



# Formative Parenting

*Cultivating Character in Children*

*A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania*

## **EASTERTIME (Easter through Pentecost)**

Eastertime is punctuated with ALLELUIA!, an expression that comes from the Hebrew verb hallel, “to praise,” and Yah, a shortened form of “Yahweh.” When we proclaim “Alleluia” we are saying, “Praise Yahweh!” “Praise the Lord!” St. Augustine said, “A Christian should be an Alleluia from head to foot.” In other words, everything about us—speech, behavior, priorities, relationships, dress, home decor, entertainment, etc.—should give praise to God. Alleluia people are a contradiction in a de-Christianized culture that exalts materialism, pleasure, drugs, sex, and violence and excludes God. Through formal and informal ways, sacred space, sacred time, and sacred practices, Christian parents teach children how to be alleluias in their world. It is your parent vocation to cultivate a sense of the sacred, knowledge of God, and formation in faith and morals that replace current societal trends with an alleluia philosophy. This newsletter explores ways to do that during the liturgical season of Eastertime.

### **EASTERTIME**

The suffering, death, and burial of Jesus on Good Friday—marked by grief, loss and emptiness within his mother and disciples—was transformed to unbounded joy when they experienced Jesus, risen to new life on Sunday. Since that day, nothing has been the same! Jesus conquered death. Angels announced: “Why do you search for the Living One among the dead? He is not here; he has been raised up” (Lk. 24:5-6). Mary Magdalene reported, “I have seen the Lord!” (Jn. 20:18). On Sunday afternoon Jesus walked with two disciples en route to Emmaus. It was not until he broke bread with them that they recognized him and said, “Were not our hearts burning inside us as he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” (Lk. 24:32). Later that evening he appeared in the midst of the disciples and greeted them with blessing: “Peace be with you.” He showed them his hands and side, and repeated his blessing of peace (Jn. 20:20). What a day! It is the greatest feast of the Church year, the “Great Sunday.” This is why Christians transferred their worship day from Sabbath-Saturday to Sunday. Every Sunday is a “little Easter” that celebrates the **paschal mysteries** (passion, death, resurrection, and ascension) of the Lord (CCC #1169).

The **paschal candle**, prepared and blessed during the vigil Mass on Holy Saturday, symbolizes the Risen Jesus. After the blessing of the new fire, the minister cuts a cross in the wax with a stylus. He traces the Greek letter *alpha* above the cross, the letter *omega* below, and the numerals of the current year between the

arms of the cross. Meanwhile he says: “Christ yesterday and today / the beginning and the end / Alpha / and Omega / all time belongs to him / and all the ages / to him be glory and power / through every age for ever. Amen.” Then the minister inserts five grains of incense in the candle in the form of a cross, saying: “By his holy / and glorious wounds / may Christ our Lord / guard us / and keep us. Amen.” From Holy Saturday until Ascension Day the paschal candle remains in the sanctuary, standing on the Gospel side of the altar. It is lighted during Sunday Masses of the Easter Season and extinguished after the Gospel on Ascension Day, symbolizing that the Risen Christ has ascended into heaven. It is then removed from the sanctuary and reserved for use at Baptisms and funerals. **PRACTICE: Imitate the preparation of the paschal candle. Bless the rooms of the house by having a parent say “Christ our light,” and family respond “Thanks be to God.” Use the candle as the meal table centerpiece throughout the Easter season.**

**Renewal of baptismal promises** is a core element of the Easter liturgy. We declare that we reject sin and the glamour of evil; that we refuse to be mastered by sin; and that we reject Satan, the prince of darkness. What powerful promises! Do our children understand what they are promising? Eastertime is a graced season to catechize your child about sin and grace, darkness and light. **PRACTICE: Explain that sin is a deliberate break in relationship with God, others or self, deliberate in the sense of (1) knowing a choice/action/behavior to be life-blocking, (2) giving the idea serious reflection, and then (3) freely**

**choosing it even though you believe it to be against the will of God. Discuss how evil can appear glamorous, exciting, or the answer to loneliness or acceptance in a crowd. Ask your child why Satan has the title of “prince of darkness.” Reflect together on how we feel after we deliberately break relationship with God or others or when we ignore what we know is good for us. Celebrate Jesus as the Light of the World.**

Renewal of baptismal promises concludes with a **profession of faith**. We affirm our belief in the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, holy Catholic Church, communion of saints, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. **PRACTICE: Use the seven weeks of Eastertime to review the basic tenets of faith that are found in the Creed. Pray the Apostles’ Creed.**

The **Ascension** of Jesus, 40 days after Easter, was reported in three of the Gospels (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-20 and Lk. 24:50-53) as well as the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:6-11). In the last moments of his life on this earth, Jesus directed his apostles to “wait for the fulfillment of my Father’s promise. . . the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5). He then commissioned the apostles to make disciples of all nations, to baptize in the name of the Trinity, to carry out his mission of proclaiming the Good News, and to know that they would never be alone: “Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!” (Mt. 28:20). His command and his promise are ours, too! **PRACTICE: Give family members a small symbol of Christ to carry in their pocket or purse: a wooden cross, a Christ-coin, a pebble with a cross drawn on it, etc. Every time they touch it they will be reminded of Christ’s abiding presence. This would be a particularly useful ritual for children who have fears or feelings of inferiority or who lack confidence.**

## PENTECOST

The Easter season of 50 days culminates on the feast of Pentecost. Pentecost is considered “the birthday of the Church” because it was on that day that the Holy Spirit filled the apostles with the gifts of soul needed to go out to the whole world and share the Good News. Pentecost is a season of evangelism and outreach: “The gift you have received, give as a gift” (Mt. 10:8). The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains:

“On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the spirit, a promise which he fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost. Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim ‘the mighty works of God’ . . . Those who believed in the

apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn.” (CCC # 1287)

Though the gifts of the Spirit are beyond number, we usually refer to **SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**: **wisdom**: to see things from all sides; **understanding**: to comprehend the feelings and attitudes of another’s heart; **counsel/right judgment**: to develop good decision-making skills; **courage/fortitude**: to follow the convictions of conscience no matter what the cost; **knowledge**: to know your faith and teach others about it; **reverence/piety**: to look upon God as a loving parent and want to please God in every thought, word, and action; **wonder and awe / fear of the Lord**: to recognize God’s presence everywhere and in everything. The Holy Spirit infuses us with these gifts for our growth in holiness and so that we can build up the Body of Christ on earth. Like any gift, though, it must be exercised in order to be of benefit; and the more often you practice the gift, the more habitual it becomes! Observable signs of our cooperation with the Spirit are called the Fruits. No limit exists in the ways that God’s presence can be revealed, but generally we name **TWELVE FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**: **joy**: confidence, optimism, and happiness that won’t quit; **faithfulness/fidelity**: security, deep trust, and dependability in relationships; **charity/love**: outreach to others motivated by love for God; **patience**: the ability to endure gracefully disagreeable circumstances, frustration, or hardship; **peace**: calmness, serenity, tranquility, and inner guidance; **benignity**: generosity and consideration of others without thought of reward; **long suffering/longanimity**: patience over a long period and endurance marked by composure and balance; **mildness**: gentleness that responds to persons and situations without defensiveness or arrogance; **modesty**: moderation and restraint regarding external actions, dress, and conversation; **goodness/kindness**: loving concern for all without distinction or favoritism, tenderness, courtesy, and compassion; **contenance**: self-control, temperance, and balance in personal life, food, drink and sex; **chastity**: respect for the body, the gift of sexuality, and moderation of sexual desires, thoughts, and actions. **PENTECOST OPENS THE SECOND SEASON OF ORDINARY TIME WHICH EXTENDS TO THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.**

**PRACTICE: What role does the Holy Spirit play in your family life? Create table cards of the names and definitions of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Each day choose a card, discuss it as a family, and practice it on the following day. Pre-printed resources are available at [www.creativecommunications.com](http://www.creativecommunications.com).**

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