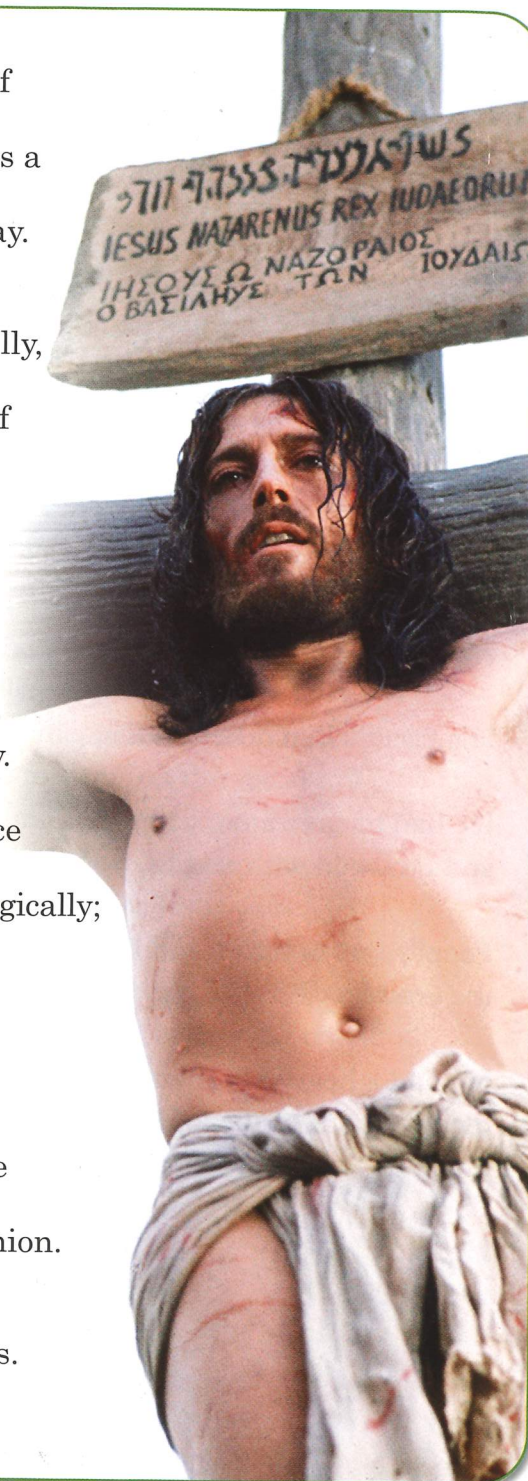
Although he was God, Jesus was also fully human. As he hung on the cross, he felt thirsty. A soldier offered him bitter vinegar. After he had taken the vinegar he said, "It is accomplished" and bowing his head he gave up his spirit and died (Jn. 19:30).

"It is accomplished!" Those words are so simple and yet so powerful. Jesus is dead but, by dying, he has completed the task that he set out to complete. The journey has reached its end.

Activities



1. a) Watch the Power Point presentation on the Stations of the Cross. (DVD ROM)
b) Work in pairs. Each pair takes a 'station' and relates it to an experience or event in life today. (Suggestions on DVD ROM)
2. Jesus suffered in many ways: physically, emotionally, psychologically.
a) From what you have studied, give an example of each type of suffering.
b) What type of suffering do you think was the hardest? Why?
c) In what ways does Jesus continue to suffer in people today?
3. a) Watch the Power Point presentation on Good Friday in church.
b) Describe and explain the meaning of this liturgy.
4. How does the suffering and death of Jesus influence Christians today? Think about:
 - those who suffer physically, mentally, psychologically;
 - what the death of Jesus accomplished;
 - how it inspires people.
5. Classroom Discussion.
Why is the suffering and death of Jesus important to Christians?
Study the statements which your teacher will place around the room. (Statements on DVD ROM)
a) Tick on the statement that is closest to your opinion.
b) Work in groups. Decide on the three most important reasons.
c) Share them with the class and reach a consensus.



Reflect on the experience of Mary and the disciples on Holy Saturday.
Think about how they can help us.

Holy Saturday: A time of deep silence!

Disciples

The disciples experienced the silence of God. It appeared as though God had been defeated. Their Lord and Master had been killed. The previous day, they had been stunned into silence by one unforeseen event following another. They must have felt ashamed because they had disowned their Lord. They saw themselves as traitors and cowards. Their hopes of a future with him had come tumbling down. They spend Holy Saturday in fear and dread that something worse was coming.

Mary

Mary reflected on what had happened. She held on to the total trust she had in God's promises. Even though her heart must have been pierced with suffering she was able to instil hope into the confused disciples. She remembered all that God had done for her and hoped in Him.

Mary spent Holy Saturday in trust and patience contemplating the mystery of God's plan.



Ourselves

In the disciples we see the confusion, bewilderment and fear that we sometimes feel when we cannot find God and wonder if He really exists.

Mary teaches us how to be faithful.

She believed completely in God's plan and teaches us to do the same, even though, like her, we cannot see into the future.

Mary teaches us to trust in God at all times, especially when we are going through something very difficult, such as being abandoned by friends or our family breaking up.

Activities



1. Imagine you are Mary. It is the Sabbath (Holy Saturday) and all is quiet. Your son is dead, killed as a criminal. You are all alone except for John. Write a poem to express your feelings.

2. a) Watch the Power Point presentation of the Easter Vigil in church.
b) Design a leaflet: 'My Guide to the Easter Vigil'. Include symbols and explanations to show all you understand about it.

Think about:

- lighting of the fire and paschal candle;
- what the symbols on the candle mean;
- why the congregation light small candles from the flame of the paschal candle, (make reference to Mt. 5:14-16);
- renewal of baptismal promises.



Deepen our understanding of the meaning of the Resurrection.
Reflect on its importance for us.

The Resurrection



The day of rest, the Sabbath, had passed. Dawn broke. Daylight started to fill the sky. People could once again resume their daily business.

Pause to Reflect

Even though it is not recorded in the Gospels, we may assume that Jesus first appeared to his mother, Mary. It is highly likely that she was still praying and pondering over all the events that had taken place.

Imagine Jesus coming to her.

What do you think he said?

What do you think it was like for Mary?

How did it help her to understand all that had happened in her life?

The Empty Tomb

"Jesus is alive and we have seen him!"

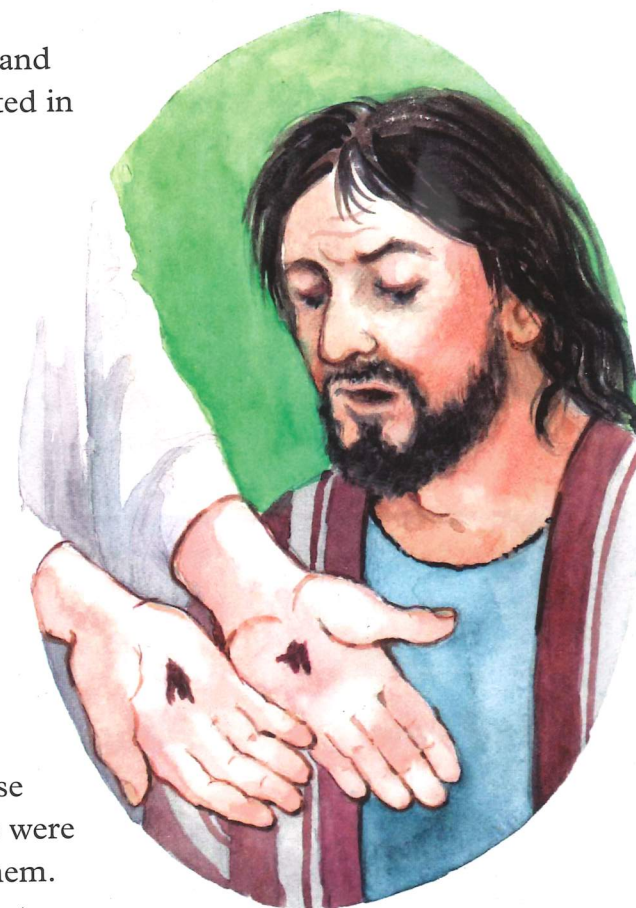
This was the most sensational news that the disciples had ever heard. Two days had passed and now they were astounded by the news that Mary of Magdala had brought to them. She had seen a vision of angels who declared:

"He is not here: For he has risen as he said!" (Mt. 28:6)

The disciples reacted in different ways. Peter and John rushed to see for themselves. Others waited in disbelief until Jesus appeared to them that evening.

Doubting Thomas

"Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, had heard the news, but he was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, **'We have seen the Lord'**, he answered, **'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe'**."



Eight days later, the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them.

'Peace be with you', he said. Then he spoke to Thomas,

'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.'

Thomas replied, **'My Lord and my God!'** Jesus said to him:

'You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe'" (Jn. 20:24-29).

The writers of the Gospels list numerous occasions after the resurrection when Jesus appeared alive and real to his followers, for example, in the garden itself, in the upper room, on the road to Emmaus and at the Sea of Galilee.

Activities



- Imagine that the news of the resurrection of Jesus has spread around Jerusalem but the guards cannot find him. All who claim to have seen him are rounded up and brought to court to be questioned. You are among them.
 - Divide into six groups. One group will be the guards and all the others eye-witnesses.
 - The eye-witnesses must study their scripture text very carefully and be prepared to be questioned by the guards.
 - The guards must decide the questions they are going to ask based on Matthew 28:11-15.

Group 1 Mary of Magdala
(Jn. 20:1-18)

Group 2 Peter with an eyewitness
(Jn. 21:9-17)

Group 3 The disciples on the road to Emmaus
(Lk. 24:13-35)

Group 4 The apostles gathered together
(Lk. 24:36-43)

Group 5 The disciples on the shore of Tiberias
(Jn. 21:1-14)

The Jury

When your group is not being questioned by the guards you are the jury.

Judge

The teacher will sum up the evidence and decide on the verdict.

The Power of the Resurrection

The appearances of the Risen Jesus had such a profound effect upon the disciples that, shortly after the resurrection, they devoted their lives entirely to telling people that:

- Jesus died for our sins;
- Jesus rose from the dead;
- Jesus will come again.



The resurrection gives us **HOPE** that death is not the end.

Death was **NOT** the **END** for Jesus and it is **NOT** the **END** for us.

Jesus' resurrection broke the power of sin and this gives us **HOPE** because we know that **GOOD** will triumph.

The disciples followed Jesus' instructions by celebrating the Eucharist together, sharing bread and wine and knowing that it had now become his Body and Blood.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tell us that: "United with Jesus Christ by Baptism, believers truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ, but this life remains 'hidden with Christ in God'. The Father has already 'raised us up with him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus'. Nourished with his body in the Eucharist, we already belong to the Body of Christ. When we rise on the last day we 'also will appear with him in glory' (CCC 1003).

"Christ will raise us up 'on the last day; but it is also true that, in a certain way, we have already risen with Christ. For, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, Christian life is already now on earth a participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ." (CCC 1002).

Activities



- Imagine that you were present when Jesus appeared after the resurrection, for example, you could be
 - Peter (Jn. 21:1-18)
 - Mary of Magdala (Lk. 24:1-11)
 - Cleopas (Lk. 24:13-35)
 - Thomas (Jn. 20:19-29)
 - Nathanael (Jn. 21:1-17).
 - Say who you are and what you were doing when Jesus appeared.
 - What did he say?
 - What did you do as a result?
 - What effect did it have upon your belief in Jesus and your life afterwards?
- "By rising from the dead on Easter Sunday, Jesus provided the ultimate proof that there is life after death - and all of us share in it." Discuss.
 - Say what you **think** and **why**.
 - Give a different point of view and say why some people hold it.
 - Say why you **disagree** with it.
 - Quote some source of evidence.