

Embracing Easter Joy

Kathy Kuczka

It is Easter Sunday and Christ is risen!

The Church keeps the fifty days of Easter in several ways. In some parishes, the newly initiated sit in a prominent place reserved for them and their godparents. Two of the symbols of Easter—water and light—are featured throughout the season. The blessing and sprinkling of water may be performed at the beginning of Mass. The paschal candle, lit from the blessed fire at the Easter Vigil, remains near the ambo or in the middle of the sanctuary reminding the faithful that they are to live in the light of Christ.

How does one live the joy of Easter for fifty days?

REFLECT ON THE MYSTERIES

During the Easter season, those who were initiated at the Easter Vigil reflect on their faith journey, in particular, on the celebrations of Holy Week and on their experience of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. This period is known as *mystagogy*, a time set aside for reflection that leads to a deeper understanding. According to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the entire community, not just the neophytes, is asked to reflect on the mysteries of faith during the Easter season. Some suggestions for engaging in mystagogy are

- read Pope Francis' *The Joy of the Gospel*;
- study or take a class on some aspect of the faith;
- reach out to one of the newly baptized or newly received and talk with them about their faith journey. Allow their enthusiasm to fill you with joy.

REFLECT ON THE WORD OF GOD

All the readings during the fifty days of Easter are taken from the New Testament. The first reading always comes from the Acts of the Apostles, in which we hear how the Holy Spirit guided the early Church. The second reading is from the First Letter of Peter, the First Letter of John, or the Book of Revelation. The Gospels, with their accounts of Jesus' resurrection appearances, come mostly from John. Each of these

Scriptures give witness to the paschal mystery through the lives of those who have experienced death and new life. Some ideas for reflecting on the Word of God are

- read through the Scriptures of the seven Sundays of Easter;
- consider how you are being invited to newness of life;
- reflect on ways you will respond, as did the first disciples, to the call of the risen Lord.



During Easter Time the Scriptures draw us to reflect on how God invites us to newness of life.

CELEBRATE YOUR BAPTISM

During these fifty days, take time to remember your baptism by

- perusing through photos;
- speaking to a godparent, relative, or friend who was present at your baptism;
- lighting your baptismal candle and putting it in a special place for the entire fifty days;
- marking the date of your baptism on the calendar to celebrate it every year!

Water is the primary symbol of baptism. Contemplate how water cleanses, refreshes, soothes, and heals and then how baptism cleanses, refreshes, soothes, and heals. Think about how deep water calls you to trust, and then consider how baptism calls you to trust when life plunges you into deep water. Reflect on water's power to evoke death and promise life, then reflect on baptism's power to evoke death and promise eternal life.

SHARE THE JOY

The Gospel accounts during Easter Time urge the first disciples to spread the Good News. The angel tells the women at the tomb to tell the disciples that Jesus has been raised from the dead. On the Ascension, Jesus tells his disciples to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." On Pentecost Jesus breathes on his disciples and sends them forth. Think about where and to whom the Holy Spirit is calling you to share the joy of the resurrection.

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