

## **April Lesson Plan: Resurrection, Joy, and Gratitude**

### ***Easter Spirituality Through a Franciscan Lens: Theme Overview***

April invites us into the heart of Easter: encountering the mystery of the Resurrection and allowing it to transform how we live, pray, and relate to creation. Drawing from Franciscan spirituality, this session highlights joy, praise, and gratitude as signs of Christ's victory over death.

#### **Key Question:**

**How can I witness joy as a risen people in word, action, and presence?**

#### **Opening (5 minutes)**

##### **Welcome & Centering Prayer**

- Light a candle as a symbol of the Risen Christ.
- Pray: *"Risen Christ, open our hearts to the joy of new life. Awaken in us gratitude, simplicity, and wonder so we may reflect Your resurrection in all we do."*

##### **Scripture & Reflection**

##### **Suggested Gospel: John 20:11-18 or Luke 24:13-35**

Focus on how the risen Jesus brings peace, recognition, and joy.

##### **Guiding prompts:**

- What emotions do you see in the disciples as they encounter the risen Lord?
- What does *resurrection joy* look like in your own daily life?

##### **Teaching Content**

##### **A. Easter Spirituality: Transformation Through Resurrection**

- Easter is not only an event; it's an invitation to new life.
- The resurrection calls us to leave behind fear, despair, and cynicism and to live as people of hope.

## **B. Franciscan Joy : Simple, Humble, Radiant**

- For St. Francis, joy came from belonging to Christ and trusting God in all circumstances.
- Resurrection joy is *not* loud enthusiasm; it is a deep, steady gladness rooted in God's love.

## **C. Praise, Gratitude, and Hope: The Rhythm of Easter Living**

Daily practices that shape the heart:

- Begin and end the day naming three things you are grateful for.
- Offer praise to God throughout the day — short prayers of thanks.
- Look for small resurrections: healing, patience, laughter, beauty.

## **D. The Canticle of the Creatures: Easter Faith in Creation**

- Francis praises Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Sister Mother Earth — all signs of God's overflowing life.
- Seeing creation as kin helps us witness resurrection in the world around us.

## **Discussion**

Use any of these prompts:

- Where have you experienced resurrection in your life this year?
- What obstacles keep you from living with joy?
- How can gratitude reshape your awareness of God's presence?
- What would it look like to *embody Easter* for others this week?

## **Love in Action: Joyful Stewardship of Creation**

Introduce the monthly practices and invite participants to choose one or more.

### **Love of Creation: Weekly Practices**

✓ **Spend 10 minutes outside each day simply observing.**

Listen, breathe, notice the “resurrection” happening in nature.

✓ **Pick up litter during one walk each week.**

A small act of healing for the earth.

### ✓ **Plant something.**

Flowers, herbs, a tree — or care for a neglected plant. Resurrection is slow, gentle growth.

### **Reflect: Brother Sun, Sister Moon**

- Offer a blessing for the earth when you rise and before you sleep.
- Practice gratitude for the elements — sun, water, wind, soil — that sustain your life.

### **Short blessing example:**

*“Blessed are You, my Lord, in Brother Sun and Sister Earth, who reveal Your beauty and nourish my life.”*

### **Practical Application**

Invite each participant to complete:

1. **One joy practice** (gratitude list, praise pause, noticing beauty).
2. **One creation-care practice** from the list.
3. **One way they will witness joy** in their relationships or ministry this week.

### **Closing Prayer**

Pray the final lines of the *Canticle of the Creatures* or a simple Easter thanksgiving.

*“Most High, all-powerful God, through the risen Christ fill us with joy that does not fade. Help us praise You in all creation and reveal Your love in all we do.”*