

Easter: Texts&Stories

Easter Prayers

Lord God,
early in the morning,
when the world was young,
you made life in all its beauty;
you gave birth to all that we know.

Hallowed be your name.

Early in the morning,
a voice in a graveyard
and footsteps in the dew
proved that you had risen,
that you had come back
to those and for those
who had forgotten, denied and destroyed you.

Hallowed be your name.

This morning we celebrate
your creation, your life,
your death and resurrection,
your commitment to us;
so we pray:

**Lord, bring new life where we are worn and tired;
new love where we have become hard-hearted;
forgiveness where we feel hurt or where we have wounded;
and the joy and freedom of your Holy Spirit
where we are prisoners of ourselves. Amen.**

Story: Good News

Mary got up very early on the Sunday morning and went off to the tomb. She hadn't been able to wait for the dawn. It was still dark,...

**** put down black cloth on the altar***

...but there was enough light to show her,...

****put candle on the cloth and light it***

...when she got to the tomb she noticed that something very strange had happened. The stone was rolled back from the entrance, and someone had removed Jesus' body! She knew the house where Peter was hiding with Jesus' other friends. She ran there as fast as she could.

"They've taken Jesus out of the tomb!" she cried. "I don't know where they've put him! Who would do such a thing?"

****put down big question mark***

The tomb was in a garden. Mary told them exactly where it was and Peter and one of the others went running off to see what had happened. Mary followed them as quickly as she could.

Peter's companion got there first. Mary was right. The stone, which must have sealed the entrance, had been moved aside.

****put down a big stone***

The sun had just risen above the horizon and its first rays shone into the tomb, turning its stone to gold.

****cover the stone with the sun***

He looked inside. The tomb was empty, except for the linen cloth Joseph had used, lying on the spot where Jesus' body had been placed. Only the body wasn't there! No smell of death either!

At that moment Peter came running up and went straight inside. He also saw the cloth which Joseph must have tied round Jesus' head. But Jesus wasn't there.

****put down a white sheet***

His companion bent his head and came in. He didn't fully understand, but he knew something very good had happened in that place. The tomb wasn't empty at all. It was full of the life of God!

The two men went home bewildered, not knowing what to make of it.

****put down another question mark***

Yet Mary didn't leave. She had reached the tomb again, and she didn't know what to do, but she knew she couldn't leave. She hadn't deserted Jesus when he was crucified, and she wouldn't desert him now. She stood outside the tomb, weeping.

She bent down to look inside the tomb. There were two angels sitting on the ledge as bold as brass, as if they belonged there! What was heaven doing in this garden? It wasn't the time for heaven. It was the time for tears, and plenty of them.

****put down tears***

"Why are you crying?" the angels asked.

"Why do you think?" Mary answered. "They've taken away my Lord, my friend, my teacher, and I don't know where they've laid him."

She straightened herself.

She turned round. A figure was standing there. It was Jesus.

"Why are you crying?" the figure said. "Who are you looking for?"

Mary thought he must be the gardener.

****put down gardener's tools***

“Oh sir!” she cried, “If you’ve taken him away, tell me where you’ve laid him, and I’ll go and fetch him.”

“Mary,” the figure said.

Now she recognised the voice. It was Jesus! “Teacher!” she cried.

She took a step forward. “You can’t hold on to me, Mary,” said Jesus quietly. “I am free now. But go to the rest of my friends and tell them what you have seen and heard. And tell them I will be with God soon.”

Then he was gone, and the angels with him. Mary went running off to tell the others. She burst in upon them and exclaimed, “I have seen the Lord! I have *seen* him!”

****invite children to run around and tell everybody “I have seen the Lord!”***

That very evening, when the friends were all together, wondering what might happen next, and still afraid that the Roman soldiers or temple guards might come looking for them, Jesus appeared among them.

“Peace be with you!” he said.

****put down PEACE poster***

“I bring you the peace of God, God’s well-being, life in all its fullness, life like a watered garden.’

Mary of Magdala understood, but the others couldn’t believe their eyes or their ears. The last time most of them had seen Jesus, he was being dragged off by the temple guard from Gethsemane.

But then Jesus showed them the marks of crucifixion, and they know for certain who it was.

They were overjoyed. They’d thought everything was lost. They’d thought that tyranny had won. They’d thought the Dark Forces had got him at last, and that death was holding him tight.

But death can’t hold the life of God. They knew that now. They could see and hear it was true.

****take candles from the plate standing on the little table at the back of the church, take them to the front, light them at the candle on the cloth and put the lit candles down on the cloth...***

“Peace be with you!” Jesus said again. “Just as God, our Father, sent me, so I send you. You must continue the work I have begun.”

Easter Intercessions

Leader: Jesus, we long to see you this day and every day.
As we wonder at your resurrection,
at the hope you have given us,
we remember
the appearances you made to those close to you,
and we pray that our eyes, too,
may be opened to your presence.

Women: We think of Mary and the other women,
who loved you so much
and took such risks to be close to you.
We think of how you recognised their need
to hear your messenger tell them
that you were alive.
We bring before you
those we know to be in special need at this time –
those who are sick lonely and afraid.
Embrace them with your love and presence.
Be close to them.

Men: We think of the friends,
who walked their lonely road to Emmaus,
a journey of sadness
after all the events of Holy Week.
Yet you walked beside them
and shared with them –
opening their eyes to your presence
in the breaking of the bread at supper.
Journey alongside all those who are sad and mourning over losses.
Embrace them with your love and presence.
Be close to them.

**All: Open our eyes, Jesus.
We long to see you. Amen.**