

Witnessing a New Life



EASTER
REFLECTION BOOKLET | 2024 (YEAR B)

OFFICE FOR THE NEW EVANGELISATION



Inaugurated in September 2013, the **Office for the New Evangelisation (ONE)** is an office in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore working to realise the Archdiocese's vision of being a vibrant, evangelising and missionary Church.



As a catalyst for the New Evangelisation, ONE's mission is to facilitate processes and initiatives to move baptised Catholics into becoming missionary disciples.

This initiative is supported by the **GIFT Programme** under the Catholic Foundation.

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“ You are my
witnesses,” says
the Lord, “and my servant
whom I have chosen, that
you may know and believe
me and understand that I
am He. Before me no god
was formed, nor shall there
be any after me.”

ISAIAH 43: 10

Easter Message

Dear sisters and brothers,

Alleluia, the Lord has truly risen, Alleluia.

The women went to the tomb to continue showing their love for the Lord. They wanted to complete what they were not able to finish on the day of His death. Instead, the Lord had other plans for them. Their love in action was rewarded by being the first witnesses to the Risen Lord.

When we experience an event that is mind-blowing, we are spontaneous in our witnessing by sharing it with others. There is a need to talk about the event and a need to express our emotions. This is the first way to witness: speaking about the event. The blessings we receive from the Lord are meant for us to bless others by sharing with them the deeds of the Lord in our lives and the lives of those around us. Likewise, many of the psalms in Scripture proclaim what the Lord has done for the individual and for the people.

This Easter, let us be such witnesses of the Lord's truth, blessing, and salvation to all those around us. We journey with faith, trusting that the Lord will do the rest.

Let us be people of the Resurrection, a people filled with hope.

The joy of Easter grows in you when you share it with others.

May the Lord bless you with Easter peace, joy, and love.

Rev. Fr. Terence Pereira

Episcopal Vicar for the New Evangelisation

The Purpose of this Booklet

This resource is intended for families, RCIA groups, parish organisations, ministries, small Christian communities and neighbourhood Christian communities. It may also be used for individual reflection.

- To promote the Christian community in the neighbourhood as a place where we can hear the word of God and put it into practice.
- To give participants an experience of community and a sense of their mission by reaching out to neighbours and those in need.
- To gather parish organisations / ministries to pray together as one and put Christ back in the centre.
- To increase communication between family members. Love should be the main message in all communication, so the sessions are aimed at families sharing stories, doing meaningful activities together, sharing faith and being reconciled with one another.

How to Use this Booklet

These reflections may be used either

- (1) before participating in Sunday's liturgy, as a way of preparation to receive God's Word at Mass, or
- (2) after participating in the liturgy as a continuation of 'breaking open the Word of God' in our lives.

In the spirit of generosity, group members volunteer beforehand to read Scriptures and other parts of the text.

A different group facilitator can take the responsibility in each session to foster good interaction and to keep time.

Someone should record the discussion in general terms and then email it to the members who are absent.

The duration of each session is about two hours.

The time and place for the next meeting should be announced at the end of each session.

Session Format

OPENING PRAYER

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

READINGS

The three scripture texts should be read at least twice, allowing some time for a silent listening to the Word. Then the passages are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given write up. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior the meeting.

THOUGHTS

Someone reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

REFLECTIONS

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

TAKE HOME

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

DOING YOUR BIT

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

CLOSING PRAYER

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

APPENDIX: ACTIVITIES

The appendix section contains activities that further enrich our spiritual journey with our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ.

Facilitating Group Reflections

**For where two or three
meet in my name,
I am there with them**
- Matthew 18:20

Be mindful of Christ's presence. Adopt a humble and reverent manner when speaking or acting within the group. Read the text meditatively and give your best attention to the words of the Scripture readings.

**May they all be one,
just as, Father,
you are in me and
I am in you**
- John 17:21

Help everyone to feel at home and take special care to welcome newcomers. Treat each person as a beloved member of the community and invite one another to participate in the session by taking turns to read the text. Use a language that everyone can understand so that no one feels left out.

**... and their great men
make their authority felt.
Among you this is not
to happen**
- Mark 10:42-43

Avoid being authoritative or domineering by acting aggressively, flaunting knowledge or telling others what to do. If there is advice to be given, do so after the reflection is done. Choose words that are easily understood by all when speaking. Avoid giving lengthy and verbose sharing that consume other people's opportunities to offer their sharing.

**If anyone wants to be a
follower of mine, let him
renounce himself and take up
his cross every day and
follow me** - Luke 9:23

At the core of these reflections is the Word of God, the teachings of the Church and the invitation for our conversion towards Christ. If the group wanders away from this during the session, gently invite one another to re-focus.

**Because when the time
comes, the Holy Spirit
will teach you what
you should say**
- Luke 12:12

There is no need to prepare sharing in advance or to appoint people to share. Wait patiently for God's Spirit to inspire generosity and remember to give thanks after someone volunteers to contribute their own faith experience.

**...your light must shine in
people's sight, so that, on
seeing your good works, they
may give praise to your Father
in heaven** - Matthew 5:16

These reflections challenge us to do the will of God - to reflect the love of Christ to others we meet. Spend some time at the start of the next group session sharing with one another how each one has tried to do this over the past week.



CatholicSG Radio

brings you the audio version of 2024 Easter Reflection Booklet.

Join our presenters as they take you through the reflections.

Tune in on Easter Sunday:

31 March: 6.30am, 9am, 12pm, 2pm, 5pm, and 10pm.

Encore on 1 & 2 April at various timings.

From 2nd Sunday of Easter till Pentecost:

Starting on 4 April, every Thursday: 8am and 9pm.

Encore from Fri-Mon at 8am, 9pm and more during the day.

For more information on the days and timings of the encore,
visit radio.catholic.sg/easter-programme-2024.

Available as podcast in the CatholicSG Radio app!

Download the CatholicSG Radio app here:



SUNDAYS OF EASTER (YEAR B)

Witnessing a New Life

Week	Readings	Theme
Easter Sunday	Acts of the Apostles 10:34, 37-43 Colossians 3:1-4 John 20:1-9	Witnessing a New Beginning
2 nd Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35 1 John 5:1-6 John 20:19-31	Witnessing the Family of God
3 rd Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 3:13-15, 17-19 1 John 2:1-5 Luke 24:35-48	Witnessing a Conversion of Heart
4 th Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 4:8-12 1 John 3:1-2 John 10:11-18	Witnessing the Good Shepherd
5 th Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 9:26-31 1 John 3:18-24 John 15:1-8	Witnessing the Fruits of God's Labour
6 th Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48 1 John 4:7-10 John 15:9-17	Witnessing a Love Like No Other
7 th Sunday of Easter	Acts of the Apostles 1:15-17, 20-26 1 John 4:11-16 John 17:11-19	Witnessing the Church of God
Pentecost	Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11 Galatians 5:16-25 John 15:26-27; 16:12-15	Witnessing the Holy Spirit

EASTER SUNDAY

Witnessing a New Beginning



Opening Prayer

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

Good and gracious Father, the resurrection of Your Son, Jesus, fills us with much joy and peace, for it brings us great hope in all events of our lives. Your raising of Your Son shows Your love for us and thus we live with grateful hearts. Filled with Easter joy and hope, we want to witness to others what You are doing for us through our Risen Lord. Amen.

Readings:

The three Scripture readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.

Next, the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

Commentaries for:

1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 10: 34, 37-43

Peter, as a Jew, was used to speaking to the Jewish audience. However, by God our Father's prompting, he found himself speaking to Cornelius, a gentile (non-Jew), and his family. Peter gave an account of Jesus Christ by sharing about His ministry on earth, His passion, and His resurrection. Peter presented Christ as the Lord of all and the "judge of the living and the dead." In so doing, Peter witnessed to Cornelius and his family who the Lord was and what God our Father was doing in the lives of people. He preached as a credible witness, having eaten and drunk with the Risen Lord, thus becoming God our Father's instrument to prepare the hearts of Cornelius and his family for the Sacrament of Baptism.

2nd Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Paul, in the letter to the Colossians, is reminding his audience and us that, by virtue of baptism, all Christians share the glorious life of the Risen Lord. Hence,

we orient and set our life's trajectory on "things above." This means that we should take on a different perspective on life and the world, a perspective centred on Jesus Christ. Since He is present in all things, we too are to make Him present in everything we do. Setting our minds on things above is not a one-time decision but a decision made repeatedly. We choose daily to live a life that is in the Risen Lord, and that means we choose to think, love, and act according to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: John 20:1-9

In the Gospel of John, the detailed account of the linen cloths was an indication of the Resurrection. The cloth that covered the Lord's head and His burial cloth were both found arranged in the tomb. In comparison, when Lazarus was raised to life, he came out of the tomb with the burial cloth still bound to him. The empty tomb, the burial cloth laid in the tomb, and the rolled-up cloth were evidence of the Resurrection. It must have been quite incredulous and bewildering for the disciples to take in these signs and to connect them to what Jesus Christ said about His own resurrection. It would take eyes of faith to accept that these were indeed the signs of His resurrection. It is also a display of Jesus Christ's lordship and His mastery over death.

Reflections

Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

“The tomb is empty! Christ is risen!” We hear these phrases often during Easter, and some of us get the sense that these are just some clichéd greetings reminding us that we are yet again in the season of Easter. Instead, let us pause and consider what these phrases mean. God our Father loves humankind more than we can comprehend, and chose to come among us so that humanity may have a full life with the Triune God. Hence, the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus Christ are evidence of God our Father’s commitment to us.

This fullness of life is not just for a selected group of people; it is extended to all, as seen in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. Peter’s message was for the gentiles as much as it was for the Jewish audience and for us today. Whether Jews or gentiles, slaves or free persons, the message of the Resurrection is for all. It was the vision Peter had (vv10-16) that propelled him out of his fixed mindset, enabling him to share the message of Christ with Cornelius. We too must be open to the Lord’s ways to be witnesses of this message to those around us; to live a life of right relationship with God our Father and others.

This message can be powerfully witnessed when all the baptised live this glorious life and focus on things above by aligning our plans and desires with those of God our Father. It requires all of us to choose to come back to the image of the empty tomb and contemplate Jesus Christ’s victory over death. Whenever we face challenges in our lives, let us remember the abundant and full life that Jesus purchased for us through His blood. These contemplations should lead to real action. Our words and deeds must be filled with compassion and kindness leading us out of the empty tomb to new life. We must choose to stand for justice and work for reconciliation amongst all men and women. We strive to encourage and give hope to others. This is how we witness the new life in Jesus Christ.

As we are all pilgrims on this earth, we will sometimes lose our way and may choose a different path. However, let us remember that the sure and definite sign for us is that after the empty tomb, the apostles dined with the Lord! We can always return to this hope that nothing can separate us from the love of God our Father and start anew. In this way, we bear witness to the new beginning promised by Christ and live our lives as people of the Resurrection!

Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Everyone to reflect silently on the questions below. Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.

Speak about what struck you in the passages of Scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.

- Jesus left the tomb that held His body. What is the tomb in your life that is keeping you from the new life promised by Jesus?
- Can others perceive the presence of the resurrected Lord through this new life within me?

Group Contextual Sharing Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- To be a resurrected community of the Risen Lord, what do we need to leave behind in the tomb?
- Like St. Peter, who else must we proclaim Jesus as the Risen Lord to?

For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- Do those whom we serve see that we have moved out of the tomb? Why/why not?
- In what way can we remind ourselves that we are the people of the Resurrection, and thus continue to serve each other with hope and joy?

For Family

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.

- Are we still in the tomb of unforgiveness, prejudices, and hurts? Why/why not?
- How can we ensure that our family hears and lives the message of the Resurrection?

Take Home

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

Just as the tomb could not hold Jesus, we too must abandon our own tombs to truly experience life in Christ.

Doing Your Bit

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

Gather a few friends who have embraced their conversion journey during Lent and share on the newfound transformations in your lives.

Closing Prayer

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

Alleluia! Praise be to You our Father for the gift of our Risen Lord! His Resurrection gives us the courage to live as Your witnesses to bring Your light and love to a world that is lost. The unfailing hope of the Resurrection of Your Son enables us to become Your instruments to build a kingdom of peace, justice, and love. Alleluia. Amen.

My Easter Reflection Journal

2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Witnessing The Family of God



Opening Prayer

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

Almighty God, our Father,
You unite us as one family on our shared journey of faith. With hearts full of Easter joy, we offer our gratitude and praise to You. Empowered by this joy, may we become beacons of light, guiding others towards You in all we do and say. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord, Alleluia. Amen.

Readings:

The three Scripture readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.

Next, the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

Commentaries for:

1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35

We are presented with a description of the strong bonds within the early Church that looked after the material needs of each member. There was no mention of obligations being imposed, but it implied that the pooling of resources for shared usage and selling of real estate by well-off members was undertaken voluntarily. This practice was first mentioned in Lk 8:3, in line with Jesus' teachings to give up material possessions and follow Him. At the same time, this enabled the Apostles to continue proclaiming the resurrection of the Lord — a mission entrusted to them and to us now by our Lord.

2nd Reading: 1 John 5:1-6

By becoming God our Father's children through baptism, we want to demonstrate our love for Him by following His commandments, including loving our fellow brothers and sisters. He grants us the ability to live and love like Him, even as the world opposes His values and places obstacles in our way of obeying Him. Jesus shows us the way in His humanity, as seen by the water representing baptism and the blood representing the sacrifice of His life.

Gospel: John 20:19-31

The disciples were hiding together, still reeling in shock from the events of the past few days. Despite the locked door, Jesus Christ appeared in their midst, a sign that His resurrected body was different from before. He was not there to seek revenge from them for abandoning Him, but to empower them for the important ministry of reconciling sinners. The absent Thomas struggled to believe his friends, so our Lord showed Himself again specifically to address his doubts. In doing so, Jesus affirmed the faith of those who believe in Him unconditionally, regardless of signs or conditions.

Reflections

Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

According to psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, human behaviour is motivated by five categories of needs ranked according to priority: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation.

The early church community was described as taking care of the material and spiritual needs of its diverse members. These were essential, but Jesus showed that there was something greater to work towards: the healing of broken relationships. At first glance, it might seem odd that He would choose to commission the disciples in their distraught state for the ministry of forgiving sins. However, Jesus Christ, in His wisdom, recognised the importance of freeing them from the guilt of abandoning Him. By offering them peace, He showed by example the meaning of reconciliation.

For those of us who accept the resurrected Lord as the Son of God, we take on a new identity as God our Father's children. This identity is a gift for our faith journey, but it also brings challenges we need to navigate during our interactions with others. Yet, these present opportunities for us to allow the Holy Spirit to guide our behaviour, enabling us to share in Christ's mission of bringing mercy to others when conflicts and disagreements arise. We learn to be sensitive when recognising and responding to the less obvious needs of people. In this way, we become a powerful witness to one and all, reflecting God our Father's graces that help transform us to be more loving and forgiving.

Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Everyone to reflect silently on the questions below. Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.

Speak about what struck you in the passages of Scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.

- In what ways am I connected with the family of God?
- What steps can I take to ensure that I forgive as easily as God our Father forgives?

Group Contextual Sharing Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- What are some of the unmet needs of our community? How can we go about fulfilling them?
- What sort of adjectives would you use to describe the community? How can we be like the community of the first Christians?

For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- As a ministry, does our work reflect our identity as God's children?
- What might we do to spark a desire for closer relationships among members beyond fulfilling our ministry duties?

For Family

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.

- How often and how quickly do we forgive one another in the family?
- How can our family be one that always strives for reconciliation?

Take Home

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

To grow as a community of Jesus Christ, we ought to forgive one another and look out for one another's needs.

Doing Your Bit

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

Gather the same group of friends to pray for this newness of life to continue growing.

Closing Prayer

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

Heavenly Father, as Your beloved children, we are grateful for the gift of new life bestowed upon us through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. All praise and glory belong to You, both now and forevermore. Empowered by the teachings of our Risen Lord, we are called to be a family of witnesses, sharing His message of love and redemption with those around us. Grant us the courage and strength to fulfill His commandment to go forth and proclaim the Good News to all peoples. We offer this prayer through Christ our Lord, Alleluia. Amen.

My Easter Reflection Journal

3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Witnessing a Conversion of Heart



Opening Prayer

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

Heavenly Father, all glory and might are Yours. We gather to open our hearts to one another in this week's sharing and to acknowledge the marvellous raising of our Lord Jesus Christ. Stir within our hearts a passion to be witnesses to Your love. Inspire us as we are called to be Your witnesses. We pray this in Jesus' most holy name. Amen

Readings:

The three Scripture readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.

Next, the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

Commentaries for:

1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 3:13-15, 17-19

The words that Peter addressed to the Israelites are important for us to note. Despite the centuries that separate us from the Israelites, these words are still applicable to us right now. In the complexities of life in a modern world, there will be times when we “acted in ignorance.” This led us away from the path of Jesus Christ. It is then that we are called to “Repent therefore, and turn” to God our Father, opening our hearts to conversion.

2nd Reading: 1 John 2:1-5

In this passage, John talks about the role of Jesus Christ in our salvation. It is through His sacrifice that our sins are cleansed. However, that is not the end of the story; we too have the duty to carry on this conversion that has occurred in our hearts and continually choose to obey the commandments. It is only when we act on the will of God our Father that we become visible witnesses to carry forth the love of God our Father to others.

Gospel Reading: Luke 24:35-48

It is very intriguing how Jesus chose to appear to His disciples after the Resurrection, validating His physical presence by eating with them. While the disciples were hesitant to touch Him, He could have just touched them as proof that He wasn't an apparition. Instead, Jesus Christ chose to show them an action, eating, that is commonly linked with life. Through this simple action, Jesus shows that being a witness to His Resurrection is not as daunting as we think it is. His Resurrection should bring in us a true conversion of heart, and we are now called, like the Apostles, to share this new life with others.

Reflections

Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

The three readings today show us a clear path to being true disciples of Jesus Christ. The first reading reminds us about the need to be aware of our actions and to repent for our shortcomings as soon as we are aware of them. This opens our hearts to conversion. The second reading reminds us that we cannot just say we know Jesus Christ; our actions must make our conversion obvious to others. The Gospel passage then reinforces the idea that with Jesus Christ as our role model, we are called to live as witnesses to this conversion.

One message present in all three readings is the call to repentance for sins. During the season of Lent, we fasted, gave alms, and prayed, which prepared our hearts to be open to new life at Easter. In this third week of Easter, we are reminded of the constant need for conversion; it is not a singular moment or event in our lives. The conversion of our hearts must spur us on to becoming witnesses of the love of Jesus Christ. If we are not going through constant conversion, there is always the danger of going back to where we were.

It is only when we choose to return to Him despite our sins that we can become true witnesses. Jesus came down to experience our very lives and thus truly understands the temptation of sin. We too, having experienced conversion after turning away from sin, must empathise with those who are struggling with sin and be witnesses to the freedom in Jesus Christ. He calls us, who are converted, to be instruments in our witness to others.

Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Everyone to reflect silently on the questions below. Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.

Speak about what struck you in the passages of Scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.

- What is an area of weakness that I have overcome with God's grace? How can I use this experience to be the witness of Jesus Christ to someone else?
- Am I satisfied with the conversion I have made this Easter? What other areas of my life require conversion?

Group Contextual Sharing Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- As a community, how can we create a more open and safer environment to encourage sharing our struggles with one another?

- How can we support each other to become visible witnesses, with the aim of inspiring conversion in others?

For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- What further conversion do we need as a ministry to live in Easter joy and peace?
- How can we be better witnesses to Jesus Christ through our ministerial work and bring the light of Easter to others?

For Family

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.

- What are the moments of conversion that we have experienced in our family?
- In what ways can we support each other as a family in our commitment to be witnesses?

Take Home

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

The call to conversion is an ongoing process. It ends in holiness: being united with God our Father in heaven.

Doing Your Bit

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

Think about a person or persons whom you would like to share about this new life that you are living. Pray for that person or persons. Ask the same friends whom you have been journeying with this Easter season to do the same.

Closing Prayer

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

God, our ever-loving Father, as You call us to new life, bless us with the strength and passion to always remain faithful to You. Jesus, our Risen Lord, is a sign of Your infinite power and love for us. His death through obedience inspires us to follow in His footsteps. His call to conversion invites and challenges us to walk towards You, Father. After the resurrection, the Spirit, our Advocate, is given to us to empower us to overcome the temptations of sin and use the experiences we have gained to be true witnesses to the new life You call us to. We make this prayer in Your most holy name, Alleluia. Amen.

My Easter Reflection Journal

4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Witnessing The Good Shepherd



Opening Prayer

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

Loving Father, you have called us out of darkness into the wonderful light of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd. We have heard Your voice and gather in Your name. Your Son had shown us a Father's love in His passion and death. Through Your raising of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have also seen Your glory. We contemplate Your saving mystery that has called us out of darkness to walk in Your light. Alleluia. Amen.

Readings:

The three Scripture readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.

Next, the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

Commentaries for:

1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 4:8-12

The author of Luke's Gospel narrates in the Acts of the Apostles the activities of the early Christians under the leadership of the Twelve. Inspired by the Spirit, Peter boldly proclaims to the religious authorities the power of Jesus, who was rejected but is now raised in glory by God our Father. Peter challenges his listeners to look carefully into the miracles that they were witnessing, confident that those who search will find the truth that there is only one source of all that is good. It is Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord, who is the hope of salvation for all.

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:1-2

God's love is the common theme found in the letters and Gospel of John. Here, the author of the letter tells Christians to rejoice in their new relationship with the Father; one that is so intimate that they can liken themselves to the children of God our Father. Through faith, their personal destiny has been elevated by God our Father, from the earthly to the heavenly realm. Even though adversity and hardship may lie in the future, the author assures that if they stay faithful, they will grow in the image of the loving Father, and their lives will unfold in increasing closeness to God our Father.

Gospel Reading: John 10:11-18

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who, unlike a hired caretaker, has a personal relationship with His flock and will never abandon them. At the time of this Gospel's writing, the Christian community had seen the ministry of the apostles bear fruit in the conversion of many gentiles. They witnessed for themselves how these outsiders responded in faith to the Good News, leading to the marvellous expansion of the Church that would verify Jesus' claim that "I have other sheep" who were not of the Jewish people. Christ is indeed the universal shepherd whose voice resounds for all who recognise His self-giving love.

Reflections

Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

Christ the Good Shepherd

The One who came from God our Father to save us was not someone who was distant and cold. Jesus was the gentle and kind shepherd who proved God our Father's immense love for us by His own sacrifice on the cross. His way of being a shepherd was at times misunderstood. Some could not appreciate the risk Jesus would take by leaving the ninety-nine good sheep in search of the lone stray (Mt 18:12, Lk 15:4). Others who accepted the leadership of Jesus were not comfortable knowing that their shepherd led sheep from other folds. Jesus laid down his life for them all.

We Become like the Shepherd

We take our father's name from the family we were born into. Similarly, one who is reborn as God our Father's child in Christ also bears His powerful name. The Holy Spirit enables God our Father's children to grow to become like Him in the image of Jesus Christ, gradually becoming gentler, more loving, and more ready to give their lives for others. Jesus Christ does not call disciples for them to remain passive or private believers who keep God our Father's consolation to themselves. In the mysterious plan

of God our Father, the Good Shepherd became the sacrificial sheep so that all sheep can become shepherds.

Called to Lay Down Our Lives for Other Sheep

The Sacrament of Baptism immerses us in the paschal mystery of Jesus, our High Priest, enabling us to act together with Him in self-sacrifice on behalf of those who need the salvation of God. The sheep who are drawn to the shepherd's voice are destined to become like the shepherd Himself, caring for God's flock wherever they are found according to the gentle and unselfish way of Jesus. We even endure the same rejection by the world that the Lord faced so that God our Father may raise us up in glory. We recall that there is no Easter joy of the Resurrection without first the pain of the cross.

Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Everyone to reflect silently on the questions below. Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.

Speak about what struck you in the passages of Scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.

- Does it make sense for the shepherd to leave the ninety-nine on their own (who may also stray), to go and look for the lost one? Why/why not?
- What were the times that I emulated the way of Jesus, the Good Shepherd?

Group Contextual Sharing Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- Who are the lost sheep in our community? How can we bring the love of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, to them?
- Looking through the history of our community, what are some ways

we have become more like our Good Shepherd?

For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- Who can we identify as the lost sheep in our midst?
- What is our attitude towards the lost sheep, and how are we going to minister to them?

For Family

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.

- What is the attitude of the Good Shepherd that members of this family can live out?
- Who in our family (immediate or extended) is the one sheep who has left the ninety-nine? What can we do, following the example of Christ the Good Shepherd?

Take Home

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

Getting lost in the busyness of our lives and not being aware of the lost sheep leads everyone astray.

Doing Your Bit

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

As a group of friends, arrange a gathering for the individuals you had in mind last week. Collaboratively decide on a sacrifice that each of you will undertake, offering it in prayer to our Heavenly Father. Pray for His grace to soften the hearts of those you plan to invite to the gathering.

Closing Prayer

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

God our Father, we thank You for the new life through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for the gift of faith that we have renewed. Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd keeps calling out to us and directing us on the right path. Through our baptism, we share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice, which culminated in the resurrection, brought about new life. We thank you for enabling us to participate in the paschal mystery and offer our daily sacrifices to Him. Alleluia. Amen.

My Easter Reflection Journal

5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Witnessing The Fruits of God's Labour



Opening Prayer

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

Our Father in Heaven, we give You thanks for all the gifts and blessings that You shower upon us. We thank You for the newness of Your mercies every morning and the grace of Your forgiveness and love whenever we fall short. We are certain that as we reflect on the readings for the 5th Sunday of Easter, You will reveal to us the message You have for us as Your Word ministers to us today. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Readings:

The three Scripture readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.

Next, the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

Commentaries for:

1st Reading:

Acts of the Apostles 9:26-31

We recall that Saul was a persecutor of the Christians before his conversion on the road to Damascus. It is understandable, then, that the disciples in Jerusalem looked at him with fear and suspicion. It was only when Barnabas, a disciple whose name meant “son of encouragement,” reported to the Apostles the fruits of Saul’s conversion (preaching about Jesus) that he was accepted into the community. In Jerusalem, Saul continued to display his fruits by “speaking boldly in the name of the Lord” and debating with others. This resulted in plots to kill Saul, and he was thus sent away from the city for his protection.

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:18-24

There are numerous idioms and sayings that remind us that words have the peril of being mere sounds without any weight or meaning behind them. Jesus Himself tells us, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 7:21). Therefore, John reminds us to “love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.” Similarly, our faith cannot simply be lip service. Our faith must be practiced through actions, by keeping the commandments and loving one another.

Gospel: John 15:1-8

It is only through abiding in Christ that we can have life. If we choose to separate ourselves from Him through sin, we will die a spiritual death. We must therefore remain in Him through our communion with the Church and encounter Him in the sacraments, primarily the Eucharist. We will then be able to bear the spiritual fruit found in Gal 5:22-23. That is not to say that our lives will be smooth sailing though; we will experience times of struggle and hardship. These are times of pruning that Jesus refers to in the Gospel, and He asks us to persevere in such moments for the promise of bearing more fruit, for the glory of God our Father.

Reflections

Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

Israel, during Jesus' time, was an agrarian society whose economy was based on producing and maintaining crops and farmland. Our Lord, therefore, would often use such imagery in His teachings and parables (the Parable of the Sower, the Good Shepherd, etc.) to help the listeners understand His message. For our Gospel this Sunday, He likens Himself to the vine and God our Father as the vine grower to bring across the message of spiritual fruits borne through a life close to Him.

Through the Sacrament of Baptism, we are received into the family of God our Father and take on a new identity as children of God. Through Baptism, we are also given a new mission: to spread the Gospel. This new identity and mission are reflected in the choice of a new name at Baptism, as the biblical understanding of a person's name reflects the whole being of the person. Persons like Abram, Jacob, and Saul received new names after encountering God our Father (or Jesus, as in the case of Saul) and became Abraham, Israel, and Paul, respectively.

Any family, whether divine or earthly, has demands on its members. God our Father's family is no exception. Jesus' desire is for us to be His disciples and, in turn, make disciples of the whole world. Paul tells us in the second reading that to remain in Jesus, we must keep His commandment of believing in Christ and loving each other. After all, it is through our love for each other that others will know that we are disciples of Jesus (John 13:35). In this Easter season, let us not be dead branches thrown into a fire to be burned. Let us instead bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit through our actions and our love.

Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Everyone to reflect silently on the questions below. Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.

Speak about what struck you in the passages of Scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.

- How have I lived my life so that others can see the fruit that is borne in Jesus Christ?
- How do I ensure that I continue to abide in Jesus Christ in my daily life?

Group Contextual Sharing Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- How can we make our love for one another more evident in our community?
- How can we support one another through times of pruning and trials?

For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- What are the fruits of our ministry that we can identify?
- How can we ensure that we remain loving to everyone when we encounter difficult individuals in the course of our ministry?

For Family

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.

- The family is the school of love. How then can we better love each other?
- How can we be patient and understanding when our family members go through times of pruning and struggle?

Take Home

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

Let us abide in Christ through loving one another and keeping His commandments.

Doing Your Bit

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

Invite the person or persons that you have been thinking about and praying for to your gathering.

Closing Prayer

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

Our Father in Heaven, we thank You for the gift of Your Word. It is through the living of Your Word that we can bear fruit. Your Word, our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, enables us to love each other through our words and actions. As we bear fruit, we give testimony to Your everlasting love and care for us. All these are possible through Your labour of love. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Alleluia. Amen.

My Easter Reflection Journal

6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Witnessing a Love Like No Other



Opening Prayer

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

Gracious Father, You know us through and through, and You love each of us with an unconditional love. It is only in Your unconditional love for us that we can go forth to love others in return. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Readings:

The three Scripture readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.

Next, the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

Commentaries for:

1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

We hear in this first reading that “God does not have favourites.” This is a very consoling statement: each of us is considered worthy of God our Father’s attention and affection. “The Holy Spirit came down on all listeners”; this affirms the previous statement, that if the ears of our hearts are open and welcome the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will come down upon us. We recall powerfully that the Holy Spirit is the intimate bond of love between the Father and the Son. How blessed are we for being worthy of this intimate bond of divine love, and how wonderful our hearts are for being capable of this amazing treat?

2nd Reading: 1 John 4:7-10

“Not our love for God, but God’s love for us”; this is a very telling statement to remind us that love can only be understood, appreciated, and experienced as God our Father’s love, coming from Him who IS love. When we choose to define “love” according to our standards, we cannot impose this definition on others, as we are not the reference point of love. Thus, we must turn to God our Father as the only concrete reference point of love. We remember that love is not a “what” but a “who.” Jesus Christ, His Son, who, in true and perfect love, gave us the only possession He had; His life.

Gospel: John 15:9-17

“My own joy may be in you and your joy be complete”; again, what a mind-blowing statement of the capacity of the human soul to take in divine joy, which fills us completely and perfectly. We are made for joyful love! This is indeed Jesus’ command: that you love one another as I have loved you. (Jn 15:12) His being and doing are one and the same: to love. This love is also sacrificial; a love that benefits another, a love that heals another, a love that fills another. This is the only love worth receiving and giving.

Reflections

Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

Love never dies, and Jesus' resurrection shows exactly that; true love lives on even if it is persecuted and attacked. This gives us hope that the sacrifices we make for others and the risks we take to build bridges of kindness will not go to waste. Every single effort, whether recognised or not, is a "yes" to the command of God our Father to simply love, and each "yes" to love expands our hearts just that little bit more each time. This is the *Capax Dei* (capacity for God) that St. Bonaventure talks about – we humans have a capacity to receive some depth of the richness of God our Father, to receive His love as true love because He is Love, and we are made in His image.

On the 6th Sunday of Easter, our readings emphasise that this love and joy come from God our Father, not from ourselves. Our purpose and destiny as humans are revealed only when we truly attempt to love, as we are made in the image of love and hence are capable of loving. Our hearts are made for love, capable of love, and burning with love.

This flame of love lives on, especially amidst the darkness of suffering and death. Our Lord Jesus did not just conquer but also redeemed suffering and death, paving the way for us to embrace suffering and death with an unimaginable and indescribable hope. This hope is meant for all of humanity. By clinging onto this hope amidst the darkness, we will come to experience the peace and joy of the Lord.

Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Everyone to reflect silently on the questions below. Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.

Speak about what struck you in the passages of Scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.

- How has my deep encounter with the Risen Lord influenced the way I perceive and live life?
- In moments of trial and darkness, how can I cling on to the complete joy of the Risen Lord?

Group Contextual Sharing Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- How are we called to witness to and radiate the love of the Risen Lord to the people in our neighbourhood?

- How can we help each other recognise the presence of God our Father's love in our lives?

For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- In our service of God's people, how has our ministry shown God our Father's love and joy?
- How can we, as a ministry, deepen the love that we have for the people we serve despite the challenges we face?

For Family

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.

- How do we show the love of the Lord to one another?
- Can we love more as a family? What small steps can we take to achieve this?

Take Home

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

Christ loved us to the end, and thus we have joy to the full. It is up to us to accept and live this love.

Doing Your Bit

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

Have a gathering of friends and speak about the newness of your life and how you would like to continue growing in this way. Invite the person or persons to follow you to a Pentecost rally, such as the one organised by SACCRE (Singapore Archdiocesan Catholic Charismatic Renewal).

Closing Prayer

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

Father, most loving, Your Son, Jesus Christ, bore the greatest testimony by dying for us on the cross. In Jesus, our God died for us. The darkness of the tomb and the darkness of our lives are overcome by His resurrection. The power of Your love never dies, even though we sometimes forget our own pain and struggles. We know that by following Jesus Christ, we will powerfully witness the new life Jesus Christ has wrought for us. We continue to give You praise and glory through the most holy and precious name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord. Alleluia. Amen.

My Easter Reflection Journal

7TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Witnessing The Church of God



Opening Prayer

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

God our Father, our society and Church are constantly beset with troubles and temptations towards divisions. Our Lord Jesus prayed that we may be one as You and Jesus are one. In this oneness in the Trinity, the resurrection of our Lord took place. Oneness is a mark of Your Church. We know that we can be one as Your light shines in our minds so that we can stay together and bear witness to the holiness of Your Church. Amen.

Readings:

The three Scripture readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.

Next, the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

Commentaries for:

1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 1:15-17, 20-26

As the leader of the early church, Peter calls upon the community to replace Judas as the twelfth apostle. The significance of this event is hinted at by the seemingly unnecessary detail that there are 120 people in the crowd. The point here is not to describe the size of the community. Instead, this is a sign of wholeness. There were 12 tribes in ancient Israel, and the Church was about to become the new Israel. Thus, it is important that the number of apostles, all of whom participated in Jesus's ministry, be restored to 12. It is also noteworthy that the approach to this selection involves both human recommendation and faith in divine choice.

2nd Reading: 1 John 4:11-16

This famous passage on Christian love reformulates the commandments to love both God our Father and our neighbour in a way unique to John. There is no separation between the love of God

our Father and the love of neighbour. Rather, our love for God our Father is expressed through our love for our neighbour. In turn, that love becomes the only sure sign that the invisible God is present in us through the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, John makes a clear link between faith and love: if we believe in Jesus, the Son of God, we can have confidence that God our Father loves us. This faith ought to move us to love one another.

Gospel: John 17:11-19

This passage is part of the famous farewell discourse of Jesus that runs from chapters 14 to 17 of the Gospel of John. John's signature dualism is recognisable in this passage. Jesus clearly segregates His disciples and Himself from the world. In fact, they stand as contradictions against the world. It is important to understand that the "world" doesn't refer to all of God's creation, which is good, but only that which is under the dominion of evil, that which rejects the Creator. An important theme that runs throughout Jesus' prayer is wholeness and unity. He asks the Father to keep His disciples united as one. He asserts that no one was lost except Judas ("the one who chose to be lost"). Most importantly, He explains His death as a return to God our Father, with whom He is united as one.

Reflections

Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

Whenever we recite “The Creed” during the Eucharistic Celebration, we profess to believe in one Church. Unity, then, is a fundamental character of God’s people. This quality of the Church features prominently in the Gospel reading when we read of Jesus asking God our Father to protect His disciples so that they remain as one even after His death. In effect, falling apart would demonstrate victory for the evil one, while unity is a sign of submission to God our Father’s power.

Indeed, the scattering of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel in the Old Testament due to invading armies might seem like the downfall of God our Father’s chosen people there and then. God our Father’s plan took centuries to bear fruit because of our slow response to His love. The selection of Matthias as the twelfth apostle, as we read in the first reading from the Acts of Apostles, restores the wholeness of the early Church. It has now become a new Israel, with the twelve apostles standing for the twelve tribes. God’s plan ultimately is not frustrated, and the Church has held together for more than 2,000 years.

Even so, we must not take this grace of unity for granted. The second reading tells us that God our Father dwells in us if we love one another. We need to build and maintain a culture of love in the Church if God our Father is to remain in us and preserve our wholeness. Love and unity, then, bear witness to His presence and power for all the world to see. In this time of bitter divisions, here and elsewhere, this is what societies across the world urgently need to see: the Church as an example to follow and a sign of hope.

Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Everyone to reflect silently on the questions below. Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.

Speak about what struck you in the passages of Scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.

- How am I united to the Church of Jesus Christ?
- What might bearing witness to the Church's unity look like in my life?

Group Contextual Sharing Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- How do we bring about reconciliation within our community in times of division and conflict?
- How can we bolster unity in our community?

For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- How do we bring about reconciliation within our ministry in times of division and conflict?
- How can unity come about in our ministry?

For Family

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.

- What causes divisions and conflicts in our family?
- What are the ways that we can overcome these divisions in our family?

Take Home

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

Unity is a mark of the Church that we must preserve by loving one another, through which we become a beacon of light to the world.

Doing Your Bit

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

Get together as friends (same as the first two weeks) and discuss what else you can do to encourage the people you had invited for the rally or some other events leading up to Pentecost or Pentecost itself.

Closing Prayer

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

God our Father, our Lord Jesus beseeched You that the Church remains as one, just as You and He are one. Despite divisions all around us, the example of unity in the Holy Trinity continues to be an example for us to work towards. We know that by being faithful to the commandment of our Risen Lord to love one another, we witness to Your unity and oneness. Through the power of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we will always bear witness to Your power and grace as Easter people. Alleluia. Amen.

My Easter Reflection Journal

PENTECOST

Witnessing The Holy Spirit



Opening Prayer

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

Almighty Father, You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit to redeem us and restore our communion with You. As we have rejoiced in the resurrection of Your Son, we know that the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to be witnesses, proclaimers, and examples of Your love, will be present to us. The Spirit inspired the early Church to teach the Gospel. May this same Spirit continue to work in the world through the lives of all Your disciples. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Readings:

The three Scripture readings and their accompanying commentaries must be read out loud, allowing some time for silent reflection.

Next, the readings are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given commentaries. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior to the meeting.

Commentaries for:

1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

At Pentecost, Jerusalem was crowded because it was the Jewish feast of Shavout, or “Weeks,” celebrated seven weeks after the Passover. It was a harvest festival and a commemoration of God our Father giving the Israelites the Law at Mount Sinai. Thousands of pilgrims would bring the first fruits of their harvests to present at the temple. Yet in a small upper room, God our Father was granting a different harvest. As the Lord gave the Law to the Israelites, He now gives the Holy Spirit to the apostles. The apostles now receive the mandate to share the Good News of God our Father’s redemption with everyone.

2nd Reading: Galatians 5:16-25

“... if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law.” writes Paul to the Galatians. Paul wrote this letter in the context of a major conflict in the church at Galatia. Paul had converted a group of pagans in the city to Christianity. However, other missionaries to the land insisted that one had to observe all the Jewish laws in order to be a faithful Christian. Paul was insistent that the Law was no longer binding on Christians. It is the grace of the Holy Spirit that enables a person to live for God our Father. Salvation cannot be attained by following a law purely by one’s own power.

Gospel: John 15:26-27; 16:12-15

Similar to last week, this Sunday’s Gospel is part of the Gospel of John known as the farewell discourse. The disciples are understandably upset to learn that Jesus will be leaving them, but Jesus did not intend to leave them alone. The Holy Spirit (the Advocate) was to remain with them and be the presence of the divine in their lives forever. While the disciples lose Jesus in His physical presence, they will have the Holy Spirit in His spiritual presence. It must come as a great comfort to Jesus’ followers and to all of us that we have such an assurance that God our Father is with us.

Reflections

Another person reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

In His final address to His disciples, Jesus promises that they will receive the Holy Spirit and tells them what the Holy Spirit will do for them.

First, the Holy Spirit will make them witnesses of God's salvation. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences explained that the mission of Christians in Asia is to bear witness to the love of God our Father. In a continent of great religions and cultures, of dire poverty alongside huge economic growth, we Christians are called to share the love of God with those in need. This is not a mission that we can accomplish with our own strength. Jesus promised His disciples and us that we would always be strengthened and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Second, the Holy Spirit will help the disciples know and understand the Truth. We cannot be expected to understand all of Jesus' teachings at once. Also, as times change, we are constantly challenged to discern the right path ahead. It is very reassuring to hear Jesus' promise that "when the

Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth." We have the assurance that God our Father will never allow the Church to lose faith or fall into error.

After the Paschal Triduum, the feast of Pentecost is the biggest celebration of the Church and signals the end of the Easter season. We now begin Ordinary Time, but in our faith, no time is ordinary after our experience of God's salvation in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has empowered us to be witnesses to what God our Father has done. The apostles had locked themselves in a room out of fear but were transformed when they received the Holy Spirit. They went out and became witnesses to the new life that they had been given in Christ. We are sent to do the same.

Sharing Questions:

This section is divided into Personal and Group Contextual sharing. The latter is meant to prompt sharing based on the specific context, i.e. Small Christian Communities, Ministry or Family. Allow time to reflect on these questions and time for everyone to respond.

Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

Everyone to reflect silently on the questions below. Then, share your reflections if you are in a group.

Speak about what struck you in the passages of Scripture and how you can share the Word of God with others.

- Where is the Holy Spirit in my life? Do I actively seek His guidance in what I say and do?
- How can I ensure that I listen to the Holy Spirit in all that I do?

Group Contextual Sharing Questions

You may wish to reflect on one of the following questions according to your context.

For Small Christian Communities

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a community.

- Is the Holy Spirit present in our community gathering and sharing? What can we do to invite His presence?
- In what direction is the Holy Spirit guiding us with regard to our neighbourhood?

For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a ministry.

- Have we devoted time to praying with the Holy Spirit for His guidance and direction? How can we ensure that our ministry actively seeks His guidance?
- Are the fruits of the Holy Spirit evident in our ministry?

For Family

We talk about what struck us in the passages of Scripture and how we can share the Word of God as a family.

- Pope Francis says, “It is the Spirit who lets us speak with people in fraternal dialogue; to speak with tenderness, compassion, and understanding.” How is this present in the dialogue in our family?
- Have we given the right of place to the Holy Spirit in our family life? What steps can we take to invite Him to move into our home?

Take Home

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

We have taken the Holy Spirit for granted and not included Him seriously in our journey as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Doing Your Bit

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

Ask your friends about their experiences of the rally. Invite them to join you in your community sharing and growth sessions (if you have any).

Closing Prayer

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

Loving Father, You know us and know what we need, and in Your providence, You sent us the Holy Spirit to be our guide and our advocate. Through His gifts, we can bear fruit for Your Kingdom and be pleasing in Your sight. By the gifts of the Holy Spirit and following the example of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, we can be witnesses of Your love. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, our Advocate. Alleluia. Amen.

My Easter Reflection Journal

Easter Activities

Celebrating Sundays of Easter

Easter Sunday (31 March 2024)

Together with family and friends, let us be ready and watchful as we celebrate the Easter Vigil as one Body in Christ.

2nd Sunday of Easter: Divine Mercy Sunday (7 April 2024)

Gather your family, ministry, or community members and pray the Divine Mercy chaplet. We lift up in this prayer those who are most in need of His mercy.

3rd Sunday of Easter (14 April 2024)

Read the Hari Raya message from the Vatican or the Archbishop of Singapore. At this time, we join the Church in our prayers for universal solidarity and mutual respect.

4th Sunday of Easter: Good Shepherd Sunday (21 April 2024)

Pray for a priest in the archdiocese for 365 days starting from this Vocation Sunday.

5th Sunday of Easter (28 April 2024)

Leading up to the Feast Day of St. Joseph, we implore the intercession of St. Joseph the Worker. Let us honour the men in our lives and pray that he may become our role model in our family life and work.

6th Sunday of Easter (5 May 2024)

Begin a nine-day (from May 10 to 18, 2024) novena prayer to the Holy Spirit on the day after Ascension Thursday.

7th Sunday of Easter: World Day of Social Communications & Mother's Day (12 May 2024)

Read the Holy Father Francis' message for the 58th World Communications Day: Artificial intelligence and wisdom of the heart: for a fully human communication.

Offer a spiritual bouquet to our Blessed Virgin Mary by praying a rosary. We pray especially for all mothers and especially for those who are trying to conceive.

Pentecost (19 May 2024)

Prepare a music playlist for Pentecost and play it in the background as you go about your week. Alternatively, you can listen to CatholicSG Radio. Sing along whenever the Holy Spirit moves you.

Easter Activities

Family Easter Activity: Faith Seedlings

Use this family Easter activity to sprout a seed this spring as the perfect reminder of the new life we have in Jesus as His children.

You will need:

- seeds
- paper towels
- plastic bag
- water
- a Bible

Methods:

1. Have each of your family members place four seeds in a folded piece of paper towel.
2. Place the paper towel and seeds inside a plastic bag. Leave the plastic bag open.
3. Moisten (but do not over-water) the towels and place the seed baggies in a sunny area.
4. Have different family members care for the seedlings each day.
5. Read aloud 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 and discuss how your family's seedlings are like or unlike each family member's faith growth and development.

Easter Activities

Celebrating Pentecost - Tongues of Fire – Mobile Sheet

Adapted from William H. Sadlier, Inc.

Bring the Good News of Jesus out into the world by making a mobile to show what you will do!

Materials:

1. Clothes hanger or a stick
2. Thread
3. Red coloured construction paper
4. Marker or pens

Methods:

1. Scan this QR code to download the flames



2. Print the flames on the construction paper.
3. Cut out the flames and decorate the flame with words or symbols that describe how you will use a gift of the Holy Spirit to spread the Good News of Jesus to others.
4. Punch a hole in the top of the flame and run a thread through it.
5. Knot the thread and hang the flame on a clothes hanger or stick.

WHAT COULD WE HAVE DONE BETTER?

Thanks for using this booklet! We hope that the reflections have helped you and your community to grow in faith. Did this booklet meet your expectations? What else would you like to see in future booklets? Your feedback is important to us. Let us know!



one.org.sg/feedback

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