The Resurrection: It’s Kind of a Big Deal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCTRINAL ELEMENT</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profession of Faith</td>
<td>The Resurrection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GOAL**
The goal for this session is to introduce young people to the Resurrection event and why it is important. They should see how the Resurrection is the central truth of our Catholic faith. Additionally, our young people should be able to see how Christ’s resurrection calls us to a life with him in eternity.

**SECONDARY RELIGION GUIDELINES**
(II.I.A.3.d.ii.a,b) (II.II.A.5.c.iv,v)

**SCRIPTURE**
I am the Resurrection- Jn 11:25-26  
Resurrection account: Includes Journey to Emmaus- Lk 24:1-49  
He is not here, he has RISEN- Mt 28:5  
Resurrection account- Mt 28:1-15  
Resurrection account: “Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth- Mk 16:1-18  
Resurrection account: “Appearance to Mary Magdalene”- Jn 20:1-18  
Foretelling of the suffering and Triumph of Christ- Isa 53  
“God will redeem my life”- Ps 49:16

**CATECHISM**
Historical and Transcendent Event- 638-647  
The Resurrection-A Work of the Holy Trinity- 648-650  
The Meaning and Saving Significance of the Resurrection- 651-658  
The Creed- 988-991  
Christ’s Resurrection and Ours- 992-1004

**GOLDEN THREADS**
The Incarnation: Jesus is the FULLNESS of revelation. Jesus lived to die. In order for the Resurrection to matter, Christ had to take on real flesh. He would come to redeem humanity through the Resurrection, but there would be no Resurrection without the Incarnation.

The Paschal Mystery/The Church: The Resurrection is one part of the Paschal Mystery. The Paschal Mystery is the saving work of Christ in history. His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension is the greatest mystery of our faith. It is through the Paschal Mystery that we are able to be brought into life with Christ. “The Paschal Mystery is celebrated and made present in the liturgy of the Church and its saving effects are communicated through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which renews the paschal sacrifice of Christ as the sacrifice offered by the Church (From the Glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church).”

The Trinity: The Resurrection is the work of the Trinity. All the members of the Trinity play a role within the Resurrection. “Christ’s Resurrection is an object of faith in that it is a transcendent intervention of God himself in creation and history (CCC 648).” The three persons of the Trinity act as one in the Resurrection.
The Resurrection: It’s Kind of a Big Deal

ANNUAL THEME RELEVANCE
Built on Christ. Christianity cannot exist without belief in the Resurrection. It changes everything. To be built on Christ, is to say that we proclaim that through his death and resurrection, Christ conquered sin and death!

PROCLAMATION
The Resurrection is the truth that is central to our faith. Even up to his passion and death, people could still proclaim that Jesus was just a man. It is his Resurrection that changes everything. “The resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our faith in Christ, a faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament…” (CCC 638).

Our lives are different because of the Resurrection. Christ lived to die. His entire mission on earth was to bring us to eternal life with him and it is through the Resurrection that this can be. It is because of the Resurrection that we are able to be with Christ for all eternity (CCC 655).

Christ’s Resurrection promises us new life with him in heaven and then the resurrection of our bodies at the end of time (CCC 654). Even in Jesus’ time, people debated the truth of the Resurrection, but we can see it both historically and spiritually. The fact that it is so heavily debated shows us the gravity of the mystery (CCC 643-644).

Our whole lives, our faith, the promise God has made to us about being redeemed rides on the truth of the Resurrection. The Resurrection is so important it is celebrated each Sunday (which are considered to be a “little” Easter) (CCC 988-991).

Between the Resurrection and before the Ascension forty days later, Christ spent the time eating and drinking with the disciples and teaching them about his kingdom (CCC 659). After his Ascension into Heaven, he “draws men to himself” (Jn 12:32) and sits at the right hand of the Father to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb 9:24), interceding for us.

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Songs
• “Resurrection Day” by Matt Maher (Lyrics Available at www.spiritandsong.com)
• “Christ is Risen” by Matt Maher (Lyrics Available at www.spiritandsong.com)

Movies
• “Resurrection” from Catholic Media House. Available at: www.catholicmediahouse.com. Lots of general use videos are available here, but some require a subscription, so poke around and look carefully.
• “Come Awake” from Catholic Media House. Available at www.catholicmediahouse.com. This highlights one aspect of the Resurrection, and looks a little bit more at sinfulness, but based on how you spin the night, it could be applicable.
• “The Passion of the Christ”. The particular part to focus on here the part where Jesus says, “Behold, I make all things new” to his mother.
The Resurrection: It’s Kind of a Big Deal

OTHER RESOURCES

- The Exsultet: this is sung typically by a Deacon at the Easter Vigil. It is the song of praise for Christ breaking through the chains of sin and darkness on the holiest night of the year. This is available in the Sacramentary or “Catholic Rites Today”. It is always a good idea to put into your catechesis a DIRECT link to the liturgy and this is it. If this is proclaimed well, (perhaps by a priest or deacon), then it can be VERY powerful.
- “We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our Song”: St. Augustine.
- Any type of pictures that teens would want to add to their candles for the Activity Option #2. A good place to go is to Google image search.
- Make sure that teens have access to the Bible and the different accounts of the Resurrection.

GATHER

Icebreaker- Roll Away the Stone
This game is best played outdoors in a large area clear of any objects. A parking lot or field is the best option. Divide the teens into teams with an equal number of people. Give each team a large round table to roll across the area. Each team must roll the table (the stone), from one side of the parking lot (or field) to the other. The trick is that each team member, with the exception of one, will be blindfolded. The team must listen to the non-blindfolded member in order for this icebreaker to work.

Opening Prayer
Play the song “Christ is Risen from the Dead” with the lyrics in background.

Then have a deacon or priest (or you can sing it in a pinch), sing the Exsultet from the Easter Vigil:

Jesus, you broke through the chains of death and rose triumphant from the grave.
Heaven is wedded to earth through your resurrection. Be with us tonight as we break open the mystery of your love for us.

EXPLANATION

The Resurrection IS a BIG DEAL!

The Resurrection is kind of a big deal…I mean, really, it’s the central mystery of our faith.

Jesus’ life, death and Resurrection is the Good News (Gospel) that we are proclaiming to the world.

Without the Resurrection Jesus would have been…a great man, a prophet, a visionary or a wise man; when you add the Resurrection and Ascension to the mix, Jesus is the Messiah and Christ prophesied by the Old Testament; the God made man and the redeemer of all humanity through all time.

Simply put, Jesus Christ lived in order to redeem us and show us the way to salvation, the Resurrection is essential to complete this act of love.

WOW! Okay, so why is what I just said such a big deal? Let’s take it apart piece by piece.

In the beginning…
The Resurrection: It’s Kind of a Big Deal

Adam and Eve’s first sin removed humanity from God’s grace. In order to restore that grace and the relationship that God intended to have with his creation he had to send a redeemer. Why? Because, through our gift of free will we (humanity) chose to be separated from God; we burned a pretty big bridge. It was such a big bridge that we couldn’t rebuild it on our own because of the inherited sin from Adam. We needed divine help, a redeemer who is both human and divine to bridge the gap. This is where Jesus comes in. We know about the Incarnation and about his teaching. Wouldn’t that have been enough to redeem us?

(Get responses from the teens…)

No.

Without the Resurrection Jesus would have been, as I said before, a great teacher, a prophet, a wise man, but not the Messiah or redeemer. Why? Through his Resurrection, Christ broke through the chains of sin and death! Jesus, as both fully human and fully divine, descended to the realm of the dead and rose out of that to bring us back to the presence of God. Christ the Messiah removed the permanent stain of sin from our humanity to raise us to the status of adopted sons and daughters of God. He defeated sin and death by his Resurrection.

Through Christ the Messiah’s nature (being fully human and fully divine) and the Resurrection we are raised to new life. As Christ was raised to new life, so shall we be raised on the last day (1 Cor. 15:12-20).

This is really important! St. Paul tells us in his first letter to the Corinthians that, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching and your faith is in vain (1 Cor. 15:14)” and “…if Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain; you are still in your sins (1 Cor. 15:17).”

These are powerful words. So how do we know that Jesus really rose from the dead? Did the Resurrection really happen? Yes, absolutely. But, how do we know?

How do we know the Resurrection happened?

Scriptures

The Catechism tells us that, “the mystery of Christ’s Resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness (CCC 639).” So, we go back to the Gospels, Acts and the Epistles to see how the disciples and apostles knew that Jesus rose from the dead. What accounts are there?

(Ask the teens to give you some examples from scripture. Here are a few for reference:)

Matthew 28:1-10 – Mary Magdalene and the other Mary meet Jesus in the garden.
Matthew 28:11-15 – The report of the guard to the chief priests
Matthew 28:16-20 – Jesus appears to the apostles and commissions them
Mark 16:4-7 – The angel tells the women that Jesus has been raised
Mark 16:9-11 – Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene
Mark 16:10-18 – Jesus appears to two apostles then the rest and commissions them
Luke 24:1-49 – Jesus’ resurrection, the road to Emmaus and the commissioning
John 20:11-18 – Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene
John 20:19-23 – Jesus appears to the apostles
John 20:24-29 – Doubting Thomas
John 21 – Resurrection appearance in Galilee
Acts 1:1-5 – The promise of the Spirit
Acts 9:1-9 – Saul’s (Paul) Conversion
1 Corinthians 15:3-9 – Paul’s testimony to the appearances of Christ after the Resurrection
The Resurrection: It’s Kind of a Big Deal

So Jesus appears to multiple people and under many circumstances throughout the 40 days prior to his Ascension. He appears to the apostles and disciples, to Mary Magdalene, Peter, “other women,” then to “more than 500 persons…on a single occasion (CCC 641-643, 1 Cor. 15:5-8).” All of these eye witnesses bear witness to Christ Resurrected after his death…then they wrote many of the accounts down for us to believe.

That isn’t all though. Scripture also tells us of a plot by the high priests to cover up the Resurrection. In fact, in Matthew’s Gospel we read:

...some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place (at the tomb). And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sum of money to the soldiers and said, 'Tell people his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep'. And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. So they took the money and did as they were directed; and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. (Mt 28: 11-15)

In this passage, we see how powerful the Resurrection truly is. The chief priests, who knew the Scriptures and that Jesus had said he would rise in three days sent a guard to make sure Jesus’ body stayed in the tomb.

The Resurrection happened anyway!

Can you imagine the surprise of the priests when the guards told them that the stone had rolled away and that the body was gone; all while they were on watch. The event had to have taken place if the priests had to bribe the guards to lie about falling asleep (which they never would have done as professional Roman soldiers).

Okay, so the tomb was empty after the third day. The soldiers witnessed the empty tomb and a few of the disciples saw it as well. As a matter of fact, the disciples (Mary, John, and a few others) witnessed an angel asking them who they were looking for and told them that he was not there, he had been resurrected. Mary Magdalene even asks on the way to the tomb “who will roll aside the stone (Mk 16:3)?” and later states that “they have taken him away (Jn 20:2,13).” If the disciples didn’t take Jesus and the priests didn’t remove the body (why would they, it would only make it appear that Jesus had risen), then who did?

Tradition
How do we know that history actually happened?

Think about it this way? How do we know that Aristotle lived and what his teachings were?

(Allow the teens to give their opinions) (FYI: Aristotle lived around 350 BC. The earliest copy of his epic poems that we have come from A.D.1100 -- over 1,400 years after his death. We only have five early copies of Aristotle's works.)

Even with so little evidence it is accepted historic fact that Aristotle lived and taught what is attributed to him. Aristotle’s students passed on his teachings to others through word of mouth. This tradition allowed his thoughts to spread and be passed through time to us. Aristotle’s teachings were spread by word of mouth and traditions. It is the same with the Resurrection accounts.
The Resurrection: It’s Kind of a Big Deal

The disciple whom Jesus loved (John) entered the tomb and discovered the linen cloths lying there and saw and believed. This suggests that he realized the empty tomb’s condition, the absence of Jesus’ body could not have been of human doing and that Jesus didn’t simply return to an earthly life like those he had resurrected before himself (CCC 640). The empty tomb, in and of itself doesn’t certify the Resurrection, but it is the first step toward recognizing the fact of the Resurrection (CCC 639/640).

The Scriptures also speak of a living Tradition of the Resurrection during the time of the early Church. It is the Tradition of the Resurrection that gives us the meaning and gravity of the event. The event itself is witnessed by Scripture and history, but the truth of the event is passed on to us through Scripture and Tradition.

Faith of the Saints and Martyrs
The Resurrection is also witnessed to by the actions of the early Church martyrs and saints.

Would you be willing to suffer and die for a lie? How about dying for something that you didn’t really believe happened? Would you be willing to die for something that you know happened and believed in? (talk about this with the teens, would they be willing to suffer for a lie or the truth?)

The early Church believed so deeply in the truth of the Resurrection that they were willing to suffer and die (become martyrs) for their belief. What did they have to gain by this? Wouldn’t it have been easier just to say that you were wrong than to die for a belief that may or may not be true? Besides, what did the apostles and disciples have to gain from proclaiming the Resurrection. They certainly didn’t gain popularity, fame or money. In fact most of the early disciples lost their families, freedom or their lives proclaiming the “Good News.” History and psychology both tell us that the human preservation instinct is such that most people are not willing to suffer for something that isn’t true simply for the sake of saving face.

What it all comes down to is…
So, the Resurrection event is witnessed by the apostle’s teachings, the martyrdom of the early Church, Scripture and Tradition. But does that prove that the Resurrection happened?

In short, no, it doesn’t prove it.

I wish I could stand here and give you physical evidence or have Jesus come down right now body and all to tell you, but I can’t. There is nothing that can prove the Resurrection happened. We have a lot of evidence that points to it happening, but we can’t scientifically prove it. However, there is nothing that proves it didn’t happen either.

This is where we take our leap of faith. It is a matter of faith! We have to have faith in the word of the Apostles (Gospels), faith in Jesus as the Messiah and faith that God can do all things.

When we take this leap to believe without seeing we get so much in return. Our hearts long to be with Christ, we want to be with him for all eternity and our faith gives us hope that we will be with him. The Resurrection is our surest sign of hope and quite possibly one of the biggest leaps of faith that we’ll ever have to take.
The Resurrection: It’s Kind of a Big Deal

So what do we get for our leap of faith?

You get loads of grace, newness of life, hope in everlasting life and resurrection on the last day, eternal joy, happiness and peace; just to name a few.

We get all of this through Jesus’ life, death and Resurrection.

Resurrected Body and Soul
Newness of life is best seen in Christ after his Resurrection. The disciples have a hard time recognizing Jesus, which seems really strange. Why wouldn’t they recognize him after all the time they spent with him? If I spent three years with someone, wouldn’t I recognize them after only a few days apart?

In the Resurrection, Christ’s humanity has entered into the glory of God. The body that they hardly recognized is a glorified body. Through touch (Thomas, etc...) and sharing a meal (post road to Emmaus), Jesus shows that he is not a ghost. He is something more. The body that appears before them is the same earthly body that had, only days before, been tortured, but at the same time, it is no longer confined by space and time. It is not simply an earthly body, but it belongs to a heavenly realm (CCC 645). They don’t recognize Christ because his body is radiating with the Glory of God the Father!

This will happen to us as well. In death, our earthly bodies decay and our souls go to be with God. Our soul is awaiting its reunion with our glorified body. We won’t get new bodies; we will just get the best, most perfect, glorified body, just as Christ did. We know that this will happen, because Christ is raised with his own body. Jesus promised to raise those who believe in him, the same way he was raised.

No one knows the hour in which the Lord will reappear in glory, but we do know that he has promised us that we will be reunited with our bodies at the end of the world. At that time we will perfectly radiate Christ. We will be the best, shiniest version of ourselves ever! Christ will transfigure our bodies!

Is this hard for you to believe?

Hard for us to accept
It’s interesting that we live in a world where we will believe just about anything. Everyday there are claims on TV about gadgets that do more than ever with less. There are stories about UFOs and aliens, about miraculous things that make life easier. “Just buy this perfume and you will be popular and beautiful,” or “all you have to do is _____ (fill in the blank) and you will have a perfect life and be happy.” Do any of these sound familiar? So many of them are fantastic claims and outright lies, but how many people fall for them?

(Ask the teens:) What are some other fantastical things you have heard recently?

How can we buy into all these things, but find believing in the Good News of our salvation is so hard? So unbelievable that people have been trying to debunk it for centuries? Probably because belief in the Resurrection calls us to more, it calls us to a life of holiness, to a life of faith. The Resurrection, while it is a historically real event, still requires us to have faith.
The Resurrection: It’s Kind of a Big Deal

The Resurrection confirms all of Christ’s works and teachings and that’s hard for us to handle. He fulfills every promise he makes to us in the Resurrection. Truly, he makes all things new and for that, it’s a really big deal. His death liberates us from sin, and by his Resurrection, he opens the way to a new life. We truly are able to share in his life through the Resurrection.

Conclusion

Is the Resurrection a big deal? If you hope that this life is not all there is. If you hope that there is a way you can find eternal joy. Then yes, absolutely and without question, the Resurrection is a big deal.

The Resurrection changes everything!

It’s the biggest deal around. We get to participate in heaven because of Christ’s Resurrection. St. Augustine is attributed with saying: “We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song.” Easter is the song of our heart as Christians. At Easter, we celebrate our newness of life. Alleluia is our song! The Resurrection is the source of light for the whole liturgical year and the source of our hope as Christians! No longer are we bound to sin and darkness (or death), but we are people of the light and life.

APPLICATION

Activity Option # 1: He is RISEN from the dead!
Have the teens read through the different versions of the Resurrection in the four different Gospels. They should work to construct a timeline of who Jesus appeared to so that it reads as one long timeline and not separated among the four Gospels. Have the teens present to the group.

Activity Option # 2: Light of the World.
The Easter Vigil starts in the dark and the eventually ends up fully lit by candles. This is symbolic of Christ breaking through the darkness of sin and death and bringing us into the light of new life. The Easter Vigil is considered to be the holiest night of the year. The Exsultet says: “Accept this Easter Candle, a flame divided, but undimmed, a pillar of fire that glows to the honor of God. Let it mingle with the lights of heaven and continue bravely burning to dispel the darkness of this night. May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning: Christ, the Morning Star, who came back from the dead, and shed his peaceful light on all mankind, your Son who lives and reigns forever and ever.” The Paschal Candle or Easter Candle is blessed on Easter and is used at Baptisms and funerals throughout the year. At every liturgy, candles are used as a symbol of the risen Christ. It reminds people that through baptism, they are brought out of darkness and into God’s marvelous light.

(Then say to the teens:) So that you can have a constant reminder of being called into the light, we are going to be decorating candles tonight. Each one of you will get to make one and as a group, we will decorate the one that we’ll use in our sacred space this year.

Direct the teens to go to the table and decorate the candle in whatever way they feel. It is helpful to provide the teens with precut pictures and sayings. The easiest way to do this is by searching online for holy pictures. I typically include pictures of Jesus, our Lady, the Holy Spirit, etc. It’s easy to go to a scrapbooking store as well and just pick up some quotes for scrapbook pages. Additionally, I like to include ribbons and pins, glitter and some paints.
The Resurrection: It’s Kind of a Big Deal

This allows teens to decorate it as they wish. A little Modge Podge from the craft section will get the pictures to stick to the candle and will provide a top coat that’s nice. Warn your students that when they burn the candle it can burn quickly because of all of the paper, so they should not leave it unattended. The candles will still be wet when they go home, so they’ll need to be careful taking them home. Have them decorate the candles in a way that they choose. Allow 20-30 minutes for decorating and clean up.

SEND
Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-57. (Then say) Father, through your Son’s Death and Resurrection You broke through the darkness of our hearts. Death has no victory, sin no longer stings, you are triumphant and victorious. Help us to be Easter people, to have Alleluia be our song! Amen.

Summary: What does this have to do with Jesus?
The Resurrection has everything to do with Jesus. Through the Resurrection, Christ brings us new life and we are able to be with him for eternity. Without the Resurrection, we would be people with no hope of seeing God’s glory. The Resurrection makes us part of the story of God’s unending love for us. He allows us to be part of the story of our salvation. Without the Resurrection, we would be a hopeless creation.

Closing Prayer
Before the closing prayer, set up some candles in your sacred space and invite each teen to come up and offer a petition that the whole group can pray for.

Play “Resurrection Day” By Matt Maher; Invite the teens to sing along. (Then say) Father, help us to see within these candles the light of your Son’s Resurrection. Help us to see how they remind us of your marvelous light. May they burn brightly along with our hearts which burn with your love and glory! Amen.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HISPANIC YOUTH MINISTRY
The teaching of Christ’s Resurrection is one that could always be more emphasized within the Hispanic culture. Being a culture that has endured great persecutions, wars, sufferings, and poverty both in the U.S. and in the native countries of South and Central America, Hispanics often find it easier to identify with the crucified Christ. This is evident in the many traditions and rituals during Holy Week and Good Friday, with very little tradition or celebration of Easter Sunday and the Resurrection. The Hispanic culture at times has an unconscious mindset that it is better to suffer in this present world than to advance at all. Suffering has its purpose and sacrifice its meaning, however when we work with Hispanic youth it is worth spending some extra time on stressing the gift of Everlasting Life that Christ has given to us through his Resurrection which is not just reserved for us to enjoy in eternity, but which we are given glimpses of and should celebrate now in the present. The Resurrection is ultimately our greatest hope for our future, and it is a hope that the Hispanic culture often needs to be reminded of as they hope and work towards a better future.

Biography
Emily “Em” Anderson is the Director of Youth Ministry at St. James in Falls Church, Va. She has an MA in Theology and Christian Ministry with a (soon to be) concentration in Catechetics from Franciscan University of Steubenville. She has a passion for the teens of our Church and loves coming up with creative ways to get them to love Christ. She likes to sing at the top of her lungs in the car, make up awkward dance moves, and is constantly on the quest for silly bands.