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Background: Easter Joy

Easter is considered the Church's most important feast. It celebrates the central truth of our faith as Christians—the Paschal Mystery that is Jesus' Passion, Death, Resurrection, and glorious Ascension.

Easter is a season of endless joy. By rising from the dead, Jesus conquered death forever. The followers of Jesus believe that death is only a transition into a new and better life with God forever. Life has won the victory! Eternal death has been overcome! There is great reason to celebrate and rejoice!

The Church's word of joy is *Alleluia*. During Lent, the Church puts this word away. Now that Lent has passed, she returns *Alleluia* to her prayers and hymns in the liturgy so that the joy of Easter is expressed and celebrated.

Getting Ready

1. Eggs, bunnies, chicks, butterflies, and blooming flowers are all signs of the emerging life that announces spring's arrival and help us celebrate the new life of the Easter season. Spend some time outdoors this week and look for signs of new life amid the remains of the darker days of winter. Together with your child, give something in your home or yard new life by cleaning, painting, or repairing it.
2. With your family, create an *Alleluia* banner for your Easter prayer table or prayer space. Write the word *Alleluia* on a large piece of poster board or on a length of drawing paper or shelf paper. Invite family members to fill the borders of the paper with pictures and words that capture the Easter season themes of joy and new life.



Focus

Easter is the Church's greatest feast. It celebrates with joy the new life won for us by Jesus' rising from the dead.

The Saints Say

"We are an Easter People and *Alleluia* is our song!" We are not looking for a shallow joy but rather a joy that comes from faith, that grows through unselfish love, that respects the "fundamental duty of love of neighbour, without which it would be unbecoming to speak of Joy." We realize that joy is demanding; it demands unselfishness; it demands a readiness to say with Mary: "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

Pope Saint John Paul II
November 30, 1986

Prayer

Risen Jesus, you are my life and my hope. Your resurrection has won for me eternal life with the Father. Help me share the joy of Easter with my child, that we may both have unending Easter joy in our hearts. Amen!
Alleluia!

Exploring the Theme

Share

1. Light the candle. Sing an Easter Alleluia and pray together the Sign of the Cross and the Scripture verse at the top of page 251. Explain that Jesus' friend, Mary Magdalene, said this after she learned that Jesus was not dead. He was alive! Talk about where you have seen the Lord in the past week—perhaps at Church, or in a kind deed someone did for you; perhaps in an encouraging word someone spoke to you or in a song you heard.
2. Talk with your child about reasons you have to be joyful today. Also name reasons your family has to be joyful. Name ways your family and you express joy, both in words and actions. Read together Words of Joy on page 251.
3. Read the directions for the Activity. Give your child time to complete it. Invite your child to draw more dialogue balloons on the page, and to write other words that show he or she is filled with joy.

Hear and Believe

4. Look at the photograph on page 252. Explain that it is a photograph of the Easter (Paschal) candle. It is blessed on Holy Saturday night at the Easter Vigil, and it is first lit from the Easter Vigil fire.
5. Take time to explain the symbols you see presented on the candle. Explain that the A and upside down U stand for the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. The cross reminds us of Jesus, to whom we give all power and glory. The year (2017 in the photograph) reminds us that all time belongs to Christ. The five cones of wax remind us of the five wounds of Christ: the nails in his two hands, the nails in his two feet, and the wound in his side.

6. Talk with your child about where the Paschal candle is located in your parish church. Explain that it is a reminder all year long of the new life we have in the Risen Christ.
7. Read Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen! and invite your child to recall why Easter is important and ways the Church celebrates Easter. Share stories of how your parish celebrates Easter and the Easter season.

Respond

8. The butterfly is a common Easter symbol of new life. Talk with your child about how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. You may also wish to read to him or her *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle).
9. Use materials such as tissue paper, scraps of fabric or scrapbooking paper, clothespins, pipe cleaners, scissors, and glue sticks or glue to make butterflies with your child. Give the butterflies to family members, neighbors, and friends as signs of new life.
10. Conclude this Easter session by singing "Alleluia" from the Grade 2 music CD. Pray together the Sign of the Cross and the prayer on page 252. Conclude by again singing "Alleluia."

Two Things We Learned

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