

Prayer Celebration

Preparation: Cover a table with a white cloth. Arrange a large Bible in a stand-up holder and a tall, white candle on the table. Place a vase of flowers on it, making sure there is one flower for each child. Choose a favorite Easter song to sing with the children. Gather the children around the table.

Leader: Christ has risen!

All: Alleluia!

Invite the children to listen carefully to the story of the first Easter.

Gospel Reading John 20:11–18

Talk about how joyful Mary Magdalene was to discover that Jesus had risen. Point out that by paying attention to the signs of new life around us, we can discover what this holy season means to us as followers of Jesus.

Leader: Loving and gracious God, the beauty of spring is opening up all around us.

All: We thank you for the gift of new life.

Leader: Fill us with wonder as we celebrate the joy of Easter. Remind us to pay attention to the gifts of your creation.

All: We thank you for the gift of new life.

Leader: Help us to be signs of the new life of Jesus through the ways we share and care for others.

All: We thank you for the gift of new life.

Distribute the flowers and encourage the children to remain attentive to the signs of new life throughout the Easter season.

Leader: May the peace of Jesus live in us throughout these Easter days. In his name we pray.

All: Amen.

Adapted from *Gather in My Name*, "Discovering the New Life of Easter." For more information, visit WeBelieveWeb.com/gather.cfm

Easter Signs of New Life

Signs of new life in Christ surround us throughout the year, but they take on particular meaning during the 50 days of the Easter season. On the Second Sunday of Easter, the gospel tells of Thomas, who would not believe unless he could see with his own eyes and touch with his own hands the risen body of Jesus. We are not able to see, hear, touch, and talk to Jesus the way Thomas and the other disciples did. We can, however, discover signs of wonder within our daily surroundings.

By opening ourselves to discovery, we become better attuned to recognizing these signs as we make our way through one of the church's most sacred seasons. It is a time to pay attention, a time to be still, a time to be immersed in the wonder of God's love and the closeness of Christ's presence. It is the season to celebrate new life.

There are many signs and symbols of new life that surround us at Easter. The liturgical color shifts from the violet of Lent to white, signifying the joy of Jesus' Resurrection. During the Easter Vigil, the church welcomes new members through the sacraments of initiation. The presider immerses the catechumens in blessed water, symbolizing their immersion into new life as Christians. They are clothed in a white garment, reminding them that they are now clothed

in Christ and thus a visible sign of Christian justice, peace, and compassion. Their godparents present them with a candle as a reminder of the light of Christ that shines within them. The presider anoints them with chrism (sacred oil), which signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will strengthen them for sharing in the mission of Christ. They share with us the Body and Blood of Christ, which nourishes them for their journey of faith. This is a time for all Christians to renew our commitment to and participation in the way of discipleship.

Coupled with the signs of life emerging in the natural world, the rituals of our Easter celebration shape the season into one of wonder, joy, and awe. By staying alert to the life emerging around us and symbolized in the rich traditions of the church, we discover a deeper appreciation of the life within us.

Like flowers budding on the trees, chicks emerging from their shells, butterflies flying free of their cocoons, and neophytes stepping out of the fresh waters of baptism, each of us is called into a new way of being.



Bright Ideas

Looking for more ideas about celebrating the Easter season? Visit WeBelieveWeb.com.



Suggested Activity

Engage your learners in a discussion about the signs of new life that are emerging at this time of year. Place an empty basket in your prayer space. Provide learners with index cards and invite them to use words or pictures to record the signs of new life they are discovering in the world around them each day. When they have completed a card, they can place it in the basket. Share the cards together as part of a prayer service near the end of the Easter season.

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Directions: What can you discover along the Easter trail? Collect the eggs by completing each activity. Color an egg in the basket for each one you collect.

Easter is a season to celebrate the new life of Jesus.

Tell a friend about one way you like to celebrate Easter with your family.

Easter is one of the special times we welcome new members into the church through the sacraments of initiation.

Name two ways to welcome someone new to your class. Write your ideas on the basket.

Find three letters hidden on the page.

Use them to fill in the word that we sing during the Easter season to express our joy in the risen Lord.

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One way to discover signs of new life is by paying attention.

Look around the room. Name five things you didn't notice about the room when you first entered and write them on the path.

Complete the prayer.

Thank you, Jesus, for these people who love and care for me
