We share in Jesus’ victory over death.

- The risen Jesus appears to his disciples, offering tender concern to Thomas who has difficulty believing in the good news of his resurrection.
- Young children often hear the message “don’t touch,” which makes Jesus’ invitation to Thomas all the more appealing.
- In today’s session, we explore the gospel story and begin a series of optional activities designed to help children explore Holy Communion.

Question of the Week
What does Easter mean to you?

Core Session
- Getting Started (paper bags, rubber bands, paper scraps, felt, yarn, pipe cleaners)
- Gospel Story: I’ve Found Jesus! (large stone)
- Action Rhyme: Jesus is Risen
- Praying Together (white or colored cloths, Bible, candles)

Enrichment
- Discover the Good News
- Singing Together
- Journey Chart (stickers)
- Movement: Easter Games and Dance (optional: colorful scarves)
- Talk Together: Grandparents (picture of children with grandparents)
- Info: Young Children and the Gospel
- Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists
- More about Today’s Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- Seeing Salvation, Part 2: Rendering God Visible
- The World of the Bible: Resurrection
✓ Getting Started (10-15 minutes)
Invite children to turn paper bags into puppets. Say:
◆ Your puppet can be Jesus.
◆ Your puppet can be one of Jesus’ friends.
◆ Your puppet can be anyone or anything you like.

Distribute brown paper lunch bags. Children use crayons or felt pens to draw faces and other details onto the bags. Provide collage materials.

Although many adults like to make paper-bag puppets that use the flap as a mouth, preschoolers and kindergartners are not likely to use or even understand this convention. The children will be happier with their puppets if you help them draw on the side of the bag without a flap.

Help children use rubber bands to fasten the finished puppets around their wrists. Invite children to bring their puppets to the storytelling area for today's story.

✓ Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)
I’ve Found Jesus!
Story Focus: Let children use their puppets to illustrate the story. Volunteers can act out the parts of the women, the young man, Jesus and Thomas. Do not worry if more than one child volunteers for each part! For example, many of the children may want to join “Thomas” in touching “Jesus.” Have ready a large stone, too.

Early Sunday morning, three women come. “Who will roll the stone away?” they ask.

Look! (Silently roll the stone away from you.) The stone is already rolled away! The women walk closer to the tomb.

The women hear a young man say, “Jesus is not here! Jesus is not dead! Jesus is risen! God has given Jesus new life!”

The women run home to Jesus’ other friends. “Good news!” the women cry. “Jesus is alive!”

That night many of Jesus’ friends are together in a small room. Suddenly Jesus is with them!

“Jesus! You’re alive! Hooray!” The friends are happy to see Jesus. (Encourage children to join in with shouts of joy.)

But Thomas is not there. When Thomas comes home he says, “I want to see Jesus myself. I want to touch Jesus myself. Then I will know that Jesus is really alive.”

Next evening Jesus comes back to the little room. Thomas is there. Jesus says, “Thomas, come and see me! Come and touch me!”

Thomas sees Jesus. Thomas touches Jesus and says, “Jesus, you’re really alive!”

✓ Action Rhyme (5-15 minutes)
Jesus is Risen!
Teach the children the words and movements to this action story:

Jesus was risen, from the dead.
(Raise hands over head.)

Did Thomas believe what his friends all said?
(Shake head “no.”)

“First I must see, and then I’ll believe!”
(Point to eyes.)

So Jesus came, that very eve.
(Slowly extend hands to front, palms up.)

✓ Praying Together (5 minutes)
Gather children in the area used as a prayer corner throughout Lent. Invite the children to decorate the prayer corner for Easter. (Although the liturgical color for Easter is white, children are more likely to perceive an assortment of brightly colored cloths as festive.)

Help children include an open Bible and candles in the prayer corner. Explain that during this time of the year—Easter time—we use in our prayer the word, alleluia, which means “Praise God!”

Encourage children to join you in calling out alleluia several times. Pray:
◆ Thank you, God, for giving Jesus new life. Alleluia!
◆ Thank you, God, for so many things... (Encourage children to offer their own thanksgivings. Help children respond to each prayer by calling out alleluia!)
◆ Thank you, God, for each child here. (Name each child, helping children respond with the call alleluia after each name.)

Note: Distribute this week’s Discover the Good News to children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.
Discover the Good News
(5-10 minutes)
In today’s Discover the Good News you’ll find an illustrated version of today’s story. Children will also find an illustrated story-starter. Explain that Thomas wanted to be with Jesus so that he could touch him. Ask the children:
◆ What do you want to do with Jesus?
◆ What do you want to say to Jesus?

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News you and the children can sing together:
◆ “Easter Lullaby” (p. 35 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)
◆ “Celebrate Life” (p. 36 in the songbook)
◆ “Jesus Says to Us” (p. 46 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

Journey Chart (10-15 minutes)
A familiar metaphor for the Christian life is that of a journey. We make this metaphor concrete for preschoolers and kindergartners by introducing a Journey Chart that will be used throughout the sessions in Lent and Easter.

Throughout the season, children can add stickers to the chart. Find sticker page templates for this and other Journey Chart activities attached to this document. You’ll also find the Journey Chart itself attached to this document.

Post the chart at children’s eye level. Explain:
◆ We can pretend we are traveling together on this road.
◆ Each time we do a project together, we will add stickers to this chart.
◆ Today’s project is listening to our good shepherd, Jesus.

Help children find a quiet way to sit. (The most effective way to accomplish this is to model a quiet, prayerful posture yourself.) Explain:
◆ There are many ways to listen to Jesus.
◆ Sometimes people hear a voice inside them when they listen to Jesus.
◆ Sometimes people only hear silence when they listen to Jesus.
◆ Today we will sit quietly for a minute and listen to Jesus. Whatever you hear or feel is fine.
◆ If you like, you can say Jesus’ name to yourself while you listen.

Pray silently for 1 minute. Then help each child choose a sticker to add to the chart. Save the chart to use in future sessions.

Movement (10-15 minutes)

Easter Games and Dance
Activity Soundtrack: Play “Dance of the Tumblers.” (Open your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Companion Music for options on obtaining this music.) This energetic music captures the joy of the Risen Jesus and his astonished disciples.

Children hunt for Jesus and greet him with an Easter cheer. Choose the option that best suits your situation. We also provide an optional dance activity to follow the game.

Option 1: This option works best outdoors or in a large room. Choose one child to be Jesus. The other children will be the friends of Jesus. Jesus hides and the other children hunt for him. When one child calls out, “I’ve found Jesus,” everyone shouts, “Jesus is risen! Alleluia!” Let the children take turns being Jesus.

Option 2: This option works well in a small room. One child hides a small picture or figure of Jesus. The other children hunt for Jesus. When Jesus is found, everyone claps and says, “Jesus is risen! Alleluia!”

You can also invite children to dance to the festive music recommended on the Activity Soundtrack above. Help them identify the qualities of the music that inspire different music. Turn off the music. Ask them to show you fast movements, then slow movements.
Turn the music back on. Ask, “What goes best with this music? Should we make fast moves or slow moves?” Allow children different answers, and invite them to show the moves they can make to the music. Explain that this music is called “festive,” that is, music suited for a feast. Today we still celebrate the festive season of Easter. Invite the children to dance in honor of the festive season of Easter. *(You can distribute colorful silk scarves for the children to use in moving to the music.)*

After 10-15 minutes of play, celebrate finding Jesus with a snack of apple slices or raisins and juice.

**Talk Together (5-15 minutes)**

### Grandparents

This simple discussion builds an analogy between the children’s relationships with their grandparents and our relationships with the risen Jesus.

Show children a picture of grandparents with children. Ask:

- How many of you have grandparents who live in town? far away?
- Do you talk to them on the phone? *(Pretend to have a conversation on the phone.)*
- Do they write you? *(Show letter or card.)*
- Do they come to visit you?
- Can you see your grandparents right now? Do your grandparents love you right now? *(Be prepared for some children not to give a ready, positive answer to this. Not all grandparent-grandchildren relationships are good. Do not single out or correct these children—allow them their negative feelings.)*

End the discussion by explaining that children cannot always see their grandparents, but many can believe that their grandparents love them.

Show children a Bible. Explain that we cannot see Jesus but we can believe that he loves us. Friends of Jesus wrote stories about him in this book. The Bible helps us know and love Jesus.

**Young Children and the Gospel**

Today is the 2nd Sunday of Easter, the festival season of the Church that lasts for 50 days. In today’s gospel, Jesus appears to the risen disciples, but absent Thomas refuses to believe until he sees Jesus himself.

With the gift of faith, we can believe, even if we cannot see. We can also note that Jesus gave Thomas what Thomas needed in order to believe. We can trust that Jesus will do the same for us and for the children in our care.

We might sum up Thomas’ philosophy in today’s gospel as **“Seeing is believing, and touching is even better!”** This accurately sums up young children’s educational needs, too.

When telling a story or talking with a group of young children, gather them around you in a circle on the floor or around a small table. Sit on the floor or on a small chair. Stay at the children’s eye-level. Whenever possible, use story materials that the children can handle themselves, either while you are telling the story or after the story is told.

**Where You’ll Find Everything Else**

- Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled *More about Today’s Scriptures.*
  - A shareable story script of today’s *Gospel Story: I’ve Found Jesus!*
  - The *Journey Chart* to be used in the activity of the same name.
  - Three additional documents needed for the Journey Chart activity: *Boy Girl Stickers, Jesus Stickers* and *Using Sticker Sheets.*
  - An optional *Mass Play* activity.
  - This week’s *At Home with the Good News,* to distribute or email to group members after the session.

- Open your Spring-B *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
  - Information on Spring-B’s *Models of the Faith.*
  - For catechists and/or families, an article titled *Easteride: The Great Fifty Days.*
  - For catechists and/or families, an article titled *The Great Vigil of Easter.*
More about Today Scriptures

Today’s readings celebrate Jesus’ victory over death and his gift of faith to his followers. In Acts, the disciples’ generosity and compassion testify to their unity and faith. John’s letter points out that we are victors when we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In today’s gospel, Thomas’s doubts are transformed as he worships the risen Lord.

Acts 4:32-35
In today’s passage, Luke summarizes the life of the early Church in Jerusalem. Two descriptions of the believers’ common life are given: complete community of goods and distribution to the needy, fulfilling the promise of Deuteronomy 15:4. The sharing of goods practiced by the Jerusalem church does not seem to have been repeated elsewhere.

“What Thomas saw was one thing; what he believed was another. He recognized the reality of the man and testified that he was the invisible God.”
—St. Gregory I, the Great

Although the care of the needy was always a feature of Christian communities, the important issue was not a particular economic principle, but the expression of the community’s unity in love. The believers had one source and center of life, and were one in outwardly visible lifestyle.

1 John 5:1-6
The form of John’s first letter is more like a theological treatise or a homily than a letter, for it lacks the usual greetings and final salutations of a letter. The occasion for writing 1 John seems to have been a schism in the community due to heresy, specifically the denial of Jesus’ humanity.

The central theme of 1 John is that “God is love” (4:8). The significance of this statement is explored, not through logical analysis, but through repeated meditation that interweaves theology and ethics, as in today’s reading.

Those who have made the baptismal confession “Jesus is the Christ” (v. 1) assented not only to a doctrine but also to a pattern for their own behavior. As God’s children, Christians are to love God and one another and to obey the commandments. Through trust in Jesus, the Christian may overcome the world, that is, all that is opposed to God.

John 20:19-31
John’s account of the first appearance of the risen Lord shows that Jesus has returned, bringing peace and joy. He shows his wounds to establish that the crucified Jesus and the risen Christ are one and the same. As he had promised, he then gives the disciples a mission and breathes upon them the Holy Spirit.

This is the new creation of humanity for eternal life. Just as Jesus’ ministry began with empowerment by the Holy Spirit at baptism, so Christians are empowered for ministry.

Thomas personifies the elements of doubt that arise regarding the resurrection. He expresses his disbelief in exactly the way Jesus had decried. Yet, without touching the Lord, he can still be brought to penetrate the meaning behind the marvel and to make a full affirmation of Christian faith. He consummates the sequence of titles given to Jesus by giving him the ultimate one of God.

Verses 30-31 serve as a summary of John’s entire message. They evaluate the content of the gospel, inviting all persons to come to the understanding of the meaning of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, and through belief to share in a saving relationship with him.

Reflection

Sometimes it’s appropriate to doubt: extravagant advertising, bogus reasons for war, chirpy platitudes, betraying friends, phony cheer and blatant lying. St. Thomas the apostle would affirm legitimate skepticism toward such hypocrisies.

Where Thomas goes wrong is in doubting Jesus, source of all blessing and life. The only remedy is to draw closer to him, close enough to touch his nail marks and wound. Then Thomas becomes his best self again, praising his Lord and God.

Everyone has dark, doubting places. We visit them when we’re anxious or angry. What we learn today is to return to our finest, close to Christ, filled with affirmation. At such times, we are like lakes filled with light, drawing from the deepest current, God within.

The breath is another metaphor today. Usually we rely on short, shallow breaths, even when we face demanding tasks. Those who take deep breaths know how calming, centering and energizing they can be.
Next time we’re frazzled or frustrated, we should remember Jesus’ actions in the gospel. He reveals the marks of darkness, carved in his hands because he’s experienced evil directly. Then he gives his friends peace and breathes on them. Can we inhale that grace-filled, life-giving breath when we need it?

**The Scriptures and the Catechism**

Today we are reminded that Jesus’ new life within us changes our attitudes and behavior. But it can also raise doubts. Belief is never completely certain. Doubts arise, as they did for Thomas (CCC, #142–75, 1814–16, 2087–89). His failure was not so much his desire for “proof” of Jesus’ new life, but rather his refusal to accept the Easter proclamation of the other disciples (CCC, #156–59, 547–550, 670). He demanded a first-hand experience of Jesus rather that accept the word of the other disciples. As the evangelist John so clearly notes, becoming a believer is not based for most people on seeing Jesus but on the word of faithful disciples (CCC, #153–165).

**Seeing Salvation, Part 2**

**Rendering God Visible**

Making an image of God who has become visible in Jesus is difficult because artists do not simply draw portraits from life or illustrate a religious story. How can they show in images the divine/human reality that fits so straightforwardly into words?

“Art does not reproduce the visible; rather it makes visible.”

—Paul Klee

*The Inward Vision*

The answer is that they translate their meaning into a pictorial theology full of multi-layered symbols expressing centuries of poring over the sacred texts to discover their meaning.

Like previous generations, we live in a world inundated with symbols from our media. But previous generations shared a much richer religious world whose symbolic connections to animals, colors, forms and biblical and theological allusions were much clearer than today.

So it is often more difficult for us to understand the meanings that their symbols point to. But by paying more attention to the images, we can learn the art of reading their paintings to discover the beauty of the divine reality hidden there.

To be human means to participate in the ongoing work of making visible the invisible: our expressions of beauty, truth and goodness mirror the God who is their source. Any true work of art points beyond itself; one who appreciates it searches for the true, divine end of human desire.

**The World of the Bible**

**Resurrection**

What happened on Easter was a complete surprise to the disciples. The Jesus that they had known and who had died was suddenly experienced as alive again.

“The death and resurrection of Jesus have robbed death of its sting. Eternal life, not death, have the last word. Death for Jesus becomes the hour of “glory” because it is the moment in which his mission is completed and he returns to the Father.”

—Donald Senior

*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John*

Lazarus. Although their return from the dead left them temporarily alive, they would die again.

Jesus’ resurrection was a new life that would not be subject to death again. It was eternal life, permanent and undying existence in the presence of God forever. So we joyfully cry, “He is risen!”