

Faith Formation Easter Scriptures

S t . I g n a t i u s L o y o l a P a r i s h

**Resurrection
Narratives**

- [Mark 16](#)
- [Matthew 28](#)
- [Luke 24](#)
- [John 20- 21](#)

Synoptics, John, Acts, etc.

While we tend to think of the Easter story as a single event (i.e. the Resurrection) and a single story (i.e. recorded by one individual) we come to find that Easter is much bigger and broader than we had considered. Have you ever sat and compared the Easter stories from the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke)?

Mark has the least amount of detail. Initially, the women who go to the tomb do not see Jesus, just a "young man" who tells them Jesus is raised and will meet them in Galilee. Following this story are a handful of appearance, to Mary Magdalene, to two on the road, and later to the eleven at table with a commission to go proclaim the gospel to the whole world.

Matthew has a similar beginning to the resurrection story but here the women witness the arrival of the angel who sits upon the stone outside the tomb. They receive basically the same message as in Mark, but there's the addition of

the story of the guards outside the tomb being bribed to say that the disciples stole the body. This is followed by a similar commissioning of the eleven but this time with what we know as the baptismal formula.

While similar, the details are different. Why? Obviously Matthew is trying to counteract rumors of the body being stolen that Mark was not aware of or did not consider important. And by now, we have a greater sense of "ritual" or "liturgy" where gospel proclamation is supplanted with a more formal baptism.

Matthew reflects a later time of composition which includes careful reflection on what needs to be included. By the time we get to Luke, we will see additional detail. For instance the women who go to anoint the body once again encounter men who are described as angels, a stone rolled back and a message to go to Galilee where Jesus will meet them. Here Luke includes a recollection of Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection:

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What about Acts?

If you didn't know, Acts is a continuation of the gospel of Luke after Jesus' commission and ascension. Still, Luke ends with the command of Jesus that the disciples stay in Jerusalem until the promise of the Father is bestowed on them (Luke 24:49).

Acts picks up the story with a recap of the last days, the appearances of Jesus as well as his Ascension. So one would think that Acts would not be part of the Easter Scriptures. Nevertheless, the Resurrection narrative is repeated as the foundation of the apostle's ministry. Footnotes list six great discourses on the

Resurrection: Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 13:16-41), the first five are presented by Peter and the last by Paul. So the Easter Scriptures would include these proclamations.

Again, Easter may be considered a lived experience, an experience of grace that
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(Continued from "Synoptics, John, Acts, etc.")

"that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and rise on the third day." (Lk 24:7.)

Luke gives a fuller description of the encounter with Jesus on the Road to Emmaus than Mark's terse two lines (Mk 16: 12-13). Again, see if you can reason as to why Luke finds it good to fill in the details. Again, note the abundance of details when Luke describes Jesus' appearance the disciples in Jerusalem. Noting the differences can help us to understand even more the stories themselves.

John has Jesus appearing the Mary of Magdala, to the disciples gathered, to Thomas who was missing, later to seven more disciples. He includes an interchange with Peter ("Simon do you love me?") as well as a bit about the beloved disciple. Again, I think the footnotes from [USCCB](#) give great clues for you to ponder. Fifty days gives us plenty of time to study and reflect on all the stories of Easter.

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Finding God in All Things

Acts (Continued)

continues to inspire and motivate the apostles, the foundation upon which the Church is built. The Resurrection is simply interwoven throughout the whole life of the Church, here in Acts as well as the Epistles.

In other words, Easter does not end. It continues in the preaching and in the practice of the apostles and the Church. In fact, what was told simply as story is now understood as the unfolding of salvation. This includes a new understanding of the prophecies of Hebrew scriptures describing Jesus, the birth of the Church in the promised coming of the Holy Spirit as well as the presentation of the gospel to the Gentiles, opening the avenue of salvation to the whole world.

It is curious to look at and to consider the liturgical calendar for the Easter Season. Of course the season begins with Easter and ends with Pentecost.

In between we will celebrate the Feast of the Ascension, but the season is really devoted to Easter. Scripture readings are drawn from either Acts (first reading) or 1 John (second reading). The focus is now on how the Resurrection continues to form and inform the young Church.

So what does it mean to be an Easter people? Well that's the story of Acts. It ranges from the event of Pentecost (Acts 2) to the way in which the community held everything in common. Peter, the one who once denied Jesus now testifies before the Sanhedrin. It is an idyllic time when

"The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.

With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord

Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all." (Acts 4:32-33)

There are signs and wonders worked. There are times of trial (literally before the Sanhedrin). There are those who esteem and those who join. And there are growing pains. The commission to go to "all the world" is fulfilled as groups travel throughout the land and open the gospel to the Gentiles.

But Easter does not end with Paul, it continues to today. This Easter spirit continues in people like Pope Francis and "Fratelli Tutti" where we are asked to have "a heart open to the whole world."

Easter does not end. Nor do the Easter scriptures. Don't stop at the end of Acts or 1 John. Look for the Resurrection, especially in the world that needs it today.