

New Life in Christ

Session Focus

This session on following Jesus explores the meaning of Jesus' resurrection for our lives as disciples. Belief in the resurrection is at the center of the Catholic faith. All other beliefs hinge on the resurrection. This session guides people in reflecting on the Gospel readings of the Easter Lectionary to discern the meaning and significance of Jesus' resurrection. It also guides people in applying this understanding to their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ today.

Learning Objectives

The session on New Life in Christ guides learners of all ages to . . .

- identify the core teachings on the resurrection as presented in the Gospel readings of the Easter Season and do theological reflection on the resurrection (know-what).
- value and appreciate the meaning and significance of the resurrection for the Catholic faith and their own lives as disciples of Jesus Christ (know-why).
- discern how they will live the experience of the risen Christ through prayer, participation in the Eucharist and sacraments, service to those in need, and the witness of a Catholic life (know-how).

Session Overview

Part 1. (5 minutes)

Gathering

Part 2. (25-30 minutes)

All Ages Learning Experience: Scenes from the Resurrection and Easter

Part 3. (90 minutes)

In Depth Learning Experience: Exploring the Resurrection

- Option 1. Whole Group Format - all participants remain in the same room.
- Option 2. Age Groups Format - participants go to separate rooms for parallel learning: families with children, adolescents, adults.

Part 4. (15 minutes)

Sharing Learning Experiences

Part 5. (10 minutes)

Closing Prayer Service

Design Options for In-Depth Learning

Option 1. Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences. You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners
- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group

- a group of leaders who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leaders to have one leader work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

Facilitation Tips for this Format:

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

Option 2. Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic. You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.
- A facilitator must guide all the of the families through each learning experience, while small group leaders move from table to table assisting.

Materials Needed

Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities

All Ages Opening Learning Experience

- Opening Prayer Service Handout
- Bible

- Props for the prayer service (See Opening Prayer Service handout.)

In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts
- Supplies noted in the age group activities

Sharing Learning Reflections

- Handout

Closing

- Closing Prayer Service

Session Plan

Part 1. Gathering (5 minutes)

Preparation

Prepare a newsprint sheet or handout that lists the order of the activities or create a PowerPoint presentation that guides people through the session.

Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the handouts participants will need for the session. You can also distribute handouts for the In-Depth Learning program at the beginning of the activity.
- Invite people to share a meal; depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal instead.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using the words below or your own words.

This session on following Jesus explores the meaning of Jesus' resurrection for our lives as disciples. Belief in the resurrection is at the center of the Catholic faith. All other beliefs hinge on the resurrection. We will reflect on the Gospel readings of the Easter Lectionary to discern the meaning and significance of Jesus' resurrection for the Catholic faith. We will then apply this understanding to our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ today. We will seek new ways to live the experience of the risen Christ through prayer, participation in the Eucharist and sacraments, and service to those in need.

Present an overview and the schedule of the program.

1. Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people for the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask all members of the same family to sit together in these intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational—children, teens, parents, and grandparents—keep them together in one group.

For the In Depth Learning Experience (Part Three) organize the participants into three types of table groups: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults.

2. Opening Prayer Service

The Opening Prayer Service is integrated within the All Ages Learning Experience.

Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: Scenes from the Resurrection and Easter Season (25-30 minutes)

The focus of the All Ages Learning Experience is understanding the impact of the resurrection on the disciples and their conversion and commitment to following Jesus. The prayer service incorporates scenes from the Easter Season Lectionary using a freeze-frame approach to dramatizing the scenes.

Preparation

Set a prayer space at the front of the room with the following items:

- Prayer table with white tablecloth, candle, and Lectionary.
- Large cross with a white cloth draped over it (stand-alone cross).
- Empty tomb with white cloths.
- Paschal (Easter) Candle.

Consider displaying icons, paintings, and/or statues of Jesus' resurrection and post-Easter appearances with the disciples.

The prayer service includes several key scenes from the Easter Lectionary. Following a brief introduction, readers lead participants through four prayerful reflections on Jesus' journey from Easter through the Ascension. The words of Scripture and prayer are accompanied by "freeze-action tableaux" representing each scene. The presentation can take place in the worship space or in your large meeting room.

Involve people of different ages as actors. Use a different reader for each Scripture passage.

Create the props for each tableau using the ideas on the Prayer Service Handout.

Use the following process for each scene:

- A reader announces the Easter scene being portrayed.
- Actors present the scene by assuming their freeze-action positions.
- An Easter Gospel reading is presented.
- The participants respond in prayer.
- 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.

Select people in advance for each freeze-action tableau. Ask each person to dress for their part by wearing a white top: shirt or blouse, turtleneck, long-sleeved T-shirts, or sweater. Ask that they wear clothes without messages or manufacturer labels or symbols.

Plan to have a rehearsal shortly before the session. Gather the props needed and duplicate copies of the Opening Prayer Service Handout with the freeze-action Easter scenes for all readers and actors prior to rehearsal time. Assign roles for each of the tableaux. Rehearse each tableau. Before you begin, share the following thoughts with the actors and readers:

- Prayer can take many different forms. Apart from words, prayer can be expressed through silence, gesture, sculpture, art, dance/movement, and theater.
- The presentation of the Easter Scripture scenes uses freeze-action tableaux, a form of theater that has been adapted in this activity to fit the needs of faith formation and prayer.

- A freeze-action approach to theater resembles silent mime more than spoken drama. Whispering or talking of any kind during the presentation is a major distraction.
- As you present the freeze-action tableaux you are leading the community in prayer.
- The props are kept simple, by design, to help the participants focus their attention on the power of the scenes being described, instead of getting caught up in the details.

The rehearsal should be a mix of fun and seriousness, modeling the kind of quiet and attentiveness needed for the actual community presentation of the Easter scenes.

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

Introduce the Gospel readings, using the words below or your own words.

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 (Easter Vigil—Year A)

- 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 (Second Sunday of Easter-A, B, C)

Use the same process as described for Scene 1.

Scene Three, Eating at the Beach: John 21:9-17, 19 (Excerpts, Third Sunday of Easter-C)

Use the same process as described for Scene 1.

Scene Four, Commissioning for Ministry: Matthew 28:16-20 (Ascension Year A)

Use the same process as described for Scene 1.

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.

Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience: Exploring the Resurrection (90 minutes)

Families with Children Learning Experiences

Materials Needed

- Handouts #2, #6, and #7
- White cloth or poster board for the Easter Banner (approximately 2'x3') and the following arts supplies: colored marking pens, pencils and pens, glue sticks, ribbon in a variety of colors, and religious and Easter stickers
- Large white candle for each family to create an Easter Candle and the following supplies to decorate the candle: push pins or other decorative pins for the candle
- Large file card for the Easter Candle Prayer

Preparation

Write the instructions on newsprint or create a PowerPoint presentation with the instructions.

1. Exploring the Stories of the Resurrection

Guide families through the activity, using the words below or your own words.

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 four 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

Use the following questions to reflect on the Gospel story:

- 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)

Use the questions listed under Story 1 to reflect on the Gospel story.

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

Use the questions listed under Story 1 to reflect on the Gospel story.

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

Use the questions listed under Story 1 to reflect on the Gospel story.

2 Creating an Easter Banner

Guide families through the activity, using the words below or your own words.

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 fifty days of Easter.

3. Decorating a Family Easter Candle

Guide families through the activity, using the words below or your own words.

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 your 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.

Adolescent Learning Experience: Jesus Lives!

The adolescent learning plan is designed to help adolescents develop an understanding of Jesus' resurrection and its importance for their Catholic faith and discipleship. Six creative activities are offered to engage the adolescents in exploring the Gospel readings of the Easter Season and theological reflections. Conclude the learning plan with the Emmaus Reflection for all groups. Select one activity for the whole group or assign a different activity to each group. See each activity plan for a list of required materials.

Option 1. Magazine Story of the Resurrection

Materials Needed

- Newsprint sheet for each page of the magazine or 11x17 sheets of paper
- Blank paper

- Colored marking pens, pens, and pencils
- Ruler
- Old magazines, scissors, glue stick or tape
- Masking tape
- Handouts #1 and #4

Groups engaged in this activity will create the cover page and feature article for *Jerusalem This Week*, a weekly magazine like *Time* or *Newsweek*, as it would appear the week after the resurrection of Jesus. Using newsprint or 11x17 paper, the group develops a headline and image for the cover, and the headlines, article, pictures, and quotes for the feature article.

The feature story should report on the events of Jesus' last week and their importance for his followers and the new religion that is being born—Christianity. Include examples of how Jesus' resurrection helps to make sense out of his life, ministry, and death.

Groups should include the following elements:

- Cover page with a “photo” or artwork and headline.
- Essay describing the major events of the last week of Jesus' life—the Last Supper; his arrest, trial, and crucifixion; and the resurrection.
- Headlines.
- First person interviews with key people such as the disciples, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Roman soldiers, and Jewish and Roman leaders.
- Artwork and pictures.
- Special comments by “experts” offering their perspectives on the final events of Jesus' life.
- Explanatory column by the magazine editors to help the reader understand the significance of the resurrection.

Groups should use the Gospel readings on Handouts #1 and Resurrection readings on Handout #4 for background information. Walk the group through the eight points about resurrection on Handout #4.

Creating the magazine should take about 30-40 minutes.

Ask groups to share their magazine with nearby tables or the whole group and then post it on the wall for all to see. Allow only two minutes for each presentation. Invite reactions and reflections from the entire group.

Ask groups to discuss what they learned using the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the resurrection of Jesus and its importance for your Catholic faith and discipleship?
- Why is the resurrection the central truth of the Catholic faith?
- How does Jesus' resurrection help to make sense out of his life, ministry, and death?
- What is the hardest thing to understand about the resurrection? the easiest?

Option 2. Presentation on the Resurrection

Materials Needed

- Handouts #1 and #4

- Newsprint sheet, poster board, and/or 11x17 sheets of paper
- Blank paper
- Colored marking pens, pens, and pencils
- Masking tape

Groups engaged in this activity will create a contemporary presentation on the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus that can be used to teach others. Their work can be structured around the question: “What is the importance or significance of Jesus’ resurrection for the Catholic faith and the lives of disciples today?” Include examples of how Jesus’ resurrection helps to make sense out of his life, ministry, and death.

The presentation can use techniques such as stories, drama, demonstrations, graphics (poster or ad), or a song. Groups should develop their explanation for a specific setting. You may want to assign a setting or give groups a variety of choices. Here are several options:

- a presentation at a youth meeting
- a talk on a youth retreat
- an RCIA session for youth and adults
- a Sunday homily at the Easter Day Mass
- a presentation for grade school children

Each group will prepare a report to present to the large group. Groups should use the Gospel readings on Handouts #1 and Resurrection readings on Handout #4 for background information. Walk the group through the eight points about resurrection on Handout #4.

Creating the presentation should take about 30-40 minutes.

Ask groups to share their presentation with nearby tables or the whole group and then post it on the wall for all to see. Allow only two to three minutes for each presentation. Invite reactions and reflections from the entire group.

Ask groups to discuss what they learned using the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the resurrection of Jesus and its importance for the Catholic faith and discipleship?
- Why is the resurrection the central truth of the Catholic faith?
- How does Jesus’ resurrection help to make sense out of his life, ministry, and death?
- What is the hardest thing to understand about the resurrection? the easiest?

Option 3. Advertisement on the Importance of the Resurrection

Materials Needed

- Handouts #1 and #4
- Newsprint sheet, poster board, and/or 11x17 sheets of paper
- Blank paper
- Colored marking pens, pens, and pencils
- Ruler
- Old magazines, scissors, glue stick or tape
- Masking tape

Groups engaged in this activity will create advertisements to announce and explain the resurrection of Jesus and its importance for people today. The advertisement can be structured around the question: “What is the importance or significance of Jesus’ resurrection for the Catholic faith and the lives of disciples today?” Include examples of how Jesus’ resurrection helps to make sense out of his life, ministry, and death. Groups should use the Gospel readings on Handouts #1 and #4 for background information.

Ads can focus on the entire parish community or can target specific groups, such as other young people, children, and families. Groups can use a variety of advertising methods such as a 30-second TV or radio ad, a song, an ad in a magazine, poster advertisement, or a billboard. You may want to choose several methods and obtain the supplies the young people will need to accomplish their work.

This project involves writing the content for an advertisement: creating a script for a commercial or magazine ad; identifying or creating artwork, symbols, images, and photos to accompany the content; and developing the final product.

Guide the young people through the following process:

- Step 1. Identify your target audience: parish community, youth, children, families, or other groups.
- Step 2. Focus your ad: In short phrases clearly identify what you want to communicate.
- Step 3. Select your advertising approach: Think about all the types of advertisements: 30-second TV or radio ad, a song, an ad in a magazine, a poster advertisement, or a billboard. Select your approach. (The young people may have other good ideas to suggest.)
- Step 4. Design your ad: Combine your content or message with your advertising method to create your unique promotion. Add color or artwork or whatever else will enhance your promotion.

Each group will prepare a report to present to the large group. Groups should use the Gospel readings on Handouts #1 and Resurrection readings on Handout #4 for background information. Walk the group through the eight points about the resurrection on Handout #4.

Creating the presentation should take about 30-40 minutes.

In the Whole Group Format ask groups to share their advertisement with nearby tables and then post it on the wall for all to see. In the Age Group Format ask each group to present their advertisement to the entire group. Allow only two minutes for each presentation. After all of the presentations, invite reactions and reflections from the entire group.

Ask groups to discuss what they learned using the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the resurrection of Jesus and its importance for the Catholic faith and discipleship?
- Why is the resurrection the central truth of the Catholic faith?
- How does Jesus’ resurrection help to make sense out of his life, ministry, and death?
- What is the hardest thing to understand about the resurrection? the easiest?

Option 4. Top Ten Reasons for the Importance of the Resurrection of Jesus

Materials

- Handouts #1 and #4
- Newsprint sheets
- Blank paper
- Marking pens, pens, and pencils
- Masking tape

Groups engaged in this activity will create “Top Ten Reasons for the Importance of the Resurrection of Jesus.” Groups should use the Gospel readings on Handouts #1 and Resurrection readings on Handout #4 for background information. Walk the group through the eight points about resurrection on Handout #4. They should rank their ten reasons in the order of importance with #1 being the most important.

Each group will prepare a report to present to the large group.

Creating the top ten list should take about 30-40 minutes.

Ask groups to share their top ten list with nearby tables or the whole group and then post it on the wall for all to see. Allow only two minutes for each presentation. After all of the presentations, invite reactions and reflections from the entire group.

Ask groups to discuss what they learned using the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the resurrection of Jesus and its importance for the Catholic faith and discipleship?
- Why is the resurrection the central truth of the Catholic faith?
- How does Jesus’ resurrection help to make sense out of his life, ministry, and death?
- What is the hardest thing to understand about the resurrection? the easiest?

Option 5. A Television Report on the Resurrection

Materials

- Handouts #1 and #4
- Blank paper, pens and pencils

Groups engaged in this activity will create a “Sixty Minutes” style TV news report that will be televised the week after the resurrection of Jesus. The news story is designed to report the events of Jesus’ last week and their importance for his followers and the new religion that is being born—Christianity. Include examples and/or interviews of how Jesus’ resurrection helps to make sense out of his life, ministry, and death.

Groups should create a variety of reports and designate one person to serve as the anchor for the story. The anchor introduces each segment.

Groups should include the following elements in their news story. They can add other elements if they wish.

- reports describing the major events of the last week of Jesus' life—the Last Supper; his arrest, trial, and crucifixion, and the resurrection.
- first person interviews with key people such as the disciples, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the Roman soldiers, and Jewish and Roman leaders.
- special comments by “experts” offering their perspectives on the final events of Jesus' life.
- commentary by the reporters to help the viewer understand the significance of the resurrection.

Groups should use the Gospel readings on Handouts #1 and Resurrection readings on Handout #4 for background information. Walk the group through the eight points about resurrection on Handout #4.

Each group will prepare a report to present to the large group.

Creating the presentation should take about 30-40 minutes.

Ask each group to present their “broadcast” to the entire group. Keep the performances moving along. After all the presentations, invite reactions and reflections from the entire group.

Ask groups to discuss what they learned using the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the resurrection of Jesus and its importance for the Catholic faith and discipleship?
- Why is the resurrection the central truth of the Catholic faith?
- How does Jesus' resurrection help to make sense out of his life, ministry, and death?
- What is the hardest thing to understand about the resurrection? the easiest?

Option 6. A Debate on the Importance of the Resurrection

Materials Needed

- Handouts #1 and #4
- Note paper
- File cards and pens or pencils

Organize the debate on the importance of Jesus' resurrection for the Catholic faith by dividing the participants into two teams. Team #1 develops reasons why they think the resurrection is important to the Catholic faith and our following Jesus as disciples. Team #2 develops reasons why they think the resurrection is not important or necessary to the Catholic faith and our following of Jesus as disciples.

Tell the groups they have ten minutes to prepare their reasons. Groups should use the Gospel readings on Handouts #1 and Resurrection readings on Handout #4 for background information. Walk the group through the eight points about resurrection on Handout #4. At the end of the work time have each team select three spokespersons.

After ten minutes gather the teams together, set up two facing rows of three chairs each for the spokespersons of each team. Place the remaining participants behind their spokespersons.

Begin the debate by having the spokespersons present their reasons and examples. Refer to this process as “opening arguments.” Begin with the reasons why the resurrection is not important or necessary (Team #2) and then the reasons why it is important (Team #1).

After everyone has heard the opening arguments, stop the debate and reconvene the original teams. Ask the teams to strategize how to counter the opening arguments of the opposing side. Again, have each team select a spokesperson, preferably a new person. You may want to add one or more chairs to the spokespersons' row. Allow participants to occupy these chairs whenever they want to join the debate. Give them five minutes to prepare for the next round.

Resume the debate. Have the spokespersons give "counter arguments." As the debate continues—be sure to alternate between sides—encourage other participants to pass notes to their spokespersons with suggested arguments or rebuttals. Also, urge them to cheer or applaud the arguments of their team representatives.

End the debate after fifteen minutes. Instead of declaring a winner, reconvene the entire group in a circle. Be sure to integrate the group by having participants sit next to people who were on opposing teams. Hold a discussion using questions such as:

- How did you feel about making a case for why Jesus' resurrection is or is not important?
- What were the best arguments raised on both sides of the debate?
- 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?
- What did you learn about the resurrection of Jesus and its importance for the Catholic faith and discipleship?
- What is the hardest thing to understand about the resurrection? the easiest?

Emmaus Reflection

Materials Needed

- Handout #3
- Reflective background music

Conclude the learning plan by helping all the young people identify how they can grow as disciples. Guide them through a reflection process on the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, using Handout #3.

Step 1. Read the Emmaus Story.

If you are using the Whole Group Format have table leaders or one young person read the Emmaus Story on Handout #3. If you are using Age Group Format the facilitator can read the story to the whole group and/or a team can dramatize the reading.

Step 2. Reflect on the Emmaus Story.

Guide the young people in reflecting on the story by imagining that they are one of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who meet Jesus.

- 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?

Step 3. Pray to Jesus.

Set a prayerful mood (consider background music). Guide the young people in expressing their thoughts and feelings 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?"

Step 4. Grow as a Disciple.

Guide the young people in deciding how they will live the meaning of the Emmaus Story in their lives: how they can grow more deeply in their relationship with Jesus Christ and live as disciples. Ask them to think about all the ways they can live the experience of the risen Christ through prayer, participation in the worship and sacraments, service to those in need, and the witness of their Christian life. Invite them to name several ways they can grow as a disciple.

Adult Learning Experience: The Meaning of the Resurrection

The adult learning plan has been created as a self-directed small group activity. Facilitators can guide the adults through the learning activities as outlined below. Write the essential instructions on newsprint or create a PowerPoint presentation with the instructions.

Materials Needed

- Handouts #5 and #6

1. Exploring the Meaning of Resurrection

Guide participants through the following activities using the words below or your own words.

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 the twelve 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.

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?

2. Growing in Our Relationship with Jesus Christ

Guide participants through the following activities using the words below or your own words.

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.

Ask one person in the group to read the story in Luke 24:13-35. As they hear the story, ask them to try to identify the various stages the disciples went through. The reading is included on Handout #5.

Invite participants to review the story and identify the four stages of relationship with Jesus Christ.

- *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.
- *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.
- *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.
- *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, ask participants to take several minutes to reflect on their 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?

Invite participants to share several reflections with their group on what they discovered through this activity. This is a storytelling experience so encourage them 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?

3. Living the Resurrection

Continue the session with the following:

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.

- How will you seek out Christ's presence through prayer and participation in the sacraments?
- How will you seek out Christ's presence through your relationship with the poor, through generosity to those in need, and through service?
- How will you share Christ's presence with those who need a sign of hope in their life?
- How will you let Christ's presence call you to something new in your life—new community, new relationships, new ways of sharing your time and talents, new ways of sharing your life with the world?

Invite participants to discuss the questions in their table groups.

Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (15 minutes)

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. Ask the participants to rejoin their intergenerational groups from the All Ages Learning Experience.

First, select or invite representatives from ask each age group to share what they created and/or learned in their activity. For example, families can share their Easter Banner, adolescents can share the projects they created (if there are a variety of projects, select several different projects), and adults can share central teachings about the resurrection. (You can also conduct this sharing in intergenerational table groups.)

Second, present the following information using the words below or your own words:

Think of everything we have done in this session to understand the meaning of Jesus' resurrection and its significance for our lives as Catholics. To help us take our learning from this session and live it in our lives and homes, reflect on the following questions and share your thoughts with your group.

- What is the most important "lesson" or insight you have learned about Jesus' resurrection?
- How can you (and your family) live the experience of the risen Christ in your daily life? For example: prayer, participation in the Eucharist and sacraments, service to those in need, the daily witness of your Catholic life.

Invite participants to take several minutes for small group sharing.

Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (10 minutes)

Gather

Sing an Easter hymn.

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.