

Lesson 5

# Jesus' Passion



## Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection

Early World	Patriarchs	Egypt & Exodus	Desert Wanderings	Conquest & Judges	Royal Kingdom	Divided Kingdom	Exile	Return	Maccabean Revolt	Messianic Fulfillment	The Church

### Introduction

The Resurrection is central to the Christian faith. Disbelief in Jesus' claim to be divine is what led to his crucifixion. Throughout his Passion, Jesus is challenged to prove that he's indeed the Messiah. Nowhere is this more apparent than after he's been nailed to the Cross. In his Gospel, Luke records: "And the people stood by, watching; but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!'" (*Lk 23:35*). Although Jesus refused to silence the taunts of onlookers by coming down from the Cross, the Resurrection confirms his divinity. This is the good news that Catholics repeat every Sunday in the Nicene Creed: "For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father." The same people who had difficulty believing in the divinity of Jesus before his death also had difficulty accepting that he'd risen from the dead. In the centuries since, belief in Jesus' Resurrection has remained a stumbling block for many. St. Paul addresses this when he writes to the Christians at Corinth: "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (*1 Cor 15:13-14*). St. Paul's point is well taken. The thing that distinguishes Christianity from other religions is Jesus' promise that those who believe in him gain a real share in his eternal life, which is fully revealed in his Resurrection.

### Matthew 26:26-29

**26** <sup>26</sup>Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and give it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup>And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; <sup>28</sup>for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup>I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

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## John 19:17—20:8

**19**<sup>17</sup> So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. <sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. <sup>19</sup> Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” <sup>20</sup> Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. <sup>21</sup> The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” <sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

<sup>23</sup> When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But his tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; <sup>24</sup> so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfil the scripture,

“They parted my garments among them,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.”

<sup>25</sup> So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold your son!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

<sup>28</sup> After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), “I thirst.” <sup>29</sup> A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “It is finished”; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

<sup>31</sup> Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

<sup>32</sup> So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; <sup>33</sup> but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. <sup>35</sup> He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup> For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, “Not a bone of him shall be broken.” <sup>37</sup> And again another scripture says, “They shall look on him whom they have pierced.”

<sup>38</sup>After this Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away his body. <sup>39</sup>Nicodemus also, who had first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight. <sup>40</sup>They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup>Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup>So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

**20** <sup>1</sup>Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup>So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." <sup>3</sup>Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup>They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; <sup>5</sup>and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>**Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, <sup>7</sup>and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself.** <sup>8</sup>**Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.**

*[Please Note: One of the best ways to meditate on God's Word is through memorization. A suggested memory verse is always highlighted in the Scripture text, or you may choose a verse of your own.]*

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## Questions for Reflection and Study

It's best to read the biblical texts and *Points to Ponder* before responding to the questions. To aid in discussion, please note Scripture verses where you find your responses.

### 'Take, Eat, This Is My Body'

#### Matthew 26:26-29

1. Matthew 26:26-29 describes Jesus' institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. What additional information about this does St. Paul provide in his First Letter to the Corinthians, and who or what does he cite as the authority for his teaching (see *1 Cor* 11:23-25)? What warning

### **Jesus' Passion Lesson 5 Questions for Reflection and Study**

does St. Paul issue to the early Christians regarding the manner in which they're to approach the sacrament of the Eucharist (see *1 Cor* 11:27-29), and how is this Scripture passage reinforced in Church teaching (see *CCC* 1385)?

### **'It Is Finished'**

#### **John 19:17-30**

- Reflection:** In Matthew 27:46, Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Read all of Psalm 22 and list the ways that it applies to Jesus' Passion. During intense suffering, many people become distraught and feel abandoned by God, but they later discover that their experiences have brought about a resurrection of faith. Describe a time when this has happened to you. How did you know that God hadn't abandoned you?
- Scholars agree that the apostle John is "the disciple whom Jesus loved" frequently referred to in John's Gospel. How do Jesus' words in John 19:26-27 emphasize the Blessed Virgin Mary's role as Mother of the Church (see *CCC* 501 and *CCC* 963)? How do Mary's roles as virgin and mother establish her as a symbol and perfect realization of the Church (see *CCC* 507)?
- Jesus' consignment of his Mother's care to John reinforces Church teaching regarding Mary's perpetual virginity, since Jesus wouldn't have needed to ask someone to care for his mother if he had siblings. How is Mary's virginity related to her faith (see *CCC* 506)?

### **One of the Soldiers Pierced His Side**

#### **John 19:31-42**

- Compare John 19:31-33 and Exodus 12:43-49, the passage in which God provides detailed instructions to the Israelites regarding the sacrificial Passover lamb. In John 19:34, the blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side are types of which sacraments (see *CCC* 1225)? How does the soldier's piercing of Jesus' body relate to Old Testament prophecy (see *Zech* 12:10)?

### **Jesus' Passion Lesson 5 Questions for Reflection and Study**

6. What events does Matthew describe in his account of Jesus' death that might have led those who were present to become members of the early Church (see *Mt 27:51-53*)? What is the Roman centurion's response to witnessing Jesus' crucifixion (see *Mt 27:54*)?

### **The First Day of the Week**

#### **John 20:1-8**

7. John 20:1 describes how Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb early on the morning of the first day of the week. What did the early Christians do on that day (see *Acts 20:7*), and how has their practice continued to the present day (see *CCC 1343*)? What does the Church mean by the term "Sunday obligation" (see *CCC 2180*), and in what ways are Christians encouraged to consecrate and sanctify Sundays (see *CCC 2186*)?
8. **Reflection: Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.** John 20:6-8 (our selected memory verses), is a passage that describes the disciple John's faith in the Resurrection. What is there about John's personal experience that provided him with such strong faith? Who's been the most influential Christian witness in your life? What do you consider your own strongest personal experience of Jesus, and how does it help you to witness about Christianity to others?
9. How are Jesus' words to the good thief in Luke 23:43 related to Church teaching about the final destiny of the soul (see *CCC 1021*)? In his parable about Lazarus and the rich man, what warning does Jesus issue that implies not everyone will be capable of believing in the Resurrection (see *Lk 16:31*)?

## **Jesus' Passion Lesson 5 Questions for Reflection and Study**

10. In John 20:11-18, after Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved leave the empty tomb, the risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene. According to the teaching of the Church, what role does Jesus' Resurrection play in the Christian faith (see CCC 638)? How do the writings of St. Paul support the Christian belief that the Resurrection of Jesus is a real event that actually occurred in history (see *1 Cor* 15:3-10)?

### **Voices of the Saints**

*As we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love. Never swerving from his instructions, then, but faithfully observing his teaching . . . until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom.*

—St. Benedict, founder of Western monasticism

## **Opportunities for Additional Study**

### **Points to Ponder—Matthew 26:26-29; John 19:17—20:8**

#### **Jesus Is Lifted Up**

In the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, as Jesus is being nailed to the Cross, the Blessed Virgin Mary stands by watching every move, although John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” has to close his eyes, and Mary Magdalene buries her face in her hands. Scripture doesn't record these details, nor do the Gospels make any mention of the Roman soldiers turning the Cross over on its face after Jesus has been nailed to it.

In his Gospel, John describes the sign that the soldiers place on the Cross: “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” and he records that Pilate had this title written in the three most common languages spoken in Jerusalem at that time—Hebrew, the language of the Jews; Latin, the language of the Romans who occupied Judea; and Greek, the language used throughout the Roman Empire. Because there were thousands of Jews from all over the world in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Passover, everyone who saw the sign would have been able to read it. The movie neglects to mention the Jewish religious leaders' objection to Pilate's choice of words: “The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews,” but, “This man said, I am King of the Jews.”’ Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written’” (*Jn* 19:21-22).

### **Jesus' Passion Lesson 5 Points to Ponder**

When Jesus' Cross is raised, two interesting things that aren't recorded in the Gospels are depicted in the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. The Blessed Virgin Mary stands and slowly lets the gravel she's been clutching in her hands fall to the ground in a submissive gesture that echoes her Son's surrender to God's will. Mary Magdalene, who's been watching Jesus intently as though she expected him to bring his Passion to an abrupt end at any moment, also rises and covers her head with her veil. The two women's apparent acceptance of the inevitability of Jesus' death reflects an understanding of his teaching recorded in John 12:32: "[A]nd I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." John 12:33 goes on to point out: "He said this to show by what death he was to die." Before Jesus can rise from the dead in the Resurrection, it's necessary that he be lifted up on the Cross to die. The two events together form the Paschal mystery and accomplish the coming of Jesus' kingdom.

#### **'Father, Forgive Them'**

The film then introduces yet another flashback to the Last Supper, and this time Jesus is shown pouring wine for the disciples. St. Paul describes the scene: "In the same way also [Jesus took] the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me'" (*1 Cor* 11:25). These words of Jesus'—and those recorded in Matthew 26:28: "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"—form the biblical foundation for the Church's teaching about the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Paragraph 781 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains Jesus' New Covenant and its connection to the Old Covenant between God and the descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel: "[God] therefore chose the Israelite race to be his own people and established a covenant with it. . . . All these things, however, happened as a preparation for and figure of that new and perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ . . . the New Covenant in his blood."

The important link between Jesus' Paschal sacrifice and the forgiveness of sins is underscored in Scripture and in the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. As he's dying, the synoptic Gospel writers record that Jesus is taunted by onlookers reminding him that he said he could rebuild the Temple in three days and urging him to come down from the Cross. In his Gospel, Mark records that the chief priests and scribes also mock Jesus, saying: "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe" (*Mk* 15:31-32). Jesus' response in the film is taken from Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

#### **'Remember Me, Lord'**

The "good" thief makes the briefest of appearances in Luke's account of Jesus' Passion, yet his dialogue with Jesus discloses basic tenets of the Christian faith. Luke 23:40-43 describes how the "good" thief rebukes the other thief who's been mocking Jesus, saying: "'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.' And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power.' And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'" Jesus' promise is extended to all who are sincerely

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sorry for their sins, but his words also point to the urgent and immediate need for repentance, an idea that's reinforced throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament, in a passage that the Church includes in the liturgy for Ash Wednesday, the prophet Joel writes: "'Yet even now,' says the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.' Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil" (*Joel 2:12-13*). And in a New Testament passage also read at the start of Lent, St. Paul writes: "For [God] says: 'At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.' Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (*2 Cor 6:2*).

The movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, portrays a crow pecking at the eye of the second thief and blinding him, a detail not included in the Gospels but one that represents a horrifying aspect of crucifixion. The crow's attack, while grisly, symbolizes the "bad" thief's unwillingness to see the truth about Jesus. It also underscores one of many reasons why crucifixion was a form of execution reserved for common criminals who had no standing in the Empire. In addition to the extreme pain and public humiliation, crucifixion victims were naked and at the mercy of birds and animals and the elements—not to mention unsympathetic bystanders. Roman citizens who'd been condemned to death were beheaded instead, including St. Paul, who was martyred outside the walls of Rome. St. Peter, who wasn't a Roman citizen, was crucified upside down.

### **'Into Thy Hand I Commit My Spirit'**

As Jesus' death becomes imminent, the sky turns ominous, a detail consistent with Scripture: "And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour" (*Mk 15:33*). In the film, onlookers begin leaving the scene at this point, including Caiaphas and the chief priests. The Blessed Virgin Mary and John approach the Cross, and Mary kisses her Son's bloody foot. This detail isn't scriptural, nor are the words that Mary speaks to Jesus, although most people instinctively will recognize in Mary's actions and words the normal response of a parent whose child is suffering: "Flesh of my flesh, heart of my heart, my Son, let me die with you."

John 19:28-29 records Jesus saying "I thirst," and then describes how a sponge full of vinegar is held to his mouth in fulfillment of Scripture: "They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (*Ps 69:21*). Like many of Jesus' final words from the Cross, "I thirst" appears to be a reference from another of the Psalms: "O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land where no water is" (*Ps 63:1*). In this Psalm, attributed to David, the psalmist is besieged by enemies but nevertheless ends his song on a hopeful note, praising God's glory: "But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth; they shall be given over to the power of the sword, they shall be prey for jackals. But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by him shall glory; for the mouths of liars will be stopped" (*Ps 63:9-11*).

Thirst is a recurring theme in the Bible, mentioned among the charitable works of mercy associated with those who will inherit the kingdom (*Mt 25:34-36*), and also in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (*Mt 5:6*).

### **Jesus' Passion Lesson 5 Points to Ponder**

In John's Gospel, Jesus requests a drink when he initiates the conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well in which he reveals to her that he's the Messiah and offers her living water, a symbol of Baptism (*Jn* 4:7-26). In a commentary on this passage, St. Augustine writes that "the one who was asking for a drink of water was thirsting for her faith" and that Jesus "is in need, as one hoping to receive, yet he is rich, as one about to satisfy the thirst of others." Paragraph 694 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the Holy Spirit is "personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified as its source and welling up in us to eternal life."

John's Gospel describes Jesus' words in the last moments before death: "'It is finished'; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (*Jn* 19:30). Luke records a slightly different version of the story: "Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!' And having said this he breathed his last" (*Lk* 23:46). These final words recounted in Luke's Gospel appear to be yet another quote from the Psalms, this time from Psalm 31:5: "Into thy hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God." Some scholars believe that Psalm 31 was taught to Jewish children as a bedtime prayer, an ancient equivalent of "Now I lay me down to sleep." This Psalm, like the others Jesus quotes, also describes a soul in distress, and it ends on the customary note of hope: "Love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but abundantly requites him who acts haughtily. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!" (*Ps* 31:23-24).

In the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, Jesus' death is marked by a single tear from heaven that sets off an earthquake. Not scriptural, the tear from heaven is a creative representation of the filmmakers' vision of God the Father's reaction to his Son's death. The earthquake itself is recorded in Matthew's Gospel (*Mt* 27:51). Although history is clear that the Temple at Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., there's no historic evidence or Gospel description of the Temple being damaged in connection with Jesus' crucifixion at the exact time of his death. All three synoptic Gospel writers report that the curtain of the Temple is torn in two, however (*Mt* 27:51, *Mk* 15:38, and *Lk* 23:45). The curtain veiled the holy of holies, the most sacred part of the Temple and the dwelling place for God (*Ex* 26:31-34), an area that only the high priest could enter once a year on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement (*Heb* 9:3-7). The torn curtain doesn't represent God's vengeance against the Jewish religious leaders but rather his love of all people. After Jesus' willing sacrifice of himself in atonement for the sins of all men and women, God is able to dwell with human beings in a more intimate way. The veil is torn because the Spirit of God explodes outward from the heart of the Temple into human hearts, which have become the new temples of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul writes to the early Christians: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (*1 Cor* 3:16).

### **'At Once There Came Out Blood and Water'**

Although the film shows several of the Roman soldiers undergoing conversion as a result of witnessing Jesus' death—including the centurion who seems to be in charge of the executions—the most interesting representation is of the soldier who's given the task of thrusting a spear into Jesus' body to make certain that he's dead. Christian tradition has held that this man's name was Longinus, although in the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, he's called Cassius. Throughout the

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film, this soldier is shown becoming more and more sympathetic to Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and his complete conversion is apparent when he falls to his knees in the shower of blood and water that pours out of Jesus' wounded side. John, who was present at the foot of the Cross, makes a point in his Gospel of describing the blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side: "But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water." John goes on to emphasize the truth of what he's writing, indicating that he considers this detail of great importance: "He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe" (*Jn* 19:34-35).

Devotions to the Divine Mercy and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus both are related to this passage of Scripture. The Church celebrates God's Divine Mercy on the Sunday following Easter, and the Divine Mercy portrait shows Jesus with rays of blood and water streaming from his heart. Paragraph 478 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that Jesus "has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, 'is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that . . . love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings' without exception." In the blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side the Church also sees types of Baptism and Eucharist, the sacraments of new life. St. Ambrose taught: "See where Baptism comes from, if not from the Cross of Christ, from his death. There is the whole mystery: He died for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved." It's little wonder, given the Church's understanding of the meaning of Jesus' Passion, that the film depicts Satan screaming in hell when Jesus dies, although Scripture is completely silent about Satan's reaction.

### **The Morning Star Which Never Sets**

In the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, most of the Roman soldiers run away during the earthquake, but three remain to help remove Jesus' body from the Cross. The camera focuses on the nails and crown of thorns cast aside before closing in on the heartbreaking sight of the Blessed Virgin Mary holding the body of her dead Son. Most people are familiar with Michelangelo's pristine white marble *Pieta* in St. Peter's Basilica, which depicts Mary looking down at Jesus' dead body. Its counterpart in the film is a bloody *Pieta* that shows the Blessed Virgin numbly staring out in grief at the world, her posture indicating that she's still accepting of God's will and still obedient. After a long moment, the screen goes dark. Moviegoers next see the heavy stone rolling away by itself from the tomb, and the light of Easter entering the darkness. Burial cloths billow in a corner of the dim cavern. The risen Jesus stands up and walks into the world. The final thing the camera focuses on are the holes in his hands.

The closing scene from the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, calls to mind the joyful words of the Exsultet, which dates to the fourth century. This hymn is sung just after the lighting of the Paschal candle at the beginning of the most holy Mass of the liturgical year, the Easter Vigil, the time when adults are brought into the Church through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist: "May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning; Christ that Morning Star, who came back from the dead, and shed his peaceful light on all mankind, your Son who lives and reigns for ever."

## Catechism Connection

- To learn how the spousal character of humans' relationship to God is perfectly fulfilled in Mary's virginal motherhood, see CCC 505.
- When Jesus prays from the Cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," he establishes himself in solidarity with sinners so that they might be reconciled to God. To learn more, see CCC 603.
- It's love "to the end" that gives Jesus' sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. For more information, see CCC 616.
- To learn how the three divine persons of the Holy Trinity act together as one in Jesus' Resurrection, see CCC 648.
- CCC 1323 describes the sacrament of the Eucharist as "a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet 'in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.'"
- Although the only perfect sacrifice is the one that Christ offered on the Cross, the Church teaches that individual Christians can make their lives a sacrifice to God by uniting themselves with his sacrifice. To learn more, see CCC 2100.

## Rome to Home

Pope John Paul II described the need for Christians to remain courageous in the face of suffering in order that they might be sent forth in the power of the Holy Spirit as the Apostles were in order to serve the needs of the Church established by Jesus Christ.

This first chapter of the Gospel of suffering, which speaks of persecutions, namely of tribulations experienced because of Christ, contains in itself *a special call to courage and fortitude*, sustained by the eloquence of the Resurrection. Christ has overcome the world definitively by his Resurrection. Yet, because of the relationship between the Resurrection and his Passion and death, he has at the same time overcome the world by his suffering. Yes, suffering has been singularly present in the victory over the world which was manifested in the Resurrection. Christ retains in his risen body the marks of the wounds of the Cross in his hands, feet, and side. Through the Resurrection, he manifests *the victorious power of suffering*, and he wishes to imbue with the conviction of this power the hearts of those whom he chose as Apostles and those whom he continually chooses and sends forth.

—*Salvifici Doloris*

## Summary

### In this lesson, we observed that:

1. Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist as a memorial of his sacrificial death for the sins of the world.
2. Belief in the Resurrection is central to the Christian faith, though it remains a stumbling block for many.
3. Without Jesus' death on the Cross, the Resurrection wouldn't be possible.
4. As he's dying on the Cross, Jesus asks God to forgive his persecutors, underscoring that the reason he's undergoing the Passion is to bring about the forgiveness of sins.
5. Jesus' words to the "good" thief indicate that God's forgiveness is extended to all who are truly sorry for their sins, but his words also emphasize the urgent need for immediate repentance.
6. Jesus' thirst on the Cross fulfills a prophetic Psalm and also foreshadows the sacrament of Baptism, in which Christians receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
7. The rending of the curtain in the Temple at the time of Jesus' death indicates the Spirit of God moving from the holy of holies into human hearts.
8. The blood and water that flow from Jesus' side are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life.
9. Easter is the Church's celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, "the Morning Star which never sets."

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Lesson 5 . . . *Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection*

# Jesus' Passion

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## **Suggested responses to Matthew 26:26-29 and John 19:17—20:8**

Note: Be sure to answer all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

1. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, St. Paul includes the information that Jesus asked his disciples to repeat the actions of breaking bread and drinking wine in memory of his sacrificial death: “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” St. Paul writes that he received his information from the Lord Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, St. Paul goes on to warn the early Christians: “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.” Paragraph 1385 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* instructs Christians: “To respond to this invitation [to participate in the sacrament of the Eucharist] we must *prepare ourselves* for so great and so holy a moment. St. Paul urges us to examine our conscience. . . . Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion.”
2. *Responses to this Reflection question will vary.*
3. Paragraph 501 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “Jesus is Mary’s only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: ‘The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formulation she cooperates with a mother’s love.’” Paragraph 963 further teaches: “The Virgin Mary . . . is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer. . . . She is ‘clearly the mother of the members of Christ’ . . . since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head.” Mary’s dual role as virgin and mother is explained in paragraph 507: “At once virgin and mother, Mary is the symbol and the most perfect realization of the Church: ‘the Church indeed . . . by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By preaching and Baptism she brings forth sons, who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God, to a new and immortal life. She herself is a virgin, who keeps in its entirety and purity the faith she pledged to her spouse.’”
4. Paragraph 506 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “Mary is a virgin because her virginity is *the sign of her faith* ‘unadulterated by any doubt,’ and of her undivided gift of herself to God’s will. It is her faith that enables her to become the mother of the Savior:

## **Jesus' Passion Lesson 5 Responses**

‘Mary is more blessed because she embraces faith in Christ than because she conceives the flesh of Christ.’”

5. In describing God’s requirements to the Israelites for keeping the feast of the Passover, Exodus 12:46 makes the following stipulation regarding the sacrificial Passover lamb: “[Y]ou shall not break a bone of it.” John 19:31-32 describes how the Roman soldiers break the legs of the two men who are crucified with Jesus so that they’ll die and their bodies can be taken away before the sabbath. John 19:33 records that when the soldiers came to Jesus they saw that he was already dead, so “they did not break his legs.” Instead, John 19:34 recounts: “But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.” Paragraph 1225 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “In his Passover Christ opened to all men the fountain of Baptism. He had already spoken of his Passion, which he was about to suffer in Jerusalem, as a ‘Baptism’ with which he had to be baptized. The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life. From then on, it’s possible ‘to be born of water and the Spirit’ in order to enter the Kingdom of God.” Jesus’ body being pierced relates to Zechariah 12:10, which includes the prophecy: “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born.”
6. Matthew 27:51-53 describes the following events taking place at the time of Jesus’ death: “And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” Matthew 27:54 records: “When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, ‘Truly, this was the Son of God.’”
7. In Acts 20:7, St. Luke indicates that members of the early Church gathered together to worship on Sunday, celebrating the Eucharist and listening to St. Paul preach: “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and he prolonged his speech until midnight.” Paragraph 1343 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “It was above all on ‘the first day of the week,’ Sunday, the day of Jesus’ resurrection, that the Christians met ‘to break bread.’ From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued so that today we encounter it everywhere in the Church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church’s life.” Paragraph 2180 teaches: “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass.” Paragraph 2186 teaches: “Sunday is traditionally consecrated by Christian piety to good works and humble service of the sick, the infirm, and the elderly. Christians will also sanctify Sunday by devoting time and care to their families and relatives, often difficult to do on other days of the week. Sunday is a time for reflection, silence, cultivation of the mind, and meditation which furthers the growth of the Christian interior life.”

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8. *Responses to this Reflection question will vary.*
9. In Luke 23:43, Jesus tells the “good” thief: “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” Paragraph 1021 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul—a destiny which can be different for some than for others.” Jesus’ parable about Lazarus and the rich man concludes with Abraham’s cautionary warning in Luke 16:31, which implies that some people will be incapable of belief in Jesus’ Resurrection: “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.”
10. Paragraph 638 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “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; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross.” The same paragraph also quotes from the Byzantine Liturgy, Troparion of Easter: “Christ is risen from the dead! Dying, he conquered death; To the dead, he has given life.” In 1 Corinthians 15:3-10, St. Paul writes: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me.”

Jesus' Passion: The Story of Redemptive Suffering  
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**Notes**