The risen Christ stands among us.
- Jesus again appears to his disciples and again invites them to touch his risen body, and believe in his risen life.
- Once more we invite children to extend their celebration of Easter as a season to celebrate Jesus’ risen life.
- In today’s session, we explore the gospel story and continue a series of optional activities designed to help children explore Holy Communion.

Question of the Week
When does Jesus seem closest to you? When does he seem farthest away?

Core Session
- Getting Started
- Gospel Story: Who Stands There?
- Praying Together

Enrichment
- Welcome the Good News
- Singing Together
- Creative Drama: Jesus Appears (fish-shaped crackers)
- Celebration: Easter Party (blank white paper, party goods, fish-shaped crackers; optional: old hat)
- Info: 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
- Liturgy Link: Easter and the Book of Acts, Part 1
- The World of the Bible: The Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms
✔ Getting Started (10-15 minutes)

Children play a guessing game. They then discuss the process of recognition as preparation for today’s story in which Jesus helps the disciples recognize him.

As the children arrive, greet them with the Easter Greeting from the session for the 2nd Sunday of Easter:

Greeter: Alleluia! Jesus is risen.
Children: Jesus is risen. Alleluia!

Invite children to play a guessing game. Ask children to sit facing one wall. Ask them to cover their eyes with their hands. Explain that when you put your hand on a child's shoulder, that child is to open his or her eyes, stand up quietly and follow you.

Place your hand on one child's shoulder and lead him or her to a place to sit behind the other children. Ask the child to say the first line of the Easter Greeting. After the children respond, tell them they can ask the mystery child any question except his or her name. When children know who the mystery child is, they may call out his or her name.

Let children ask questions until they have guessed the identity of the child. After they have guessed, ask:

◆ How did you know it was (name the child)?

Repeat several times. Then gather children and say:

◆ Once Jesus had to help the disciples know who he was. Listen and find out why—and how.

✔ Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)

Who Stands There?

A man and a woman burst into the room where Jesus’ friends sat. “You’ll never guess what has happened,” they shouted. “We’ve seen Jesus!”

The friends of Jesus stared for a moment, then all burst into speech at once. “What are you talking about? How could you have seen Jesus? Seen Jesus where? Jesus is dead!”

“No,” said the man, “he walked with us and talked with us, on the road to Emmaus.”

“He’s here now,” said the woman. “Look!”

The friends of Jesus turned, and there was a man standing in the room. The shouting grew louder.

“Jesus! No, it can’t be Jesus! It’s a ghost! God help us—save us from this ghost!”

“Peace be with you,” the man said. The room fell silent, but faces were still afraid.

“Do not be afraid,” the man said. “I am no ghost. Touch me. Feel my hands and my feet. Feel my bones. Do I really feel like a ghost?”

Peter put out his hand and laid it on the man’s foot. Hand after hand followed. The man’s flesh was warm; his bones were hard.

“Give me something to eat,” the man said.

John handed him a piece of fish. The man took it and ate. Surely a ghost couldn’t eat!

“Jesus,” whispered James. “It’s really you.”

The man’s face broke into a smile of joy. “Peace be with you, James. And Peter. And John. And all my friends.”

They gathered closer around him. “This is just what I have told you,” said Jesus. “I promised that I would be killed—and I was. I promised that I would rise to life in three days—and I am alive.”

“Then the good news is true,” said John.

“Yes,” said Jesus. “Now you must go and tell others the good news that you have seen and heard.”

✔ Praying Together (5 minutes)

Sit or stand in a circle with the children, holding hands. Say:

◆ Jesus promises to be with all of us here today.
◆ Jesus invites us to tell others good news about him.
◆ Let’s tell one another the good news that Jesus is risen.

Ask children to pass the Easter greeting around the circle; for example:

◆ First child: Alleluia! Jesus is risen.
◆ Second child: Jesus is risen. Alleluia!

When the greeting has traveled around the circle, pray:

◆ Jesus, thank you for standing among us. Help us to tell others the good news that we have seen and heard. Amen.

Note: Distribute this week’s At Home with the Good News to children after the session.
Welcome the Good News
(10-15 minutes)
On page 1 of today’s Welcome the Good News, you’ll find an illustrated version of today’s story.

We extend the themes of the story on page 2 with the scripture skills activity Welcome God’s Word. Invite children to work together to solve the puzzle. Children will also find a With Your Family activity they can lead at home or practice in the group.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News you and the children can sing together:
◆ “Blessed Is He” (p. 34 of the songbook)
◆ “Celebrate Life” (p. 36 in the songbook)
◆ “God’s Alive” (p. 40 in the songbook; also available as an MP3)
◆ “Jesus Says to Us” (p. 46 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)

(Open your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News to access both the songbook and the MP3s.)

Creative Drama (10-15 minutes)
Jesus Appears
Children act out today’s story.

Gather children around you in a circle. Ask children to lightly squeeze their ankles or wrists, feeling for bones as the disciples did in the story. Ask:
◆ What are we doing that was done in today’s story, too?

Hold up a plate of fish crackers and ask:
◆ What part did fish play in today’s story?
◆ How did today’s story end?
◆ What did Jesus tell the disciples to do?

These four questions should elicit the four main events of today’s story:
◆ Jesus was not a ghost because the disciples could feel that he was real.
◆ Jesus was not a ghost because he ate real food—fish.
◆ Jesus’ promise of new life had come true.
◆ Jesus tells the disciples to tell others the good news.

Ask a volunteer to use these four main points to reenact the part of Jesus appearing to the disciples. Ask the other children to be the disciples. Ask them to limit their squeezing to light squeezes on the wrists or shoulders. Provide fish crackers. Repeat the enactment several times, inviting different volunteers to play the part of Jesus.

Celebration (10-25 minutes)
Easter Party
Activity Soundtrack: Play “Jabulani Africa.” (Open your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Companion Music for options on obtaining this music.) This lovely African gospel song invites people to rejoice in the risen Jesus. The Zulu word jabulani means “rejoice.” The song is performed by the African Children’s Choir. You can learn more about them at http://www.africanchildrenschoir.com.

Children continue their celebration of the Easter season with another group party. You may want to add to the party those activities suggested by the children in the Easter Party discussion of the session for the 2nd Sunday of Easter.

Before the session find an old hat or cap you can use as a storyteller’s hat, to be worn by all the children.

In the session explain to children that this is still Easter—the 3rd Sunday of Easter—and ask them to help prepare a small party. Possible activities:
◆ decorating the party goods with Easter pictures
◆ eating fish-shaped crackers for snacks

You also might invite children to have a Story Bee. Gather children in a circle. Put on the storyteller’s hat. Use the poster attached to this document, Christ in Glory by Domenico Ghirlandaio, as a focal point. Say:
◆ The women who came to Jesus’ tomb found Jesus alive instead. He told them to spread the good news.
◆ In today’s story, Jesus told his friends to tell other people the good news about him.
◆ We’re friends of Jesus, too. We can tell others stories about Jesus.
◆ Let’s see how many stories about Jesus we can remember.
Ask a volunteer to tell the first story. Hand the storyteller’s hat to this child, so that he or she can wear the hat while telling the story. Repeat with as many volunteers as possible.

If a child is eager to participate but has trouble remembering a story, you might suggest a familiar story, such as the Christmas story, or a story from earlier this season, such as Jesus’ death on the cross. A child could also repeat another child’s story or join you in telling a story. (Some children may simply choose to listen rather than tell.)

Children and the Gospel

In today’s gospel, the risen Jesus stands among his disciples. At first the disciples are afraid, but Jesus reveals himself to them through his physical presence and through sharing food. He opens their minds to his presence in scripture and names them witnesses. In today’s session, children hear this story and explore its connections to Christian witness and storytelling.

The focal point for each primary session is the story, usually taken from the gospels. We encourage you to use simple rituals to emphasize the importance of storytelling: telling the story in a special, set-aside part of the room, gathering children around you in a semi-circle, lighting a candle for story time, etc.

Storytellers often use traditional greetings or openings to establish a sense of timelessness and placelessness, removing listeners from the here and now to the “once upon a time” of storytelling. Some traditional openings require audience responses. A Haitian storyteller with a tale about Anansi, the spider, will call out “Cric!” People who want to listen answer, “Crac!” Another traditional opening has the storyteller chant, “A story! a story!” The listeners respond, “Let it come! Let it go!”

You might find such beginnings useful when telling stories to the group. Children learn that the completion of the ritual signals a time of quiet, listening and wonder. Make up your own ritual, perhaps adapting the Easter greeting as follows:

**Storyteller:** Alleluia! A story!
**Children:** Jesus is risen! Alleluia!

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: Who Stands There?*
  - This week’s *Bible Skills for Third Graders* activity.
  - An optional, on-going activity exploring the *Eucharist.*
  - The *Jesus’ Table* poster, to use with the optional Eucharist activity.
  - An optional activity titled *Catholic Basics.*
  - Ghirlandaio’s *Christ in Glory,* to be used in today’s Celebration 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 scriptures proclaim that Jesus is risen and present with us. In Acts, Peter preaches about the power of God in Jesus and calls his listeners to respond with repentance and conversion. John assures us that Jesus intercedes for us, removing our sin and calling us to the obedience of love. In today's gospel, Jesus invites the disciples to touch his risen body and to understand the meaning of the scriptures.

The book of the Acts of the Apostles recounts the early growth of the Christian Church. One of the major features of Acts is Luke's use of speeches by principal figures to provide reflection upon and analysis of events. These speeches demonstrate the basic preaching pattern of the apostolic Church to different audiences as the Church moves from the Jewish to the Gentile world.

Today's reading is taken from the second of these discourses, Peter's temple sermon. Set in the context of a healing (3:1-10), it shows that Jesus' ministry continues in the apostles. The sermon begins with the basic proclamation about Jesus' death and resurrection. This kernel is then fleshed out in a longer section identifying Jesus with various Old Testament figures.

1 John 2:1-5a
John writes to encourage his readers to live without sin. Once baptized, no Christian should be able to live in ongoing, willful sin. Although Christians must constantly struggle to free themselves from a sinfulness that infects all humanity, God's cleansing power is already at work.

Jesus is our advocate, the one who speaks for us and promises continuing forgiveness. The same word for advocate, parakletos, is used of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John (John 14:16).

Verse 2 stresses God's impartiality and generous provision of forgiveness for all people. In the early Church, believers tended to concentrate on developing the new identity of their communities, focusing on the differences between "the world" and the fellowship of those in the faith. Here John reminds believers that "the whole world" (v. 2) benefits from Jesus' work.

In verses 3-5, John links, as he does repeatedly through this letter, keeping God's commandments and love. For him, the two are inseparable. Jesus alone perfectly combines these two virtues, thereby providing the model for every Christian.

Luke 24:35-48
Today's reading of Jesus' appearance to his disciples is paralleled by accounts in the other gospels and shares with them the characteristic elements of doubt, recognition and commission.

By showing the marks of the crucifixion, the risen Christ identifies himself as the earthly Jesus. He shows himself to be "really real," not a vision or a ghost.

The account displays the Hebrew understanding of the person as particular and embodied, in contrast to the Greek sense of the person as merely the "soul."

As in the Emmaus story, the disciples recognize Jesus in the context of a meal and in the exposition of the scriptures. The Hebrew scriptures are divided into three parts: the law, the prophets and the writings (the first book being the Psalms).

To the earlier statement that the scriptures told of the suffering and resurrection of the Messiah (24:25-27) is added that the scriptures also point toward the mission "to all nations" (v. 47). The accomplishment of Jesus' mission to Israel means the beginning of his followers' mission to the Gentiles.

Reflection

Today's gospel defies all the self-help books about achieving inner peace. Peace is a gift, according to Luke. Furthermore, it comes unexpectedly, during confusion, mourning, fear and anxiety. The disciples find it too good to be true.

To alert them to reality, Jesus asks for something to eat. He reminds us of adolescents who are always hungry or long-awaited guests whom we welcome with a special meal. This touchstone in human nature apparently convinces the skeptical. Wisely, Jesus starts with bodily needs, then "opened their minds to understand the scriptures" (24:45).

How ironic that he tells the poor, uncertain, wavering crew: "You are witnesses of these things" (v. 48). They are hardly the finest spokespersons, but then, neither are we. We have the same mixture of doubt
and certainty, anxiety and joy that they had. Jesus always seems to choose the most unlikely prospects. As Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu says, “Our God is an expert at dealing with chaos, with brokenness, with all the worst that we can imagine.”

But to all, he extends the same invitation: “Touch me and see.” Only by coming dangerously close to this wounded Lord will we too know transformation of our wounds—and resurrection.

The Scriptures and the Catechism

Today we are reminded that the Risen Christ (CCC, #638–58) accompanies us on our journey of life as a hidden stranger. He reveals his presence among us in the understanding of scripture and the celebration of the Eucharist. His presence triggers our conversion to relate to him and to others in a more responsible way (CCC, #1430–39). Just as Jesus was the Mediator for humanity in relation to God for the forgiveness of sins (CCC, #456–60, 1544–46, 618, 2574), so we must be mediators of Jesus’ love in our behavior toward others.

Liturgical Link

Easter and the Book of Acts, Part 1

Following an ancient tradition, a reading from the Book of Acts replaces the Old Testament reading on Sundays during the season of Easter. This reminds us that the story of the people of God has now become the story of the Church. Because the Holy Spirit is prominent in Acts, this book also reminds us of the new creation that took place as the good news spread first to the Jews, then to the Samaritans and then to the ends of the earth.

Luke as Author

Linguistic, stylistic and theological considerations lead scholars to the widely accepted conclusion that Acts and the Gospel of Luke were written by the same author. Both books are anonymous, but internal evidence points to Greek authorship. Apparently, Luke was a Gentile who knew the Hebrew scriptures in their Greek translation.

The Acts of the Apostles singles out the deeds of Peter (chaps. 1–11) and Paul (chaps. 12–28) as examples of disciples who carry on Christ’s prophetic mission. Peter and Paul were executed in Rome in or near AD 67, and the Book of Acts was probably written between AD 70 and 90. Thus we have an account of the early years of the Church that is very close to the events it describes.

[Luke is] “committed to a perspective. He has included this material, excluded other; ‘ordered’ his account in this way, not in that. This is not a neutral, disinterested chronicle but a partisan narrative shaping of the story of Jesus. His aim is communicative in the sense of his purpose to engage his audience in discourse and so to shape them by his work.”

—Joel B. Green

The Theology of the Gospel of Luke

provides an introduction to the entire double volume work and is a statement of Luke’s intention for writing.

The World of the Bible

The Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms

This phrase summarizes the three general categories of Jewish sacred texts—the Jewish “scriptures”:

◆ The Law (Hebrew: Torah, instruction) consisted of the first five books of the Old Testament that tell of God’s search for an appropriate covenant partner.

◆ The Prophets (Hebrew: Nevi’im) collected the prophetic stories and God’s messages to the community.

◆ The Writings (Hebrew: Ketuvim) was a catch-all for everything else. It included the song book of the Psalms and wisdom writings that gave advice for living a happy and fulfilling life.

The first letter of each of these three categories in Hebrew—T-N-K—forms the acronym that identifies the name for the Jewish Scriptures: TaNaKh.