

## Background: The Gift of Peace

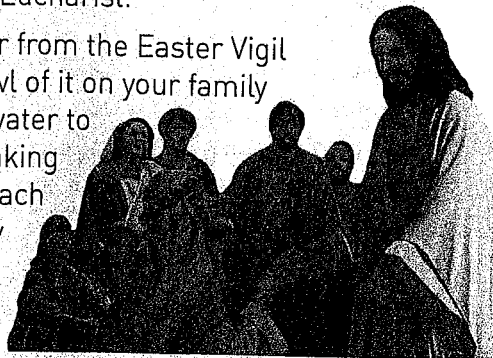
Easter is the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection from the dead. It is also the celebration of God's peace. John's Gospel tells us that when Jesus appeared to his disciples in the upper room on that Sunday evening, he said to them, "Peace be with you" (see John 20:21). Of all the things Jesus could have wished for his friends, he chose to wish them peace.

Jesus did not guarantee an end to war and injustice or an end to arguments and misunderstandings. Instead, Jesus offered his friends the gift of peace that came from knowing that he would be with them, no matter what might happen in the days and weeks ahead. What a gift for his friends! Because the disciples didn't know what might happen to them, they were hiding in fear. But Jesus came and stood in their midst, telling them that peace was his gift to them. God's lasting love was with them.

Peace is Jesus' gift to us as well. Not one of us knows what lies ahead for us. Because we are followers of Jesus, Easter sings to us of peace—real peace. We need not hide in fear, for the Risen Lord is with us now and forever.

## Getting Ready

1. Prepare the family prayer table for the Easter season. Cover the table in a white cloth and place upon it a white candle, a Bible, a cross, and fresh flowers or a plant.
2. Talk with your family about attending your parish's celebration of the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night. Explain that the Church's celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus begins at the Easter Vigil celebration, and the Easter Vigil Mass is also when those who have been preparing to become members of the Catholic Church are welcomed through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.
3. Bring home Holy Water from the Easter Vigil font. Place a small bowl of it on your family prayer table. Use the water to bless yourselves by making the Sign of the Cross each time you gather to pray as a family.



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### Focus

Easter is the Church's greatest feast, celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

### The Saints Say

Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset.

Saint Francis de Sales

### Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument  
of your peace:  
where there is hatred,  
let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.

From the Prayer of St. Francis

## Exploring the Theme

### Share

1. Light the candle. Pray together the Scripture verse at the top of page 249. Remind your child that Jesus is the one who spoke those words to his disciples. Pray again the Scripture verse.
2. Read aloud *What Is Peace?* on page 249. Review the different definitions of *peace* presented in the story. Explain to your child that the greatest peace we can have is the peace that Jesus alone can give us. That peace comes from knowing that Jesus is with us every moment of every day.
3. Read aloud the directions and invite your child to complete the Activity on page 249. Discuss his or her definition and symbol. Share with your child your own definition of peace and what symbol you would use for peace.

### Hear and Believe

4. Read aloud *Easter Peace* on page 250. Ask your child why he or she thinks that the disciples needed Jesus' gift of peace on that evening in particular. (*They were behind locked doors and they were afraid of the Jews. Jesus' gift of peace calmed their fears.*)
5. Read aloud *Jesus' Message of Peace*. Discuss why the gift of Jesus' peace is important to you today. How does it help you in daily life?

### Respond

6. Gather supplies to make peace bookmarks. Think of slogans about peace—either Scripture verses, familiar sayings, or original slogans. Choose and write one slogan on each bookmark. Decorate the bookmarks with illustrations or symbols that are reminders of Jesus' gift of peace.
7. Put a bookmark in your family Bible or in your child's religion book. Give additional bookmarks to family members and friends.
8. Conclude this lesson with prayer. The following format is suggested.
  - Sing "Blest Are We" or "Sing Out, Earth and Skies" from the *Blest Are We Faith in Action* Grade 5 Music CD.
  - Pray together the Sign of the Cross and the prayer at the top of page 250.
  - Read together the Scripture verse at the top of page 249.
  - Offer prayers of petition (responding, "Lord, hear our prayer").
  - Pray together the portion of the Prayer of St. Francis (on the previous page of this book) and the Sign of the Cross.
  - Sing again the song you used at the beginning of this prayer.

#### *Two Things We Learned*

1.

2.