

YEAR LEVEL	3 & 4
TITLE	Lent and Easter
STRAND	CHURCH AND TRADITION
SUGGESTED DURATION	4-6 weeks
ENDURING QUESTIONS	What does the Church look like in our community?



## Unit Focus

In this unit the students are introduced to the period of Lent and Easter as seasons in the Church's liturgical year and are given the opportunity to explore how the community prepares for Easter through prayer, penance and good works. Students will be encouraged through the events of Holy Week to remember and celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and come to recognise Easter as the most important event in the Church year.

## Achievement Standards

By the end of **Year Four**:

**Students identify how the Church celebrates feasts and seasons of the liturgical year.**

## Unit Outcomes

By the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Recognise that Lent is a time of preparation for Easter.
2. Identify ways the community prepares for Easter through prayer, penance and good works.
3. Identify and describe the key events that are commemorated in the liturgical celebrations of Holy Week and Easter
4. Explain how the disciples' responded to the Resurrection and the appearance of Jesus

## Key Understandings for Students

- During Lent the Church community prepares for Easter through prayer, penance and good works.
- Lent is a season of the liturgical year during which the Christian community journeys with Jesus.
- Our reflection and prayer during Lent and Easter helps us to learn from Jesus' life.
- Following Jesus closely throughout Lent challenges us to grow in our own lives.
- Holy Week is the week leading up to Easter Sunday.
- Holy Week begins with Passion (or Palm) Sunday and is the most holy of all the weeks in the Church year.
- Christians think about the death and resurrection of Jesus during this sacred time and the meaning of these events for today.
- On Passion Sunday blessed palms are distributed as a reminder of Jesus' entry into the city of Jerusalem.

- On Holy Thursday Christian communities remember the Last Supper of Jesus with his apostles.
  - On Good Friday Christians remember through prayer and ritual the suffering and death of Jesus of Nazareth.
  - On the night of Holy Saturday, the Easter Candle is lit to symbolise the resurrection of Jesus.
- Easter celebrates the life, death and new life of Jesus.

## Student Context

As students move through this level their understanding of themselves, their community and the wider world expands. They are less self-focussed and enjoy working collaboratively. Their reasoning ability takes an important step forward and, whilst still being very literal, they are developing the ability to understand different levels of meaning and hence appropriate symbols and symbolic actions. They have a better understanding of time and the sequence of events, therefore Scripture stories take on a new significance.

## Theological Background for Teachers

- The name of the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, comes from the old custom of blessing ashes and marking the forehead of the people with ashes on this day. The ashes are prepared by burning palms from the preceding Palm Sunday. The idea comes from the Old Testament times, when mourners or penitents clothed themselves in sackcloth and sprinkled their hands and faces with dust or ashes (Jn 3).
- As a season Lent was originally a period of preparation for Easter baptism. During this time of instruction the catechumens fasted and prayed. The climax came in the all-night vigil of Easter Evening with Baptism and Confirmation and the celebration of Christ's Resurrection.
- The duration of Lent has varied greatly during the Church's history. Lent now begins with Ash Wednesday and continues for forty days. The forty days of Lent represent the period that Jesus spent in the wilderness during his temptation. During Lent we are called to confront ourselves honestly, to remind ourselves as humans we are fragile and that we are not the source of our own salvation. To receive the blessing and liberation that God constantly offers us, we need to accept our human condition with the humility and trust of Jesus in the desert. Thus Lent's liturgical colour, violet, symbolises awareness of sin and readiness for conversion.
- Today, less emphasis is placed on fasting and more on penance involving prayer and charitable works.
- Penance is seen as a *metanoia*, that is a change of heart.
- The message of the New Testament centres on Jesus' life, death, resurrection and his ongoing presence in our world through, with and in the Spirit.
- The Easter Triduum of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday, the Sunday of the Lord's Resurrection (Roman Missal: Calendar #18-19).
- Holy Week, or 'Great Week' in the Eastern churches, has as its purpose the remembrance of Christ's passion, beginning with his entrance into Jerusalem on Palm/Passion Sunday.

- **Passion or Palm Sunday:** On this day the Church celebrates Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. As early as the fourth century there is an account of a procession in Jerusalem. This practice spread to the Churches of the East and West. The gospel reading accompanying the blessing of palms and the procession reflects the triumphant note of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The readings contained in the Liturgy of the Word, and other texts of the Mass focus on the account of the passion and death of Jesus. The older Roman title Passion Sunday was restored in more recent times (*Lent and Easter Units, Diocese of Broken Bay*).
- **Holy Thursday:** The evening Mass of the Lord's Supper marks the beginning of the Easter Triduum. In the celebration of Eucharist we celebrate the institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood, and Christ's commandment of love. These three are closely linked with the Passion and Resurrection. The Eucharist makes present the death and Resurrection of Jesus and unites us with their saving power. The priest, acting in the person of Christ the priest, presides over the celebration of the entire assembly who share in the priesthood of the entire Church as the body of Christ (*Lent and Easter Units, Diocese of Broken Bay*).
- **Good Friday:** The celebration of the Passion in the afternoon at about three o'clock has remained substantially unchanged for more than a thousand years. The Liturgy of the Word includes the reading of the Passion (from the Gospel of John) and the General Intercessions. This is followed by the adoration of the Cross, and the celebration concludes with Holy Communion.
- **Holy Saturday:** On Holy Saturday the Church waits at the Lord's tomb, meditating on his suffering and death. The altar is left bare, and the sacrifice of the Mass is not celebrated during the day.
- **Easter Vigil:** After sunset on Holy Saturday the Easter Vigil begins. This is the high point of the Easter Triduum. The Exultet or Easter praise is proclaimed in front of the newly blessed Paschal Candle, symbol of Christ. The readings tell the story of God's saving action in the course of human history. Then follows The Liturgy of Baptism when the catechumens are baptised and confirmed, and the whole congregation is invited to renew their baptismal promises. The Eucharistic liturgy concludes the celebration of Christ's resurrection (*Teacher Resource Sheet 1: Lent and Easter Units, Diocese of Broken Bay*).
- **The Passion Narratives:** The Passion narratives are very old, self contained units in the New Testament tradition. Unlike the Resurrection Narratives, they have much in common perhaps partly because they are older and therefore closer to the events. They are contradictory in some details, leaving unanswered questions, for example, Did the trial of Jesus take place before Passover as in John's account or on Passover Day as in the Synoptic Gospels? These narratives are not intended as mere historical reports of events. They are profound theological documents which interpret Jesus' death and suffering upon the cross from the perspective of post – Easter faith (Goosen & Tomlinson, *Studying the Gospels*).
- **The message of a crucified Messiah** would not have been easily accepted in early Christian communities. Jesus' death confounded patriarchal notions of a conquering Messiah with power over others. He became the Messiah through standing with the poor and oppressed and seeing his work in the context of the establishment of the reign of God. The Passion Narratives were an attempt to help Christian believers come to terms with the cross and the crucifixion. The Gospel writers attempted to show why the messiah died by crucifixion, which was the punishment usually reserved for rebellious foreigners, slaves and criminals.

- The Gospels present the death of Jesus, as the consequence of the radical nature of what Jesus said and did. Each of the Gospel writers throws light on Jesus' death from his particular inspired theological perspective – the same perspective that shaped the rest of the Gospels.
- For Mark, Jesus is the suffering Messiah, alone, abandoned by his disciples and experiencing the absence of God in his darkest hour. It is through the death of Jesus that his identity as the Christ is finally revealed. Only by accepting the cross can one be a disciple of the suffering Messiah. John emphasises Jesus as the only Son of the Father who 'lays down his life of his own accord.' (Jn 10:18). He goes to his cross as a king to his throne of glory. For Luke, Jesus is the Righteous One, the prophet king who is crucified. In Matthew's account of the Passion, the Chosen People of Israel, through their leaders, reject Jesus the Son of God, so now the promise is given over to the people who will follow, the Church (Goosen & Tomlinson, *Studying the Gospels*).
- In the earliest of the post-Easter traditions, Jesus' death was already interpreted as a saving and expiatory death for us and for many. "Jesus was handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification." (Rm 4:25).

## Scripture

### **Lk 19:29-40 - Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem**

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

### **Mt 26:17-19 - The Passover with the Disciples**

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

### **Mt 26:26-29 - Godly Play Script** (Stewart & Berryman p.189)

### **Mt 27:32-38 - The Crucifixion of Jesus**

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull) they offered him wine to drink,

mixed with gall; but when he tasted it he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

#### **Jn 19:40-42**

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby they laid Jesus there.

#### **Matthew 28:1-10 The Resurrection**

The Sabbath was over, and it was almost daybreak on Sunday when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. Suddenly a strong earthquake struck, and the Lord's angel came down from heaven. He rolled away the stone and sat on it. The angel looked as bright as lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards shook from fear and fell down, as though they were dead.

The angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus, who was nailed to a cross. He isn't here! God has raised him to life, just as Jesus said he would. Come, see the place where his body was lying. Now hurry! Tell his disciples that he has been raised to life and is on his way to Galilee. Go there, and you will see him. That is what I came to tell you."

The women were frightened and yet very happy, as they hurried from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and greeted them. They went near him, held on to his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said, "Don't be afraid! Tell my followers to go to Galilee. They will see me there."

## **Major Assessment Task**

#### **Lent and Easter**

Students create a product that helps someone who is learning about Lent and Holy Week engage in the liturgical season. The work is to be presented as a guide being presented in a digital format, series of posters, book, board game, etc.

The **first section** should refer to Lent and to prepare for Easter.

The **second section** should tell the story of what happened to Jesus in the days leading up to his death. This section may be broken up into smaller parts.

The **third section** will explain what happened after his death including the disciples' reactions.

## **Suggested Learning Experiences**

#### **Focusing Activity:**

Plant seeds e.g. Sweet-Peas or climbing beans at the beginning of Lent, using a small wooden cross as the stake.

Students complete Pre-Topic Discussion Sheet; KWL Things I Know, Things I feel, Things I Want to find out and Ways I could find out about Lent/Easter. *This could be used as a pre and post learning experience.*

- Prepare a 'Provocation table' which includes a display of Lenten symbols and images (e.g. palms, purple cloth, chalice, donkey).
- Begin a Word Web to demonstrate an understanding of the Lenten season. This could be added to throughout the unit.
- Discuss features of Lent: almsgiving, prayer and fasting. (Why are these especially highlighted during Lent) Refer to *Expressions 5 Easter* (Maurice Ryan 2003 p 39). [Library Learning Link](#)
- As a class begin a list of what they do together to prepare for Easter in Lent. EG: Caritas Project Compassion, prayer services, giving of time or talents to help others. At the completion of this list students use these ideas to support individual reflection about what they are going to do in Lent to prepare for Easter.
- Create a Lenten Class Tree Branch. Wrap the bottom of the container in purple and collage with words that students have used on their word webs.
- As one of the pillars of Lent in prayer, students write a Lenten prayer reflecting on the time of preparation. These prayers could be written on leaves and placed in a purple prayer box on the class prayer table. These could be shared throughout Lent, as each prayer is shared it is stuck on the class prayer tree. As each prayer is shared and displayed on the tree the branch will slowly become filled with new life, thus supporting the exploration of the resurrection on Easter Sunday.
- Jesus Shared a special meal with his friends, ask students to draw an image of a special meal they have had with their family and friends. Annotate around this image, the food, who was there, what did you talk about and celebrate?
- Read Mt 26:17-19 - The Passover with the Disciples. Students respond to the script using process questions as prompts. ( Who , what, where, why and how)
- Using the link provided <https://www.togetheratonealtar.catholic.edu.au/explore/the-last-supper/> students watch the clip. There are also images of artwork of the last supper displayed on this link. Students view the images and then create their own using what they have heard and seen as a support.
- Read Mt 27:32-38 - The Crucifixion of Jesus. . Students respond to the script using a Scriptural Thinkpad, identifying key words, images, connections to life and questions. (Dan White, Into the Deep, pg 82)
- Create a film strip, cartoon or PowerPoint display based on an event that is commemorated on one of the days of Holy Week.

**NB This unit may be taught with a break over the holidays or with a particular focus depending on the timing of Holy Week and Easter.**

- Matthew 27:57-28:10 Jesus is Risen Godly Play (Stewart & Berryman). Allow students time to reflect and wonder on the scripture. (**Appendix 1**)
- Students create individual collages of new life. They may use words and symbols to do this.
- If possible visit the Church and identify the new paschal candle, the white liturgical cloths and the new life symbols such as flowers on the altar within the Church. Create a classroom prayer focus that celebrates the Easter Story.
- Provide students with a cross template. Students represent key events of Holy Week and Easter using symbols, colours, words and texture. These class crosses can be displayed around the learning space.

## Prayer Ritual

As prayer is an important element of Lent, prayer rituals should be highlighted whilst engaging in this unit. This example of ritual is written for the completion of the learning sequence.

Gather students around the prayer focus which could be the class Lenten Tree or the cross designs that students have made.

Dear God

We come together today to celebrate the joyful resurrection of your Son Jesus and the gift that he has bought into our world. Help us to celebrate his presence among us.

( Share prayer that the students have written over the learning time, you may like to invite all students to do so or nominate a few)

As we look to this time of new life and hope we sing. ( Sing an Easter Song such as Hosanna by Andrew Chinn)

Amen

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Godly Play- From Death to New Life (Sydney)