

April GIFT Home Session

In this lesson, families will think about stories we hear during the Easter season at Mass. There is nothing in our faith that is more important than the resurrection of Jesus. Without the resurrection, there is no Christian faith.

But in the early church, there was doubt in Jesus' resurrection. So, St. Paul reported several stories of Jesus' appearances to show that the resurrection happened and fulfilled the scriptures.

In this session, you will read 5 stories about the resurrection. It would be a great idea to look these readings up in your Bible to read them.

After you read the story, discuss the questions together. Then, complete the handout, "Jesus sightings." Then, complete the handout on the Easter candle. Hand both of these in at May GIFT so that you receive credit for April GIFT.

Jesus Sighting 1

Mark 16:1-6

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. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But 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.

Reflection:

The empty tomb brought joy. Emptiness is usually a disappointment: an empty wallet or purse, an empty tank of gas, an empty bowl of ice cream, an empty feeling inside. The tomb was a sign of joy because it was empty of death. For the first time in history, a tomb was a sign of life!

Discuss together:

- Can you describe a time when something empty brought you joy?
- What does the empty tomb mean for us today?

Jesus Sighting 2

Luke 24:13-27

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.

Reflection:

Easter faith means that love conquers hatred, life is stronger than death, good always triumphs over evil, and hope never disappoints in the end. It is so easy to forget this when things aren't going well for us. The disciples on the road to Emmaus were giving up on Jesus. They had lost hope and had given into the temptation to give up in the face of what looked like failure. Jesus challenged them to go back to their core beliefs and reclaim their hope.

Discussion:

- All of us experience disappointment in our lives. How do you overcome the temptation to give up when you fail at something?
- How does the resurrection of Jesus give you hope when you face challenges?

Jesus Sighting 3

Luke 24:28-35

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.

Reflection:

This Easter story is about Eucharist and communion. There is a pattern to note here:

- Jesus breaks the bread
- The disciples recognize him in the breaking of the bread
- Jesus vanishes from their sight
- The disciples turn to each other
- Together they return to Jerusalem to serve the Lord

We repeat this same pattern every Sunday at mass:

- The bread is broken
- We recognize and acknowledge Jesus in the bread
- We consume the body of Christ; it disappears into our bodies
- We are challenged to turn to each other
- We are challenged to go and serve the Lord.

Discussion:

- When you take the body of Christ into your body, how does the presence of Jesus in you challenge you to serve others?
- What do you do or what can you do each day to remind yourself that Christ is within you?

Jesus Sighting 4

John 20:19-23

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."

Reflection:

Peace is the gift of the risen Jesus. When we work for peace, we help to spread the joy of Easter in our lives and in the lives of others. The daily practice of forgiving is an essential part of peacemaking. There can be no peace if we do not forgive.

Discussion:

- Do you think that forgiving others and asking for forgiveness is important? Why?
- What does the following phrase from the Lord's Prayer mean to you: forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us? How can this kind of forgiving bring peace?

Jesus Sighting 5

John 20:24-28

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!"

Reflection:

Jesus showed patience and understanding with Thomas. He gave Thomas what he needed in order to have more faith.

Discussion:

- Describe a story when someone close to you doubted you. How did you handle that situation?
- How could you have handled that doubt in a way that is similar to the way Jesus handled Thomas' doubt?

Your Name: _____

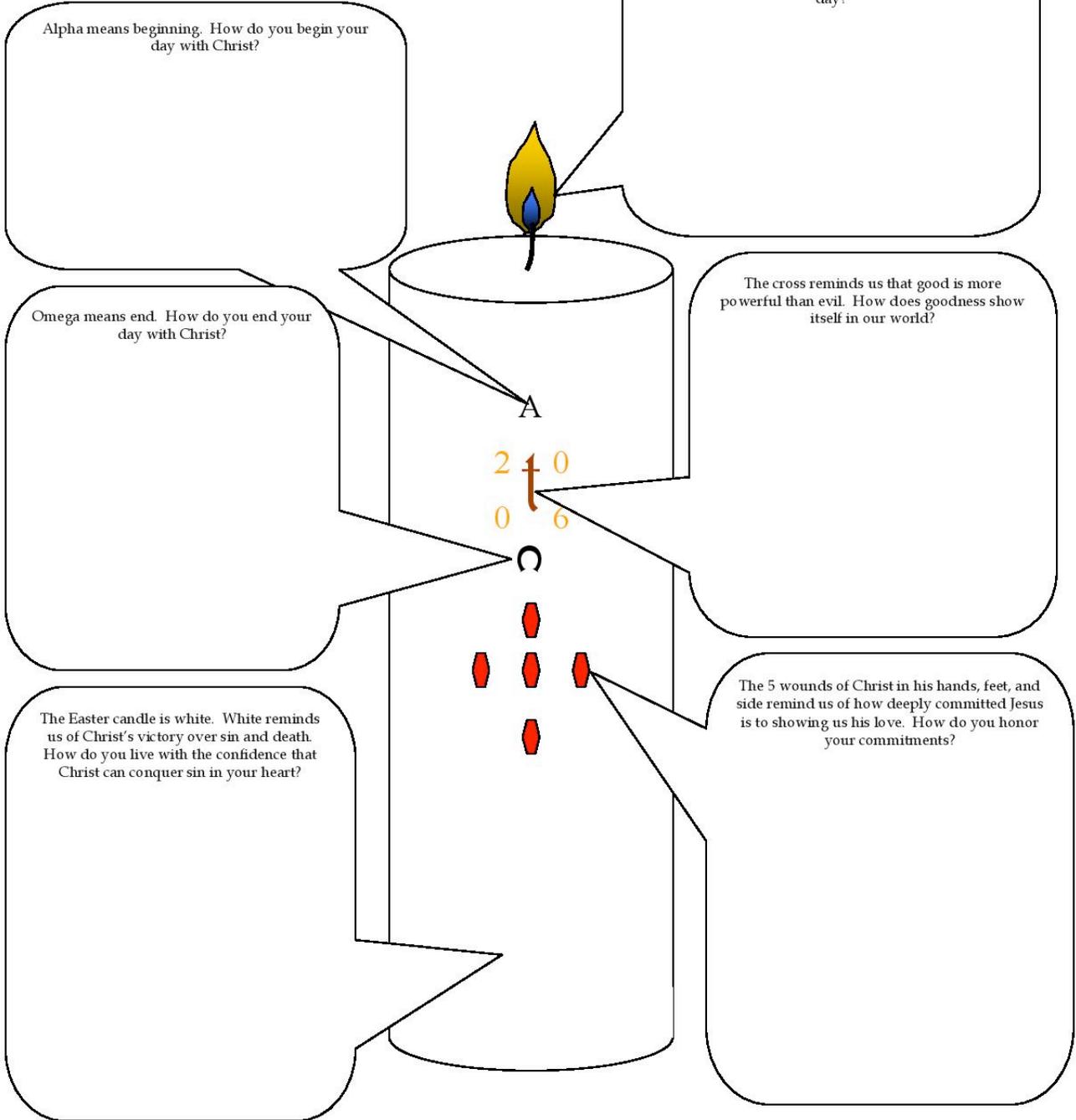


Jesus Sightings

Report of Jesus Sighting

| Gospel | To whom did Jesus appear? | Where? | When and how did they recognize him? | What was different? What special qualities? |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Mark 16:1-6 | | | | |
| Luke 24:13-27 | | | | |
| Luke 24:28-35 | | | | |
| John 20:19-23 | | | | |
| John 20:24-28 | | | | |

Easter Candle Symbols



Instructions: The Easter candle is a great symbol of faith, and it has multiple meanings. Some of those meanings are suggested in the callout boxes on the previous page. Invite each family member to write or draw a response to the questions in the callout boxes. You may photocopy the page if you need more copies for your family members or you may all write and draw on the copy provided. Display this Easter candle on your refrigerator during the Easter season.