

*Entering into Christ's Passion:*

*A Journey  
through Holy Week*

*Leader Guide*

*A reflection on the Gospel of Luke*



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# Chapter 1

## Palm Sunday (Leader's Guide)

Luke 19:28-40

### **What's going on?**

The Palm Sunday passage is the culmination of what is known as Jesus' "travel narrative" which begins all the way back in Luke 9:51 when Jesus "sets His face toward Jerusalem." From here until His entry into the Holy City, Jesus goes about His journey preaching about the coming of His Father's Kingdom through parables and instruction. Throughout the entire journey however, His disciples who are with Him never seem to quite understand why they're headed to Jerusalem or what's going to happen when they get there. It's easy for us to look at the apostles in light of all of Jesus' Gospel references to His passion and think, "Come on guys, you've been traveling with Jesus all this time and you still don't have a clue do you?" But do *we* really understand why the passion had to take place the way it did?

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- 1 **Read Luke 9:51-56.** Here, Jesus “sets His face” to travel to Jerusalem. Before He goes however, He sends messengers before Him to prepare His way in every town He will visit along the way. Why do you think He does this?

This is an interesting question. Try to really get their opinions on it. One thought is that a king would always send messengers before him to prepare his way. This is one of many ways Jesus is showing His Kingship. It is also an insight into the ways God actively calls us to action in the coming about of His Kingdom. This theme will play out through the next couple of questions.

- 2 **Read Luke 9:52-56.** In what ways does Jesus call us to be His messengers?

How can the witness of our faith plant a seed in the soul of someone else? There are so many ways that we can be examples in the lives of others. As Christians, whether we realize it or not, people are watching us. Many people around us every day who have never heard the good news of the Gospel are dying to hear it. Jesus calls us to bring His Good News to the world.

- 3 Do you think that Christ sends messengers before us to prepare our way? Have you ever felt like someone was looking out for you or preparing your way?

As Christians, we believe that in Baptism, Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit takes up real residence in our hearts. Moreover, when we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, we carry with us the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus. In a sense, we become like Christ for the rest of the world. **Try and convey the power of this.** Surely, if we are called to be Christ to the world, messengers would be sent to prepare His way within us!

**What does that mean?** At this moment, there are countless angels at work in the world. In fact, each of us have at least one angel with us at all times. A messenger can come in many different types. Try to share a story of yourself or someone else who has experienced the intervention of a guardian angel.

- 4 **Read Luke 17:24-25 and 18:31-33.** What is Jesus trying to tell His disciples in these verses? Do they understand Him?

Jesus is warning the disciples in these verses that He must go to Jerusalem to “suffer and die.” He is telling them that He must do this in order to fulfill the scriptures and the prophets. In Luke 18:34, we’re told that Jesus’ disciples don’t understand Him. **Compare with Luke 9:23.** If we are to sincerely follow Christ and be His disciples, we too must take up our crosses and follow after Him.

- 5 **Luke 19:33-39.** Jesus seems to enter Jerusalem in a somewhat unusual way, yet all of the bystanders seem to know exactly what’s going on. Why do you think this is?

**Why Jerusalem?** This is an important point. Jerusalem wasn’t an arbitrary location for Jesus to fulfill His mission; in fact, it really couldn’t have been done any other way.

Throughout the history of Israel, kings always ruled from the city of Jerusalem. It was the home of the temple, the city of the prophets and the crossroads of all Hebrew commerce. Picture Wall Street, Washington DC, and Vatican City all rolled into one and you get an idea of the importance of the ancient city. Jesus wasn’t merely going for the dramatic symbolism though. Israel had been without the aforementioned king for generations. Jesus was the King of kings coming home to claim His throne.

6 How does Jesus still come to us today?

This passage is rich with symbolism. Split up 1 Kings 1:38-40, Zechariah 9:9, 2 Kings 9:13, and Psalm 118:26. These are the Old Testament prophecies and events that foreshadow Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Any educated Jew in the time of Christ would have remembered King Solomon riding a donkey to his coronation in 1 Kings. Likewise, they would have recognized the prophet Zechariah proclaiming that the Messiah would do the very same thing. The whole Jewish people had been waiting on the edge of their seats for generations in expectation of the Messiah. So when they saw these prophesied signs they not only lay their garments on the road mirroring the action of the crowd at Jehu's coronation in 2 Kings, but they also cry out a blessing from the temple procession found in Psalm 118. Surely they thoughtfully understood Jesus to be the long awaited biblical Messiah.

7 What is *our* response to Him?

**Read Luke 19:38.** Ask if the crowd's exclamation sounds familiar. In fact, it is the *Benedictus*; part of the *Sanctus*; one of the Eucharistic prayers the Church uses in the Mass.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger ties the Palm Sunday exultation and our prayer in the mass together in a powerful way. Both are greetings to Jesus as He comes to us - on Palm Sunday, riding a donkey - and at Mass, under the appearances of bread and wine.

*“When the youths of Jerusalem shout this verse to Jesus, they are greeting Him as the Messiah, as the king of the last days who enters the Holy City and the temple to take possession of them...the Benedictus is meaningful both as an approach to the consecration and as an acclamation to the Lord who has become present in the Eucharistic species. The great moment of His coming, the immensity of His real Presence in the elements of the earth, definitely call for a response.”*

☞ **Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*.**

You will want to share this in light of **Questions 7 & 8**. Jesus comes to us in many ways, but especially through the sacraments and, in particular, the Eucharist. Do we acknowledge Christ in the Eucharist as surely as if He were standing before us physically? If not, what causes us to struggle? Get the students to really see that Jesus is just as present in the Mass as He was on Palm Sunday - more, in fact.

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## Chapter 2

### In Jerusalem (Leader's Guide)

Luke 19:47-22:6

- 1 **Read Luke 19:41-42.** As Jesus nears the Holy City of Jerusalem, He weeps for it. Why do you think Jesus is weeping?

We can speculate on a number of reasons that Jesus, upon His entry to Jerusalem, is weeping. Have the students read a few verses further. In **verses 43-44**, Jesus proceeds to prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem, which, many scholars say, happened in 70 AD - only a few decades after Jesus' passion.

**Compare with: Luke 21:5-6 and Luke 21:10-28.**

These are awfully intense verses. Many have interpreted these to represent the events of the last days. The Church believes this to be true, but also sees another meaning. Jesus, in a real and immediate way, was predicting the things which were to take place in the decades after His Passion. Jerusalem *was* taken over and destroyed by the gentiles; and the early Christians *were* persecuted, put on trial, and put to death. As if that wasn't enough, He was foreseeing His own passion and death and knew that many of those praising Him would soon turn against Him. As He entered Jerusalem that day, Jesus must have foreseen all of this.

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*“On the threshold of His passion Jesus announced the destruction of this splendid building, of which there would not remain ‘one stone upon another.’ By doing so, He announced a sign of the last days which were to begin with His own Passover. But this prophecy would be distorted in its telling by false witnesses during His interrogation at the high priest’s house and would be thrown back at Him as an insult when He was nailed to the cross.” CCC 585*

**Ask:** What do you think Jesus’ thoughts were as He entered into Jerusalem foreseeing His passion and death and the persecution of those who would follow Him?

-Do you think Jesus was weeping for the sin of those who were to betray Him and for Jerusalem’s impending destruction?

-Try to really get the students to feel the fear and hurt that Jesus must have been experiencing knowing the people praising Him would soon turn against Him

- 2 Have you ever been betrayed by someone you loved? Describe your reaction to that betrayal.

This would be a good place for a personal story. Get the students to share their own.

- 3 Christ knew that He was to be betrayed more deeply than we could ever imagine by His own beloved creation. His reaction isn’t anger. It’s tremendous sadness. Is Jesus weeping for Himself or for His betrayers? What do you think about His response?

We often look at the lives of others and think, “At least I’m not as bad as *that*.” What’s more, if someone wrongs us, our natural reaction tends to be anger—not hurt for the person. Jesus’ reaction seems completely foreign to much of our own common logic. Have someone **read Luke 13:34-35**. **Ask** what the students think about the kind of love that Jesus has for His people in these verses.

**Ask:** Do we ever use the sin of others to justify our own actions (I could be much worse)?

-***What would it be like to see our sin as God sees it?*** Bishop Robert Morlino of Madison, Wisconsin once said that grace allows us to see that

“my sin is much worse than I thought - it nailed Christ to the cross, but because of Christ’s love, I’m much better off than I thought.”

- 4 **Read Luke 19:45-46.** Immediately upon entering Jerusalem, Jesus heads straight for the Temple. When He reaches it, He acts in a way we might not expect. What does Jesus do and why?

Jesus has very good reason for His actions. He was angry at what was happening to His Father’s house.

*“Jesus went up to the Temple as the privileged place of encounter with God. For Him, the Temple was the dwelling place of His Father, a house of prayer, and He was angered that its outer court had become a place of commerce. He drove the merchants out of it because of jealous love for His Father: ‘You shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade.’ His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’ After His Resurrection His apostles retained their reverence for the Temple” (CCC 584).*

Jesus was upset because those who were supposed to be followers of His Father were insulting the Father through their actions. The temple was meant to be a gathering place for people of all nations to come to know the one true God (Isaiah 56:7). The people were now using it as a place for their own benefit. They wanted the temple to be the crown jewel of the Jewish people, not an invitation for all people to know God. It had become a symbol of Israel’s superiority. As the Catechism says, Jesus’ anger is justified because it was based out of love of the Father and desire for all of His lost children to be brought home.

*“Rather than being a source of bringing in the Gentiles, the temple in Jesus’ day had become a source of keeping them out. No other institution stood out more as Israel’s identity marker, setting the Jews apart from the non-Jews. An inscription over the entryway to the temple’s inner courts made the point crystal clear: ‘No alien may enter within the barrier and wall around the temple. Whoever is caught is alone responsible for the death that follows.’”*

☞ **Edward Sri, *Mystery of the Kingdom***

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- 5 Have you ever invited someone to be a guest in your home and felt as though they abused your invitation? What was your response?

They could not capture Jesus because all those who loved and followed Him hung closely to Him.

- 6 **Read Luke 19:47-48.** We see here that Jesus' enemies are ready to put Him to death. According to these verses, what prevents them?

This verse seems to suggest safety when we cling close to Christ and when His followers cling close to each other. Just as we saw that there are angels protecting us and surrounding us in the last chapter, countless representative of the evil one are constantly desiring our destruction. Our only protection is our closeness to Christ and our reliance on the prayer and support of others. Really emphasize the message of the charcoal analogy.

- 7 What does this tell us about our need to cling close to Jesus? What might it tell us about the need to support one another in our faith?

# Chapter 3

## Holy Thursday (Leader's Guide)

Luke 22:1-65

- 1 **Read Luke 22:3-6.** What do we catch Judas doing in this passage?

We find Judas in the act of betraying Jesus. We are told that Judas betrayed Jesus for only 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15). Even in Jesus' day, this wasn't much money. Judas' heart was bought out for an embarrassingly small amount.

- 2 We often betray God for things that are fleeting and insignificant. What are some of those things we choose every day over God?

Use examples from your own life here and try to get the students talking practically about this. **Ask:** What are specific things college students struggle with in this area?

Examples: School (grades), sports, boyfriend/girlfriend, friends, images we give to ourselves (parties, drinking, sex).

- 3 Read stories of Judas, **Luke 22:3-6, Matthew 27:3-5**, and Peter, **Luke 22:54-62, John 21:4-7**. What similarities do you see in Peter and Judas? What are the differences?
- 4 What was the major difference between Judas and Peter? Do you think the same forgiveness was available to Judas as was to Peter, or was Judas' situation different? Why or why not?

**Questions 3 and 4:** The simple similarity between Judas and Peter is that they both betrayed our Lord. They may have done it in different manners, but the basic intent of both was putting themselves before God. Judas chose himself over God with monetary gain and looking good in the sight of others. Peter chose to protect himself from harm rather than risk danger and trust that God would care for him if he put God first. You might want to share this passage from the Catechism, which suggests that all sin is essentially rooted in the same thing:

*“Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God’s command. This is what man’s first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in His goodness.”*

☞ CCC 397

When we sin, we essentially lose trust that our God wants our best and we choose to follow after the things that we want rather than the things God wants for us.

**The difference** between Peter and Judas was their response upon realizing their sin. Peter “wept bitterly” upon this realization. But later, when Jesus returned, Peter rushed to His Lord as quickly as he could. He knew that Jesus would take him back if he asked, or at least he wanted to try. Judas, on the other hand, saw no redemption for himself. He chose suicide because he saw no way God would take him back. Judas let his trust in his Creator die twice; first, by not believing that Jesus was worth more than the 30 pieces of silver and the respect of the church leaders, and secondly by not believing God had enough love to forgive him.

The forgiveness offered to Judas and Peter was the same. It’s also the same forgiveness offered to all of us. **Emphasize the significance of this!** Though the effects of our sins are all different, God wants to forgive us *no matter what we’ve done*. Judas, like all of us, could have had forgiveness if he had asked for it. **Are we ever too ashamed to ask God for His forgiveness?**

- 5 **Read Luke 15:2 and 5:29-30.** Meals play a significant role in Luke's Gospel and in the ancient world. Here we find Jesus dining with people who many would have found to be less than desirable diner companion. Why exactly do you think the Pharisees are so appalled by Jesus' choice of dining companions?

Jesus is making a tremendous familial statement about His relationship to these people by eating with them. By dining with sinners, Jesus is inviting them to a family bond with Him. As a popular teacher and Rabbi, the Pharisees see Jesus going directly against Jewish teaching about whom one could and could not eat with. He seemed to be completely abandoning the Jewish law.

It's commonly assumed that the Pharisees were criticizing Jesus because they were self-righteous snobs. This may well be true, but some Biblical scholars suggest there might be more to the story. Though a little hypocritical, the Pharisees may have had some good intentions. The main thrust of Pharisee thinking was this: Israel had gone astray and abandoned God time and time again. This caused the whole nation to lose favor with God; thus resulting in their slavery to the Romans. If the people lost favor with God by breaking the commandments and the law, then the Pharisees deduced that the only way to gain back acceptance was to keep the Old Testament law *to the letter*, exactly the opposite of Israel's checkered past. Without the light of Divine Revelation from Christ, all the Pharisees had to go on was their knowledge of the law and the people's failure to keep it.

As for dining practices, the law instructed against eating with sinners for the simple reason that Israel tended to give in pretty easily to peer pressure; that is, when the people ate or dwelt with sinners, they usually fell into the same sin. The dietary laws were put in place to help Israel keep out of trouble.

The Pharisees knew their history and firmly believed that the only way Israel could get their place back in the Kingdom of God was to hold *strictly* to the law.

- 6 Do you think it's difficult for our culture to understand the significance of meals in the time of Christ which the above passage discusses? Why or why not?

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We live in a “fast food” culture in which few of us ever really have time to sit down for a meal. Most of the time we eat on the go. **Ask:** How many of the students were raised in families in which sitting down together for meals was a priority.

Jesus says that it is the sick who need a doctor-essentially that He has come to heal.

- 7 **Read Luke 5:31-32.** Jesus explains why it is that He is dining with the people He is. What is His explanation?

Initially, God gave Israel the responsibility to be His representative and messenger to all of the nations. At one time, the people of Israel were *supposed* to be dining with and hanging around sinners so they could introduce them to God. The problem was, as we have seen, the people were too weak and too easily influenced. Jesus was different. He was God. Jesus didn't need to worry about falling into the sins of the sinners and tax collectors. He came to do the job that Israel couldn't do--to bring news of healing to the sick, sight to the blind and freedom to the captive. By sharing the Gospel with the sinners and the sick, Jesus was fulfilling the commission originally given to Israel and reuniting the family.

- 8 Go back to **Luke 22:14-15.** In light of the three previous questions, why do you think Jesus is so desirous to eat the Passover meal with His disciples?

Jesus is about to institute the Eucharist. This act will invite all of us from that time on to not only dine with Jesus but to receive Him as our food. The meals Jesus eats in Luke's gospel are not isolated incidents. They are foreshadows of the Eucharistic meal He “eagerly desires” to eat with all of us. We are all the sick that Jesus came to heal. Ask the students what they think about the invitation Christ presents to all of us to dine with Him in the Eucharist. Go back to the Tim Gray quote and show that this means His desire is to truly draw us into His family and unite Himself to us in a tremendously powerful way.

# Chapter 4

## Good Friday (Leader's Guide)

Luke 22:66-23:56

After Jesus is betrayed by Judas on Holy Thursday, He is arrested and led off to fulfill the saving work that He had foreseen long ago. This is the day that the angels wept, that the veil in the Temple was ripped in two and the day that changed the world forever.

- 1 **Read Luke 23:1-2.** The people here say that Jesus refused to let them give tribute to Caesar. Do you think that this is a surprising statement to come from the mouth of a Jewish person living in Jesus' time? If so, why?

For the Jewish people of Jesus' time, Caesar was the representation of everything they were trying to overcome. The Roman Empire had been controlling the Jewish people for years and they longed to be free of Roman rule. In fact, the common belief was that the coming messiah would free the Jewish people from Caesar and the Romans and re-establish the Jewish kingdom. In a nutshell, there was no one they would love more *not* to give tribute to than Caesar. You might say that they would have *wanted* a messiah who forbid them to "give tribute to Caesar." But in fact, because of the hardness of their hearts, they turned on the true Messiah and chose to remain in captivity rather than accept the freedom which Christ would offer. We do this every day. The following questions look more deeply into how we do this.

- 2 In what ways do we act like the little child Lewis describes in the above passage?

Lewis gives another example of this in his book *The Great Divorce*. He speaks of a man who would “like well to be able to scratch; but even when he can scratch no more he’d rather itch than not.” That is to say, we would rather choose the comfort of the things which hold us down because we are used to them - they become comfortable. We choose to turn down the satisfaction of scratching because we can’t imagine what it’s like not to itch.

This applies greatly to a life in Christ. **Ask:** what areas in our lives do we have a hard time giving over to Christ and why is it so difficult to give them up? Does Lewis’ analogy apply to your life? Do we become overly comfortable in our sin or complacency? What are the aspects of our lives that we want to keep all to ourselves?

- 3 Do you think Lewis’ analogy applies to the people in the crowd wanting to crucify Jesus? What is it about Jesus that they cannot accept?

- 5 Are you surprised at the fickleness of the crowd wanting to crucify Jesus? After all, these same people were waving palm branches and proclaiming Him as Messiah just days before.

**Questions 3 & 5:** Try to really probe the question of why the people turned on Jesus. Just a few days prior, they were waving palm branches and seemed ready to coronate Him. What was it about the events of the days in between that caused such a drastic change? **Ideas to start discussion:** The people were expecting a militaristic messiah who would conquer the Romans who were holding the Jews in captivity; crowd mentality - people following the lead of others who wanted Jesus crucified; lies spread about Jesus. What of these or other factors led to the crowd’s sudden change of heart?

4 What do we have a hard time accepting?

Try to really probe this one. Use the C.S. Lewis passage to try and show that Jesus is a person who demands a decision of us. We cannot call Him merely a “good man” or a “good teacher.” This would be a good place for a piece of personal testimony if applicable. Jesus called Himself God (John 8:56-58, John 14:6, John 10:30). If He really called Himself God, then as Lewis says, He was either lying to us; He was a crazy man who we should write off; or He was telling the truth. **Emphasize:** as Lewis said, Jesus didn’t leave us room for another option. We must make a decision about Him. What is our decision?

6 Have you ever heard Jesus referred to as the “Lamb of God?” Have you ever wondered why we call Him this? Why do you think we do?

You might want to go back to the story of the Passover in **Exodus 12: 1-13**. The point of the Passover in Exodus was that the nation of Israel was freed from its captivity in Egypt. They had been a nation in slavery. Only by sacrificing a “spotless, blemish-free” lamb and eating it’s flesh, could they be freed. The Church believes that this is a clear foreshadowing of the saving work of Christ generations later. Most of us know the Passover story at least in a vague way. But have you ever wondered why the Israelites had to sacrifice a *lamb*? What was the significance of a lamb? As we saw in the last chapter, Israel had a bad habit of falling into the sin of those it was around. The Egyptians worshiped a plethora of different gods. One of them was the lamb. Israel, having been in Egyptian captivity for hundreds of years, had started to worship some of the gods of the Egyptians. As the saying goes, “When in Rome, do as the Romans.” The act of sacrificing a lamb and spreading the blood on the doorpost for all to see was a symbol of the Israelites abandoning their adherence to this false god. It would be similar to an alcoholic taking a bottle of liquor and smashing it in the street to show that he would no longer be held by his addiction.

Hundreds of years later, Jesus would take the whole sin of the world on Himself and allow Himself to be crucified with it in order to set His people free. It was the greatest act of emancipation in history. Israel’s

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freedom from slavery in Egypt by the sacrifice of a lamb foreshadowed our own freedom from the slavery of sin by the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb.

**Ask** the students if they see a connection with the Eucharist here. For the Passover to be complete, we are told in Exodus that the family had to *eat* the lamb. If Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb and its fulfillment, then it makes sense that we would eat His body.

- 7 **Read Luke 23:3-5.** What kind of significance do you think Pilate's statement holds for us?

Pilate says that he "finds no fault" with Jesus. In other words, He is clean. In **Exodus 12:5**, we saw that the Passover lamb was to be free of blemish. In Jewish culture, the high priests of the church would spend the week prior to the Passover examining the lambs to be sacrificed to be sure they were clean and "without blemish." We have seen that the Pharisees and church leaders spent the week leading up to Good Friday questioning and scrutinizing Jesus. On Good Friday, Pilate, without realizing what he is saying declares Jesus clean and therefore ready to be sacrificed. He essentially gives the green light for Jesus to proceed to the cross and fulfill His mission of emancipation as the Passover Lamb.

- 8 **Read Luke 23:32-43.** The Church tells us that the first person to enter heaven was the criminal we meet in these verses. Why do you think Jesus chose this man to enter His Kingdom "that very day"?

Jesus is further showing that His mission of salvation is for *everyone*, not just for the Jews, as some thought it would be. The criminal on the cross essentially shows us the formula for gaining salvation. He makes a decision and admits that Jesus is the Messiah He says He is. He realizes his own faults and sinfulness with true humility and brings it before Christ. He then asks with confidence and honesty that Jesus have mercy on him and bring him back into the family. Jesus shows how simple it is by declaring that the criminal will share salvation with Him that very day.

# Chapter 5

## Holy Saturday (Leader's Guide)

Luke 23:56

- 1 Holy Saturday has always been a difficult day to peg down. The crucifixion has happened and is done but the Resurrection hasn't yet taken place. What are some words you would use to describe the mood and feel of Holy Saturday?

This can be a difficult question. Either here, or at the end of the chapter, you could challenge your students to go and sit in a Catholic Church on Holy Saturday. It's the one day in the year when the Blessed Sacrament is not in the tabernacle. It would be a great meditation to sit in the church and reflect upon the very first Holy Saturday. Peter, James, John, Mary, and the rest of the disciples were mourning the death of Christ, with His body in the tomb. As we sit in the church on Holy Saturday, the physical presence of Jesus is not present in the tabernacle. This is a beautiful way that the Church tries to live out the reality of Holy Saturday when Christ was no longer with us on earth.

- 2 What do you think about Cardinal Ratzinger's statement above, that Holy Saturday "expresses the unparalleled experience of our age?" What do you think he means by this?

The philosopher Fredrick Nietzsche once made the famous statement that "God is dead." This was as much a cultural observation as it was a

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faith statement. Our society often lives in such a way as to suggest that God is dead, or was never around in the first place. Cardinal Ratzinger says that this day is perfect for our society because the notion makes it easy to simply overlook Christ. What we know that the disciples didn't is that there *was* a Resurrection. Do we or our society still live in such a way to suggest that Jesus is still in the grave? Even as Christians, what are some ways that we still live like this?

- 3 What do you think the apostles were thinking on this day? Their teacher, the one they trusted to be the Messiah was now lying in a grave. What do you think was going through their minds? What would be going through *your* mind if you were in their shoes?
- 4 Describe a time when you have felt abandoned by God.

**Questions 3 and 4:** Try to really probe their thoughts on this one, especially on what they themselves would be thinking and feeling. Try to share some experience from your own life for question 4. Take your time letting the students answer. Really try to get them to connect with the abandonment of the disciples on that day.

- 5 **Read Luke 4:35-41.** What parallels do you see between what the disciples are probably feeling on Holy Saturday, and this passage?

It's possible to look at this passage as a foreshadowing of Holy Saturday. Though Jesus is actually right there with them, the Apostles are scared that He has abandoned them to the storm. They fail to trust in His goodness and concern for them. On Holy Saturday, this experience is magnified tenfold. All along their journey to Jerusalem, Jesus had been warning the disciples and explaining to them that He must suffer and die but then be raised. The disciples still fail to understand what Jesus was saying. They are being asked to put all of their trust in God's goodness and care. **Ask:** How hard do you think it would be for *you* to trust like that?

6 What is the only thing Luke tells us about the events of Holy Saturday (Lk 23:56)? Why do you think Luke includes this small detail?

All that Luke tells us is that on the Sabbath (Saturday), they rested “according to the law.” There could be different answers to this question, but one thought is that Luke was showing us just how empty that day was. At least if the disciples could have gone about working and keeping busy, they may have been able to take their minds off of the terrible things which just happened. Perhaps God planned it this way so they had no choice but to sit and dwell in the reality of Christ’s death. They stopped what they were doing and simply rested. The reality of the crucifixion was so great that they needed time to let it sink in. The Resurrection can only truly be understood and appreciated if we truly appreciate and understand the emptiness of the day before. **Ask:** How do we spend Holy Saturday? Do we use it as an opportunity to really contemplate the reality of Christ’s death, or do we busy ourselves with other things and focus on the celebration of Easter? **Challenge** the students to really enter into Holy Saturday this year and let the reality of what the disciples experienced permeate their hearts.

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# Chapter 6

## Easter Sunday (Leader's Guide)

Luke 24:1-53

*“The power of His death once confronted our death. In the words of Hosea the prophet: ‘Death, I shall be your death; grave, I shall swallow you up.’ By dying He submitted to the laws of the underworld; by rising again He destroyed them. He did away with the everlasting character of death so as to make death a thing of time, not of eternity. ‘As all die in Adam, so all will be brought to life in Christ.’”*

### ☞ **Pope St. Leo the Great**

- 1 **Read Luke 24:1-11.** What did the women see at the tomb? What was the reaction of the apostles to their news?

The women found the tomb empty and saw two angels who declared that Jesus had been risen. The angels also reminded them that Jesus foretold that this would take place. The apostles did not believe them. Ask: Why do you think the apostles would not believe?

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- 2 Try to put yourself in the Apostles shoes. In light of the last two days, what do you think the Apostles felt when the women shared their news? How do you think you would have felt?

Confused? Skeptical? Angry that they were being fooled? Secretly joyful and desirous for the women to be right? Take your time with this one.

- 3 **Read Luke 24:12.** Peter's response is a little different than the rest. Why do you think he responds differently?

Ask: Do you think Peter's response has anything to do with his betrayal of Jesus two days earlier? Perhaps it was Peter's desire for forgiveness that drove him to run to the tomb? Ask: How anxious are we to run to Jesus to receive His mercy when we have sinned. How often do we go to confession and take advantage of His sacramental forgiveness? Does confession scare us?

- 4 **Read Luke 24:13-32.** Why do you think the disciples fail to recognize Jesus?

After the Resurrection, Jesus' body was glorified. As we see in this passage, the glory of His new body was so powerful that those closest to Him didn't even recognize Him. Ask: The Church teaches that we will all receive glorified bodies in heaven. What does this passage suggest about the nature of our glorified bodies? What do you think the difference will be? What does this suggest about the physical effects of sin in our lives? The Church believes that physical death is a result of original sin. Christ's glorified and resurrected body is a sign of the conquering of sin, and with it, death.

*"We firmly believe, and hence we hope that, just as Christ is truly*

*risen from the dead and lives for ever, so after death the righteous will live for ever with the risen Christ and He will raise them up on the last day. Our resurrection, like His own, will be the work of the Most Holy Trinity.” CCC 989*

*“‘Resurrection’ does not mean the loss of our bodies, which would be dehumanizing. It does, in some sense, mean the divinization of our bodies, as we come to resemble the risen Christ, who remains God and man.”*

☞ **George Weigel, *Witness to Hope***

**5** How do the disciples finally come to recognize who is Speaking to them?

The text tells us that the disciples come to recognize Jesus “in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35). **Ask** if the students recognize anything familiar about the structure of this passage. The Church sees this passage as a prefiguring of the Mass. Jesus first explains the scriptures to them as they travel along the road. This represents the readings we hear at Mass and the homily, which attempts to enlighten them. Then Jesus dines with them and they know Him in the “breaking of the bread.” This is a clear reference to the Eucharist. The two parts of this passage perfectly mirror the two main parts of the Mass: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

*“Here, in the story of Emmaus, we have a glimpse of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word followed by the Liturgy of the Eucharist. At Emmaus, the twin themes of Jesus’ coming and feasting converge when the resurrected Christ ‘comes’ to His disciples in the breaking of bread. And He continues to come to His disciples whenever the Church gathers together to break bread in the Eucharist.”*

☞ **Tim Gray, *Mission of the Messiah***

**6** **Read Luke 24:36-38.** Why do you think the disciples were frightened when Jesus appeared to them? What would you have been thinking if you were in their place?

*Entering into Christ's Passion:*

The disciples were frightened because they still didn't understand Jesus' mission. **Read Luke 24:44-45.** Here, Jesus opens the disciple's minds to see who He really is. Only after this, does the disciples fear disappear. Now Jesus, in **verses 48-49** sends His disciples out to be His witnesses to the world.

**Ask:** Do you think Jesus calls us to be His witnesses just as He did the original disciples? How do we live this?

- 7 Do we treat the Resurrection as though it were an event which happened 2000 years ago, or is it present to us in our everyday lives? How do we live out Jesus' Resurrection in our lives on a daily basis?

Discuss practical ways that we can live in the light of the Resurrection.

**Suggestions:** Drawing close to Jesus in the sacraments, especially the Mass; not being afraid to stand up for the faith when persecuted; pursuing fellowship and sharing the life of Christ with other Christians; sharing that life with those who don't know Christ; etc. Try to think of some more of your own and encourage the students to do the same.

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