### Prayer Service

##### Gather

The tomb is open,

the Lord is no longer

stretched out in death.

The tomb is open,

the Lord Jesus

has passed through death.

He is alive!

We see him over there,

standing and joyful.

He calls us on the way

where we move away from death

to launch into

the fullness of life.

It is Easter!

(*Prayers for Feasts*. Charles Singer.)

##### Listen and Respond

The resurrection was the event that re-gathered the disciples after they scattered at the time of Jesus’ passion and death. For forty days, from Easter to the ascension, Jesus appeared to his disciples, calling them to follow him again and giving Peter and the other Apostles their mission. For the disciples, the resurrection was an experience of total conversion and commitment to Jesus Christ. They overcame their doubts and fears. The resurrection re-charged their faith and enthusiasm, inspiring them to follow Jesus for the rest of their lives, no matter what the cost.

Let us now experience this Easter journey through four of the Gospel readings that we hear during the Easter season.

**Scene One, Discovering the Empty Tomb: Matthew 28:1-10**

* Reader announces the Easter scene being portrayed.
* Actors present the scene by assuming their freeze-action positions.
* Reader presents the Gospel passage.
* Participants respond in prayer: **Christ, show us the path to new life.**
* Sing the refrain from *Christ Be Our Light* by Bernadette Farrell.
* After 15-20 seconds of silence, the actors sit on the floor or return quietly to their seats and turn their attention to the reader so that the next scene can be introduced.

**Scene Two, Behind Closed Doors: John 20:19-31**

* Reader announces the Easter scene being portrayed.
* Actors present the scene by assuming their freeze-action positions.
* Reader presents the Gospel passage.
* Participants respond in prayer: **Christ, show us the path to new life.**
* Sing the refrain from *Christ Be Our Light* by Bernadette Farrell.
* After 15-20 seconds of silence, the actors sit on the floor or return quietly to their seats and turn their attention to the reader so that the next scene can be introduced.

**Scene Three, Eating at the Beach: John 21:9-17, 19**

* Reader announces the Easter scene being portrayed.
* Actors present the scene by assuming their freeze-action positions.
* Reader presents the Gospel passage.
* Participants respond in prayer: **Christ, show us the path to new life.**
* Sing the refrain from *Christ Be Our Light* by Bernadette Farrell.
* After 15-20 seconds of silence, the actors sit on the floor or return quietly to their seats and turn their attention to the reader so that the next scene can be introduced.

**Scene Four, Commissioning for Ministry: Matthew 28:16-20**

* Reader announces the Easter scene being portrayed.
* Actors present the scene by assuming their freeze-action positions.
* Reader presents the Gospel passage.
* Participants respond in prayer: **Christ, show us the path to new life.**
* Sing the refrain from *Christ Be Our Light* by Bernadette Farrell.
* After 15-20 seconds of silence, the actors sit on the floor or return quietly to their seats and turn their attention to the reader so that the next scene can be introduced.

##### Go Forth

Risen Lord, thank you for the gift of Easter,

transforming our unbelief into a living faith,

turning our sadness at your death on the cross into the joy of your risen life,

replacing our fear with enthusiasm for following you.

Thank you for being our Lord, living with us each and every day.

Amen.

#### Scene 1. Discovering the Empty Tomb - Matthew 28:1-10

##### Gospel Reading

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This is my message for you.’ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

##### Freeze-Frame Tableau

**Props**

* Garden scene
* Empty tomb with white cloths
* Large stone (stone painted on large cardboard and cut out)

**Actions**

* Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, standing between the empty tomb and Jesus, looking afraid because the tomb is empty
* Two guards looking stunned
* Angel holding back the stone, pointing to the empty tomb
* Jesus standing near the empty tomb.

#### Scene 2. Behind Closed Doors - John 20:19-31

##### Gospel Reading

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

##### Freeze-Frame Tableau

**Props**

* Home setting with a room, table, chairs

**Actions**

* Disciples: 12 Apostles, Mary the mother of Jesus, and women disciples—Mary Magdalene and other women
* Disciples sitting at the table and standing around the table looking amazed at Jesus’ presence in their midst and looking at Jesus and Thomas
* Thomas standing alone with Jesus putting his finger in Jesus’ hand and his hand on Jesus’ side
* Jesus standing between the disciples at the table and Thomas standing alone

#### Scene 3. Eating at the Beach - John 21:9-17, 19

##### Gospel Reading

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.’ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep. . . . After this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’

##### Freeze-Frame Tableau

**Props**

* Beach scene
* Camp fire
* Bread and fish

**Actions**

* Disciples sitting around the campfire eating bread and fish and watching Jesus’ exchange with Peter
* Jesus standing in their midst talking to Peter
* Peter standing, trying to convince Jesus that he does love him

#### Scene 4. Commissioning for Ministry - Matthew 28:16-20

##### Gospel Reading

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’

##### Freeze-Frame Tableau

**Props**

* Mountain scene

**Actions**

* Disciples in a circle with Jesus standing in their midst
* Jesus with his hands outstretched blessing the disciples

### Handout #1.

### Selected Easter Readings

##### Matthew 28:1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, “He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.” This is my message for you.’ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

##### Mark 16:1-7

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3They had been saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ 4When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.’

##### Luke 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’ Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

##### John 20:1-9

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.’ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

The Resurrection Story Continues in John 20:11-18:

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 2and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’ When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, ‘Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” ’ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

##### John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

##### Luke 24:35-48

. . . While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

##### John 21:1-19

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We will go with you.’ They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, ‘Children, you have no fish, have you?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ He said to them, ‘Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.’ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.’ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’

##### Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’

### Handout #2.

### Discovering the Risen Jesus

Imagine that you are one of Jesus’ disciples. In the past week so much has happened—you are having a hard time understanding what it all means. Jesus has eaten his final meal (Last Supper) with his friends, the disciples. Jesus has been arrested by the Jewish and Roman authorities and sentenced to die for claiming to be God and doing God’s work on earth. Jesus has carried his cross to Calvary where he has been put to death. And just when you thought everything was over, you have heard reports that Jesus has risen from the dead and appeared to his disciples. What are you feeling? What does it all mean?

Take time now as a family to explore the stories of the resurrection. As you read and discuss the stories imagine that you are in the story—that you are a disciple of Jesus 2000 years ago. Step into the story and become a part of it.

##### Story 1. The Resurrection John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.’ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 2and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’ When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, ‘Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” ’ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

* What is happening in the story?
* What is Jesus doing? What is Jesus saying to you?
* What happens to you?
* What are you feeling and thinking?
* What strikes you as the main point of the story?

##### Story 2. Jesus Appears to the Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32)

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’

* What is happening in the story?
* What is Jesus doing? What is Jesus saying to you?
* What happens to you?
* What are you feeling and thinking?
* What strikes you as the main point of the story?

##### Story 3. Jesus Appears to the Disciples (John 20:19-31)

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

* What is happening in the story?
* What is Jesus doing? What is Jesus saying to you?
* What happens to you?
* What are you feeling and thinking?
* What strikes you as the main point of the story?

##### Story 4. Jesus Eats with his Disciples (John 21:9-17, 19)

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.’ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep. …After this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’

#### Creating an Easter Banner

Create an Easter Banner as a family to capture what you have learned from your study of four key Gospel readings from the Easter Season. The whole family should work on the banner.

Include the following elements on your Easter Banner:

* Write one or two key Scripture verses or selected words from the four Easter readings that are important for your family.
* Decorate the banner with Easter symbols from the Scripture readings, such as the empty tomb, as well as traditional images, such as lilies. Feel free to add other decorations
* Write one or two things your family will do to live the experience of the risen Christ: family prayer, participation in the Eucharist and sacraments, service to those in need, the daily witness of your Catholic life.

Decorate the banner and share it with other families at your table or at nearby tables.

Display your Easter Banner in your home for the 50 days of Easter.

#### Family Easter Candle

At the Easter Vigil a new Easter (Paschal) Candle is dedicated for the new year and lights the sanctuary at church during the Easter Season. The Paschal Candle is inscribed with an alpha (the first letter of the Greek alphabet) and an omega (the last letter) with a cross in between. The four quarters of the cross are identified with the numerals of the current year.

The Easter Candle is a reminder to all of us that Christ has risen and overcome the darkness of death. Christ is truly our light!

Make your own Easter Candle a centerpiece on your table during the Easter Season. Decorate it with a cross and write the numerals of the year in the four quarters of the cross. Write you family name at the base of the candle.

Light the Easter Candle at a family meal or gathering each day. The following blessing can be prayed by all family members. Write this prayer or your own prayer on a file card so that it can be placed next to the Easter Candle.

*Loving God, we ask your blessing on this symbol of Christ our Light. May it be a constant reminder to all of us that we, too, are to bring the Light of Christ to others by our lives of justice and kindness. Amen.*

Use Handout #8: Table Reflections during the Easter Season each week. Light your Easter Candle and spend several minutes before a meal reflecting on one Scripture reading.

### Handout #3.

### Jesus Lives!

##### Read the Emmaus Story.

Listen to the reading of the Emmaus Story from the Gospel of Luke. Now read it again yourself. Open your mind and heart to the meaning of the words. Let the passage speak to you. Listen carefully.

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. –Luke 24:13-35

##### Reflect on the Emmaus Story.

Step into the story and become a part of it. Imagine yourself as one of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who meet Jesus. Make notes of your observations.

* What is happening? What are your thoughts and feelings on this day?
* What do you say to Jesus? What does Jesus say or do?
* What happens to you? What are your feelings?
* What does this passage say to you?
* What strikes you as the main point of the story?
* What is Jesus’ challenge to you?

##### Pray to Jesus.

Move into the heart of the Emmaus Story. Express your thoughts and feelings to God in your own way. Consider the following questions as you respond to God.

* What word is being spoken to you in this Bible passage?
* What emotions do you want to express to Jesus: joy? fear? gratitude? grief?
* Are you willing to listen to Jesus’ answer?
* Prayerfully ask, “What, Lord, are you saying to me in this reading?”

##### Grow as a Disciple.

Decide on how you will live the meaning of the Emmaus Story in your life. Take a few moments to think about how you can grow more deeply in your relationship with Jesus Christ and live as a disciple. Think about all the ways you can live the experience of the risen Christ through prayer, participation in the Eucharist and sacraments, service to those in need, and the witness of your Catholic life. Name several ways you can grow as a disciple.

### Handout #4.

### Resurrection—Insights for Teens

##### 1. All Beliefs Hinge on the Resurrection.

Our belief in the resurrection is core to the Christian religion. All our other beliefs hinge on the resurrection. Paul states this very clearly in his first letter to the Corinthians. It seems that some of the Corinthians did not believe in the resurrection of the body. As Paul argues with them, he explains the centrality of the resurrection: “If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-19).

Paul is telling the Corinthians that, because Jesus rose from the dead, they have new life both on earth and after their life on earth. They have new life on earth because they have been forgiven their sins and invited to live in a relationship of covenant love with God. They have new life after life on earth because, just as Jesus passed through death to life, so will those who have faith in Jesus. (Margaret Nutting Ralph, *New Life in Christ*)

##### 2. Jesus is the Son of God.

The resurrection accounts affirm the most profound level of Christian faith in Jesus. He was not merely a great person whose idealistic cause died tragically with him. No, Jesus was unique; he was, indeed, the messiah, God’s favored Son, the one in whom life triumphed over death, the one whose life and mission were the turning point in all of human history and the pattern for all human destiny. (Donald Senior, *Jesus a Gospel Portrait*)

##### 3. Jesus’ message and ministry are vindicated.

The Gospel resurrection accounts are absolutely uniform in their message: the trust of Jesus in his God was vindicated. The miracles of Jesus were not the work of Beelzebub. His challenge to the religious leadership of his day was not presumptuous. The simplicity of his prayer and the intimate affection he tendered toward his Abba were not too bold. His insistence on service and his indictment of violence were not visionary. Above all, his conviction that the kingdom of God was coming was not an illusion. All of this, everything that Jesus said and did, was vindicated by the resurrection. The kingdom of God had come**: in him** (emphasis added). (Donald Senior, *Jesus a Gospel Portrait*)

##### 4. Jesus’ resurrection demonstrates the truth of Jesus’ teachings.

Of most significance to Christian faith is the fact that the Resurrection demonstrates the truth of Jesus’ claims and teachings about God.

* In his claim about God’s unconditional love for each of us, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his promise that we can find fulfillment in loving God and others, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his rejection of empty religious ritual and his commitment to a prayerful and personal relationship with God, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his conviction that forgiveness of one another will always be more life-giving and enriching than revenge, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his call for respect and special affection for the outcasts of society, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his teaching that the rich must share with the poor, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his absolute refusal to accept anything that would separate people from one another—social status, sexual or racial discrimination, economic standing, political affiliation, even religious beliefs—Jesus spoke the truth.

All of this is affirmed by the Resurrection. (Thomas Zanzig, *Jesus of History, Christ of Faith*)

##### 5. Jesus’ resurrection was an experience of conversion for the disciples.

For the disciples, the resurrection was an experience of total conversion to Jesus. Only with the resurrection did they truly return to him in faith and full abandonment to his power and his divine presence in their midst. We have the example of Peter and Thomas: Easter gives us disciples converted once and for all to the cause of Jesus and his Gospel. Conversion, then, does not belong only to the time before Easter, but is an integral part of Easter. It is an ongoing passage from unbelief to faith, from sadness to joy, from the paralysis of fear to the enthusiasm of the mission. (*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### 6. Jesus’ resurrection is liberating.

Jesus’ resurrection is also an event of liberation, inasmuch as it radically transforms humanity and nature, freeing them from the nets of sin, death, and suffering, whether physical, moral, or psychological. The man Jesus is restored to his integral freedom; a new lifestyle, set forth in the message of the risen Lord and his kingdom of justice, peace, and human solidarity, is born. (*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### 7. Jesus’ resurrection promotes women as disciples.

The resurrection really promotes women as disciples, hearers, and messengers of the Word of God. The deep faithfulness and devotion of the women in Jesus’ life gave them the courage to go to the tomb before anyone else, the opportunity to be the first to receive the tremendous news of the resurrection, the chance to be the first to meet with the risen Lord and to bring this extraordinary news to the Apostles (see Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 24:8-11). The resurrection brings about a radical revaluation of women: they are not the last, but the first to bear witness in faith to the risen Christ. (*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### 8. Jesus’ resurrection changes life.

It is also through the power of the Spirit that we come to understand and live out our new life in Christ. Because Jesus rose from the dead our life is changed both on earth and into eternity. We now know that we are beloved children of God. We know that we are invited to live in a relationship of covenant love with God all of our life. We know that if we are faithful to this call we will act lovingly toward all we meet, trying, in both our words and our actions, to be faithful witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ.

Finally, we know that death is not death. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, so will we. During the Easter season we celebrate new life, both on earth and in eternity. (Margaret Nutting Ralph, *New Life in Christ*)

### Handout #5.

### The Meaning of the Resurrection

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.* (Romans 6:3-11)

#### Exploring the Meaning of Resurrection

*“The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross*.*”* (CCC 638)

Take a moment to reflect on your understanding of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

* How would you describe the Catholic understanding of the resurrection?
* Why is the resurrection the central truth of the Catholic faith?
* What is the significance or importance of Jesus’ resurrection for our understanding of the life, ministry, and death of Jesus?

Share your reflections on the three questions with your group. This is a storytelling experience so be sure to give each person time to share his or her story without interruptions or discussion.

To explore the meaning of resurrection, each person takes one of readings on Handout #6 “Resurrection—Insights for Adults.” If there are fewer than twelve people, ask individuals to take an additional reading.

Read and reflect on the readings individually. Answer the questions below and prepare your reflections to share with the group.

* What is the central insight into the resurrection presented in this reading?
* Why do you think this insight is important for understanding the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection?

Beginning with the first reading, each group member shares the central insight of the reading and why it is important for understanding the meaning Jesus’ resurrection. Don’t discuss the reports until everyone has shared.

**Discussing the Readings and Presentations**

Together as a group discuss the following questions:

* What new insights came to you about Jesus’ life because of the resurrection?
* What do you think is the significance or importance of Jesus’ resurrection for us today?
* How does the understanding of Jesus’ resurrection presented in the Gospel readings of the Easter Season and the readings you’ve just done influence what it means for you to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ today?

#### Growing in Our Relationship with Jesus Christ

##### The Emmaus Story (Luke 24: 13-35)

The faith journey of every Christian is summed up in the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. All of us are at some point on that short journey the disciples took after the death of Jesus. As you hear the story, try to identify the various stages the disciples went through.

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Review the story and identify the four stages of relationship with Jesus Christ.

1. *Discovery*: “…we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel…” Imagine how the disciples must have felt when they first encountered Jesus – their high expectations, their enthusiasm – and how they must have felt when they left all in Galilee to pursue a new life with him.
2. *Disillusionment*: “…our chief priests and rulers handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him…” Imagine how the disciples felt, their sense of loss, their doubts, their reasons for leaving Jerusalem.
3. *Redefining*: …”Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scripture to us?” The disciples shared their pain with the stranger, and he explained the Scriptures to them.
4. *Rediscovery*: “…he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.” The disciples were gradually led to a truer, more realistic vision of Jesus and his mission, and how this event affected the rest of their lives.

Using these four stages, take several minutes to reflect on your own faith journey with Jesus Christ.

*Stage 1 – Discovery*Think about a time in your life when you thought you knew the Lord and walked with him.

*Stage 2 – Disillusionment*

Think of a time when you lost touch with the Lord. How did this come about? What other things were going on in your life at this time? How did you feel about life? about losing the Lord? Did your religious behavior change? If so, how?

*Stage 3 – Redefining*

Recall your efforts and the events that helped you get in touch with Jesus once more. How did the rebuilding of your relationship with him come about? What did you do to rebuild the relationship? What people were involved in your efforts to rebuild the relationships? What role did Scripture, prayer, liturgy, and a supportive community play in rebuilding your relationship with Jesus?

*Stage 4 – Rediscovery*

How did you feel about the rediscovery? What new things did you discover about the Lord? about yourself? Did your religious behavior change as a result of this rediscovery? If so, how?

Share several reflections with your group on what you discovered through this activity. This is a storytelling experience so be sure to give each person time to share his or her story without interruptions or discussion.

* What did you discover about your faith journey?
* In what ways has your experience been similar to that of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus?
* How have you grown as a disciple through these experiences of loss and discovery?

#### Living the Resurrection

The Easter season provides each of us with a chance to discern what we will do because of our experience of the risen Christ. Take a few moments to think about how you can grow more deeply in your relationship with Jesus Christ and living as a disciple.

### Handout #6.

### Resurrection—Insights for Adults

##### Reading 1. All beliefs hinge on the resurrection.

Our belief in the resurrection is core to the Christian religion. All our other beliefs hinge on the resurrection. Paul states this very clearly in his first letter to the Corinthians. It seems that some of the Corinthians did not believe in the resurrection of the body. As Paul argues with them, he explains the centrality of the resurrection: “If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-19).

Paul is telling the Corinthians that, because Jesus rose from the dead, they have new life both on earth and after their life on earth. They have new life on earth because they have been forgiven their sins and invited to live in a relationship of covenant love with God. They have new life after life on earth because, just as Jesus passed through death to life, so will those who have faith in Jesus. (Margaret Nutting Ralph, *New Life in Christ*)

##### Reading 2. Jesus is the Son of God.

The resurrection accounts affirm the most profound level of Christian faith in Jesus. He was not merely a great person whose idealistic cause died tragically with him. No, Jesus was unique; he was, indeed, the messiah, God’s favored Son, the one in whom life triumphed over death, the one whose life and mission were the turning point in all of human history and the pattern for all human destiny. (Donald Senior, *Jesus a Gospel Portrait*)

In the first place, the resurrection is God the Father’s answer to the condemnation and execution that men inflicted on Jesus. . . . It confirms the divinity of Jesus, who, as the incarnate Son of God, returns to the loving communion of the Father along with his risen humanity. Jesus is truly the “resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). The resurrection of the crucified one shows that he was truly ‘I Am,’ the Son of God and God himself.

In the second place, the resurrection completes the supreme revelation of God as Trinity: of the Father, who glorifies the Son by raising him and exalting him to his, the Father’s, right hand; of the Son, who by his redeeming sacrifice merits this exaltation to the right hand of the Father; of the Holy Spirit, who proves himself to be the Spirit of life and resurrection: “Christ. . . being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). (*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### Reading 3. Jesus’ message and ministry are vindicated.

The Gospel resurrection accounts are absolutely uniform in their message: the trust of Jesus in his God was vindicated. The miracles of Jesus were not the work of Beelzebub. His challenge to the religious leadership of his day was not presumptuous. The simplicity of his prayer and the intimate affection he tendered toward his Abba were not too bold. His insistence on service and his indictment of violence were not visionary. Above all, his conviction that the kingdom of God was coming was not an illusion. All of this, everything that Jesus said and did, was vindicated by the resurrection. The kingdom of God had come: in *him* (emphasis added). (Donald Senior, *Jesus a Gospel Portrait*)

##### Reading 4. Jesus’ resurrection helps us understand suffering and death.

His resurrection helps us understand suffering and death. The resurrection helps us understand the puzzle of our own suffering and death and gives us a basis for hope as we pass through them. In doing that, it saves us. It reveals that our suffering and dying are not final, but are a passage to some kind of new life, as Jesus’ suffering and dying were for him. Jesus demonstrates in action what he had previously proclaimed as the central paradox of the Gospel: “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains just a grain; but it if dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). “Those who want to save their lives will lose them; but those who lose their lives for the sake of me and the Gospel will save them” (Mark 8:35).

So it is in the death and resurrection of Jesus, which thus become the basis of Christian insight and hope. What they reveal is that God works within the mystery of our suffering to bring good out of evil, meaning out of absurdity, life out of death. (Kathleen Fischer and Thomas Hart, *Christian Foundations*)

##### Reading 5. Jesus’ resurrection demonstrates the truth of Jesus’ teachings.

Of most significance to Christian faith is the fact that the Resurrection demonstrates the truth of Jesus’ claims and teachings about God.

* In his claim about God’s unconditional love for each of us, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his promise that we can find fulfillment in loving God and others, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his rejection of empty religious ritual and his commitment to a prayerful and personal relationship with God, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his conviction that forgiveness of one another will always be more life-giving and enriching than revenge, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his call for respect and special affection for the outcasts of society, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his teaching that the rich must share with the poor, Jesus spoke the truth.
* In his absolute refusal to accept anything that would separate people from one another—social status, sexual or racial discrimination, economic standing, political affiliation, even religious beliefs—Jesus spoke the truth.

All of this is affirmed by the Resurrection. (Thomas Zanzig, *Jesus of History, Christ of Faith*)

##### Reading 6. Jesus’ resurrection repairs our friendship with God.

The resurrection is the event that repairs the friendship between God and man in which the divine life streams abundantly into the humanity of Christ and, through him, into all of humanity. . . Because he is risen, he has the spiritual power to transform men (and women) according to his image in order to make them sons (and daughters) of the Father. (*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### Reading 7. Jesus’ resurrection is the experience of encountering him in the Eucharist.

Jesus’ resurrection is the experience of encountering him in the breaking of the bread, in eucharistic communion. He manifested himself to the disciples of Emmaus “in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35). In history, the Eucharist is not only the memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus, but is also real participation in the divine life of the risen Christ. In the Eucharist, the sacrament of the continuous saving presence of the risen Lord in history, our saving encounter with him is realized.

(*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### Reading 8. Jesus’ resurrection is an experience of vocation, mission, and forgiveness.

Jesus’ resurrection is also an experience of vocation and mission. For the disciples, the resurrection was the event of their “reconvocation” by Jesus following upon their dispersion at the time of Jesus’ passion and death. For forty days, from Easter to the ascension, Jesus appeared to his disciples, calling them to follow him again and giving Peter and the other Apostles their definitive mission. (See John 21:15-19, John 20:21, and Matthew 28:18-20.)

Jesus’ resurrection is an experience not only of vocation and mission, but also of forgiveness. The risen Jesus gives back his friendship and forgiveness to the disciples. What is more, he confirms the Apostles in the office of forgiving the sins of humanity. He entrusts the power that he has exercised during his life on earth to his Apostles as his resurrection gift. On the evening of Easter Jesus, appearing to his disciples, gave them the power to remit sins: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23). For Christians, Jesus’ resurrection is an experience of mercy, forgiveness, spiritual renewal, and participation in Jesus’ victory of sin and death. (*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### Reading 9. Jesus’ resurrection was an experience of conversion for the disciples.

For the disciples, the resurrection was an experience of total conversion to Jesus. Only with the resurrection did they truly return to him in faith and full abandonment to his power and his divine presence in their midst. We have the example of Peter and Thomas: Easter gives us disciples converted once and for all to the cause of Jesus and his Gospel. Conversion, then, does not belong only to the time before Easter, but is an integral part of Easter. It is an ongoing passage from unbelief to faith, from sadness to joy, from the paralysis of fear to the enthusiasm of the mission. (*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### Reading 10. Jesus’ resurrection is liberating.

Jesus’ resurrection is also an event of liberation, inasmuch as it radically transforms humanity and nature, freeing them from the nets of sin, death, and suffering, whether physical, moral, or psychological. The man Jesus is restored to his integral freedom; a new lifestyle, set forth in the message of the risen Lord and his kingdom of justice, peace, and human solidarity, is born. (*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### Reading 11. Jesus’ resurrection promotes women as disciples.

The resurrection really promotes women as disciples, hearers, and messengers of the Word of God. The deep faithfulness and devotion of the women gave them the courage to go to the tomb before anyone else, the opportunity to be the first to receive the tremendous news of the resurrection, the chance to be the first to meet with the risen Lord and to bring this extraordinary news to the Apostles (see Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 24:8-11). The resurrection brings about a radical revaluation of women: they are not the last, but the first to bear witness in faith to the risen Christ.

The figure of Mary Magdalene is emblematic in this regard. She encounters Jesus even before the Apostles do. In this way she becomes the first messenger of his resurrection and ascension and earns the title “apostle to the Apostles.” (*Jesus Christ, Word of the Father—The Savior of the World*)

##### Reading 12. Jesus’ resurrection changes life.

It is also through the power of the Spirit that we come to understand and live out our new life in Christ. Because Jesus rose from the dead our life is changed both on earth and into eternity. We now know that we are beloved children of God. We know that we are invited to live in a relationship of covenant love with God all our life. We know that if we are faithful to this call we will act lovingly toward all we meet, trying, in both our words and our actions, to be faithful witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ.

Finally, we know that death is not death. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, so will we. During the Easter season we celebrate new life, both on earth and in eternity. (Margaret Nutting Ralph, *New Life in Christ* Magazine)

### Handout #7.

### Table Reflections during the Easter Season

Light a candle each night to remember the light of the risen Christ, dwelling in your home.

##### First Week of Easter

**Reader** “Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is so good, and by raising Jesus from death, he has given us new life and a hope that lives on.” (1Peter 1:3)

**Leader** Glorious God, the darkness of Lent is over, and the light of Easter shines on us. We praise you because you have shown us your power in the resurrection. We rejoice in you because you have refreshed us in the waters of baptism. We glorify you because you have given us hope for eternal life. We love you because you have loved us.

**Blessing over the Food**

Loving God, bless those who gather around this table. Help us to spread the light of your son, Jesus, to those who are hungry today. Amen.

##### Second Week of Easter

**Reader**“You are my Lord and my God!” (John 20:28)

**Leader** Reassuring God, when we hear about the Resurrection, we are like the disciples. We believe. But when we feel pain and when we see suffering, we are like Thomas. We have doubts, we wonder where you are.

Give new life to our faith. Help this family to trust in you. Help us to hear those who give witness to your love. Help us to believe in the Resurrection and become your presence for others.

**Blessing over the Food**

Loving God, bless those who gather around this table. Help us to reach out to heal the pain and suffering we see around us. Amen.

##### Third Week of Easter

**Reader** “After Jesus sat down to eat, he took some bread. He blessed it and broke it. Then he gave it to them. At once they knew who he was, but he disappeared.” (Luke 24:30-31)

**Leader** Dear God, the disciples did not recognize Jesus when they walked with him. How could they be so blind? They knew him. They had seen him with their own eyes. Sometimes I am blind. I know Jesus, but I fail to see him. Help me to see with the eyes of faith. Help me to recognize Jesus in my friends, my family, my co-workers.

**Blessing over the Food**

Loving God, bless us that we may recognize you. Bless too, this food that it may nourish us to recognize you in the stranger, in the lonely, in the forgotten. May we reach out to them in love and service. Amen.

##### Fourth Week of Easter

**Reader** “I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest.” (John 10:10)

**Leader** Dear Jesus, you are the gate and you are the shepherd. We come to new life through you. You are the one whom we must follow. Find us when we are lost. Help us to hear your voice and to follow you. Help us to understand how much you love us. Bring us to new life.

**Blessing over the Food**

Wondrous God, you guide us always in the ways of love. You gently care for us and encourage us to follow your son, Jesus. Bless those who gather around our table. Help each one of us hear your voice and follow you. Help us too to hear your voice in the hungry people of our community and world, and to reach out to them in love and service. Bring us all to new life. Amen.

##### Fifth Week of Easter

**Reader** “Have faith in me when I say that the Father is one with me and that I am one with the Father. Or else have faith in me simply because of the things I do. I tell you for certain that if you have faith in me, you will do the same things that I am doing.” (John 14:11-12)

**Leader** Dear Jesus, you tell us that you are “the way, the truth, and the life.” Help us to choose the roads in our lives that will lead to you. Help us to pursue truthfulness, help us to do all that is life-giving. Bless our faith in you. Oh, how we want to do as you do!

**Blessing over the Food**

Dear Jesus, you say that if we have faith in you, we will do the same things that you do. You forgave, you reached out to the lonely, the poor, the forgotten, the hungry. You brought peace to people’s lives. Bless us that we too may do as you do. Bless this food so it strengthens us to be your presence in the world. Amen.

##### Sixth Week of Easter

**Reader** “If you love me, you will do as I command. Then I will ask the Father to send you the Holy Spirit who will help you and always be with you. The Spirit will show you what is true.” (John 14:15-17)

**Leader** Dear Jesus, you prepared the disciples for the day you would leave. You promised to send them a helper. All you asked of them was that they remain faithful to you. All you ask of us is to remain faithful to you. Help us to understand all of what that means. Help us to be faithful in our work and our play. Help us to be faithful when we are with others and when we are alone. Let us never doubt your love for us.

**Blessing over the Food**

Holy God, your Spirit brings light to our world. Your Spirit renews and energizes us to carry on the work of your Son in our family, in our neighborhood, and in our world. Bless us as we gather to share food and companionship. Bless us for the work we continue to do in our faithfulness to your Son, Jesus. Amen.

##### Seventh Week of Easter

**Reader** “Eternal life is to know you, the one true God, and to know Jesus Christ, the one you sent.” (John 17:3)

**Leader** Dear Jesus, you are one with your Father, and you tell us that we are one in you and the Father. You point us to the type of relationship we are to have with each other—”then they will be one with each other, just as you and I are one.” Help us to bring glory to you by the life our family lives, together.

**Blessing over the Food**

Loving Lord, we belong to you. Bless our efforts to be a family of faith, bless our efforts to love as you love. Bless this food to strengthen us to live as one. Amen.

##### Pentecost Sunday

**Reader** “On the day of Pentecost all the Lord’s followers were together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting.”
(Acts 2:1-2)

**Leader** Dear God, you promised to send the world a savior, and you sent Jesus. Jesus promised to send the disciples a helper, and he sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit continues to be with us today. Thank you for keeping your promises. Help us to keep our promise to be faithful to you. Let us be open to the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Help us to recognize our gifts and to use them to serve you.

**Blessing over the Food**

Come, Holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of your love. Holy God, send the blessing of your Spirit upon us as we break bread together. Strengthen and empower us to go forth from this table ready to praise and serve your Son, Jesus. Amen.

### Prayer Service

##### Listen

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ (Luke 24: 30-32)

##### Respond

Risen Lord, may our hearts burn within us with our love for you.

Response: Hear us, Lord of glory.

Risen Lord, allow us to live by your life and walk as children of light in the joy of Easter.

Response: Hear us, Lord of glory.

Risen Lord, by your resurrection you strengthened the faith of your disciples and you sent them into the world: give us the grace and strength to follow you today.

Response: Hear us, Lord of glory.

Risen Lord, increase the faith of your Church; may it faithfully bear witness to your resurrection.

Response: Hear us, Lord of glory.

Risen Lord, comfort all who are burdened, and engrave in their hearts your words of eternal life.

Response: Hear us, Lord of glory.

Risen Lord, strengthen those who are weak in faith, and reveal yourself to doubting hearts.

Response: Hear us, Lord of glory.

##### Go Forth

Risen Christ, through the Gospel your voice makes itself heard softly. You tell us: “Why worry? Only one thing is necessary, a heart attentive to my words and to the Holy Spirit.” Breathe your Holy Spirit upon us that we may listen and follow you all the days of lives. Amen.