

The Paschal Mystery

LESSON 8

Suggested Grade Levels

- › Upper middle school
- › High school

Learning Goals

- › The Paschal Mystery is how Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection saved us from sin and death for new life as sons and daughters of God.
- › At every Mass we proclaim the Paschal Mystery in a prayer called the Memorial Acclamation.



Connection to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- › CCC 604-605
- › CCC 608-611
- › CCC 613-618
- › CCC 639-655
- › CCC 774



Vocabulary

- › Paschal Mystery
- › Mysterion
- › Paschal
- › Sacrament
- › Mystery of Faith

BIBLICAL TOUCHSTONES

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live."

JOHN 11:25

Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

1 JOHN 4:8-10

Lesson Plan

Materials

- ▶ Handout A: The Mystery of Faith
- ▶ Handout B: *Christ and the Good Thief*
- ▶ Handout C: The Resurrection
- ▶ Construction paper, markers, and/or colored pencils

DAY ONE

Warm-Up

- Write the word “mystery” on the board and ask your students what the word means. *Accept reasoned answers, which will likely be similar to a problem to be solved or something unknowable, in the sense of Sherlock Holmes has a mystery to solve.*
- Write “Paschal Mystery” on the board and explain to your students that we often call Jesus’ Passion, Death, and Resurrection the Paschal Mystery. Then ask your students why we call these things a mystery. *Accept reasoned answers, but after a few responses from students that suggest that we need to solve the mystery of Christ’s Death or something similar, explain to your students that in fact Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection are not a problem to be solved or something that is unknowable. In fact, we know about these things, and the problem has already been solved!*
- Write the word “Sacrament” on the board and ask your students what the word means. *A Sacrament is a sign of grace that gives us God’s divine life. A Sacrament is a sign that causes what it signifies. Explain to your students that during the time when Jesus was alive on earth and the New Testament was being written, the word mystery, or mysterion, meant something different from what we think of today. In fact, its meaning was almost the same as how we define Sacrament. Both words, mystery and Sacrament are Latin translations of the Greek word mysterion. The sacred authors originally wrote the New Testament in Greek. Later, when the Bible was translated into Latin, the language the majority of people in the Western Roman Empire spoke, the word mysterion was interchangeably translated as mysterium or sacramentum, both with the same meaning: a visible sign of God’s divine life.*
- Write the word *Paschal* on the board and then ask your students the following questions:
 - ▶ What does the word *Paschal* mean? *Paschal means “Passover,” and it refers to both the original Passover of the Israelites in Egypt and the Passover of the New Covenant in Christ.*
 - ▶ What happened in the original Passover of the Israelites in Egypt? *The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. God sent Moses to free them. God sent ten plagues upon Egypt, the last of which was the death of the firstborn in Egypt. To spare the firstborn of the Israelites, through Moses, God gave the Israelites instructions to sacrifice a year-old, unblemished lamb, spread its blood over their doorposts that night, and roast and eat its flesh in a sacred meal that consisted of unleavened bread and wine. If they followed the instructions of this sacrifice, their homes would be passed over that night and the life of their firstborn spared.*

- ▶ What is the Passover of the New Covenant? *We are all enslaved by sin and death. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to free us. Jesus, the Lamb of God, offered Himself as sacrifice on the Cross. Through His Death, He paid the price for our sins that we could not, freeing us from sin and death and inviting us to be sons and daughters of God. We participate in Christ's saving sacrifice when we receive the Eucharist at Mass, the bread and wine transformed into the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ.*
- E. Explain to your students that when we speak of the Paschal Mystery, we are talking about how Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection are the sacrament of our salvation, the visible sign of God's grace and truth that actually cause us to have God's divine life within us! The Paschal Mystery is how Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection saved us from sin and death for new life as sons and daughters of God.

Activity

- A. Explain to your students that at every Mass we proclaim the Paschal Mystery in a prayer called the Memorial Acclamation. After the words of consecration, the priest invites the congregation to pray together the "Mystery of Faith." And then, as one voice, we acclaim together one of the three forms of this prayer.
- B. Distribute **Handout A: The Mystery of Faith (page 111)** and have students work individually to read about the Memorial Acclamation at Mass and how it expresses the Paschal Mystery.
- C. When your students have completed **Handout A**, review and discuss the correct answers.

Formative Assessment

- A. Arrange your students in pairs or trios and distribute to each group a piece of construction or drawing paper and make markers and/or colored pencils available. Have each group choose one of the options for the Memorial Acclamation and create a poster that illustrates the meaning of the prayer and the Paschal Mystery. Have your students be sure to write on the poster the words to the form of the prayer that they choose.
- B. When your students have completed their posters, call on groups to share and discuss their creations.

DAY TWO

Warm-Up

- A. Ask your students what makes Jesus' Death different from anybody else's death. *Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Jesus' Death saved us from sin.*
- B. After students have offered some answers, project Romans 6:23, and have a student stand and read it aloud:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

C. Ask your students the following questions:

- ▶ What are the “wages” of sin? *Death. Explain that a wage is something that a person earns, usually by his or her work. Therefore, St. Paul here is saying that death is what is earned by the sinful works we commit.*
- ▶ What is the gift that God gives? *Eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- ▶ How did Jesus give us this gift? *He died on the Cross for us, paying the price for our sins so that we would not have to.*

D. Project 1 John 4:8-10, and have a student stand and read it aloud:

Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

E. Ask your students the following questions:

- ▶ What does the author of 1 John tell us that God is? *God is love.*
- ▶ How was God’s love revealed to us? *God sent His only Son into the world so that we might have life through Him.*
- ▶ The word expiate means “to make up for.” What did Jesus make up for, and how did He do this? *He made up for our sins, by dying on the Cross for us.*

F. Explain to your students that because Jesus is God, He has unlimited and perfect love for us. God loves us so much that He created everything that exists. He loves us so much that He can take upon Himself every sin and suffer for every single person’s sins. He loves us so much that He died for us. He loves us so much that His death atones for our sins and so frees us from them. It is Jesus’ divine love to the end that makes His sacrifice our redemption.

Activity

- A. Arrange your students in groups of three or four and distribute **Handout B: Christ and the Good Thief (page 113)**. Have students read the Scripture passage and discuss the questions with each other. During this time, focus on keeping students intent on the artwork and the discussion questions, letting their conversations go in unexpected ways.
- B. Circulate among the groups, listening to their discussions, keeping them on task, and offering insights or clarification where needed.

Formative Assessment

When your students have completed their conversations, call on groups in turn to share their answers to each of the questions. Conclude the discussion with the question of how the artist probably wanted the people who viewed his painting to feel.

DAY THREE

Warm-Up

- A. Project John 11:25 and John 2:19-22, and have a student stand and read them aloud:

Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.”

Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.

- B. Ask your students the following questions:

- ▶ What did Jesus say will happen to those who believe in Him? *They will live even if they die.*
- ▶ What did Jesus mean when He said “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”? *He was talking about the temple of His Body, referring to His Resurrection from the dead on the third day.*

- C. Explain to your students that the Resurrection is the most important event in salvation history. Without it, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, “our faith is in vain” and we would still be in our sins. In other words, if Jesus had not risen from the dead, then our faith would be empty and we would not be saved from our sins. Thankfully, Christ did not just die. He did rise from the dead, and we are saved from our sins. Christ’s victory over sin and death is won not just by His Passion and Death, but also in His Resurrection.

Activity and Assessment

- A. Arrange your students in groups of four and distribute **Handout C: The Resurrection (page 116)**. Assign to each group one of the Resurrection accounts from the Gospels: Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, or John 20. Have your students look up and read their assigned Resurrection account in the Bible. Then have each group discuss their account and write a summary paragraph. Have them include all the details described in their assigned Gospel. Be sure each member of the group has a copy of the summary paragraph they wrote together.

- B. Next, have the members of each group form new groups in which each student has read a different Gospel account of the Resurrection. Have your students take turns sharing with each other their summaries and then fill in the rest of the chart together.
- C. Last, call on groups to share details of the Resurrection accounts from the Gospels to create a complete picture of Jesus' Resurrection.

The Mystery of Faith

Directions: Read about the Memorial Acclamation at Mass and its different forms, then answer the questions about each one.

At every Mass we proclaim the Paschal Mystery in a prayer called the Memorial Acclamation. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, after the priest has spoken the words of Consecration to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord, the priest invites the congregation to pray together the “Mystery of Faith.” Then, together as a Church, we acclaim this mystery by saying together one of the following forms of the prayer:

Option 1: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Option 2: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Option 3: Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

Option 1

Read the first option for the Memorial Acclamation, then answer the questions.

1. What do we proclaim and profess? _____

2. What does this proclamation and profession say that we believe?

3. What do we believe will happen at the end of time?

Option 2

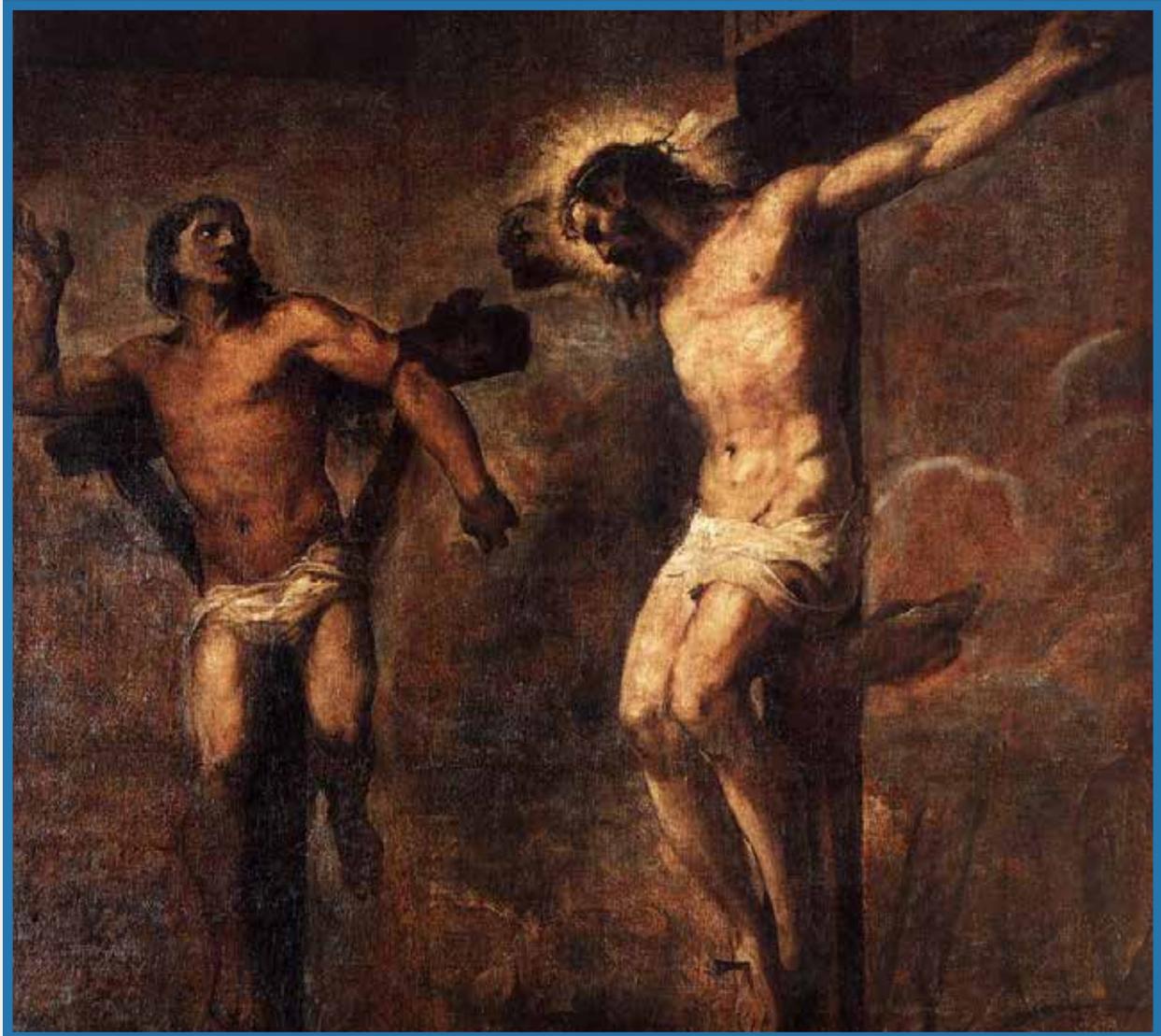
Read the second option for the Memorial Acclamation, then answer the questions.

4. How do we proclaim Christ’s Death?

HANDOUT B

Christ and the Good Thief

BY TITIAN (C. 1566)



Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna, Italy.

Christ and the Good Thief

Directions: Read the story of Jesus' Crucifixion and conversation with the Good Thief from Luke 23:33, 39-43, then answer the questions.

1. With whom was Jesus Crucified? _____
2. What did Jesus ask of His Father for those who crucified Him? _____

3. What did they do with Jesus' garments? _____
4. What did the rulers say sneeringly to Jesus? _____
5. What did the inscription above Jesus' head say? _____

6. Did Jesus deserve to die? _____
7. Did the Good Thief deserve to die? _____
8. What did the Good Thief ask of Jesus? _____

9. What did the Good Thief have to believe in order to ask this of Jesus? _____

10. What did Jesus save the Good Thief from? _____
11. What are the wages of sin? _____
12. What did Jesus promise the Good Thief? _____

13. What did the Good Thief do in response? _____

The name Jesus means “God saves.” This is exactly what the Good Thief believed. He believed that Jesus was God and that He could save him. Because the thief believed and repented, Jesus did save him. Jesus forgave him and gave him eternal life. Read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 620:

Our salvation flows from God’s initiative of love for us, because “he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 Jn 4:10).

14. From where does our salvation flow? _____

15. Why did God send His Son? _____

16. How did Jesus show His love to the Good Thief? _____

17. Why does Jesus forgive us, save us, and give us eternal life? _____

The Resurrection

Directions: Read the Gospel account of Christ's Resurrection assigned to your group, then write a brief summary paragraph. Include all the details described in your Gospel. Then take turns sharing about your Gospel's account of the Resurrection with other students, completing the rest of the chart together.

<p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 28</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mark 16</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Luke 24</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">John 20-21</p>

Answer Key

Handout A: The Mystery of Faith

Option 1

1. Christ's Death and Resurrection.
2. That Christ died on the Cross and rose from the dead on the third day.
3. Jesus will come again.

Option 2

4. When we eat the Bread and drink Cup of Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist.
5. At Mass.
6. Jesus will come again.

Option 3

7. To save us.
8. Jesus Christ.
9. By Jesus' Cross and Resurrection.
10. Sin and death.

Reflection Question: The three options for the Memorial Acclamation prayer express our belief in how Christ's death on the Cross and Resurrection freed us from sin and death. We participate in the salvation Christ won for us on the Cross when we receive His Body and Blood in the Eucharist at Mass as we await the day He will come again at the end of time.

Handout B: *Christ and the Good Thief*

1. Two thieves, one on His left and one on His right.
2. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."
3. The soldier's cast lots for them.
4. "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Messiah of God."
5. "This is the King of the Jews."
6. No.
7. He said that his punishment matched what he had done.
8. To be remembered in Jesus' Kingdom.
9. That Jesus is God.

10. Going to Hell for his sins.
11. Death.
12. That the Good Thief would be in Heaven that day with Him.
13. He believed and repented.
14. God's love.
15. Because He loved us.
16. The thief had done nothing good to make up for his sins, but Jesus forgave him and promised him eternal life.
17. Because He loves us.

Handout C: The Resurrection

Accept reasoned answers.