



The INSTITUTE for
**WORSHIP &
OUTREACH**

THE TIME OF EASTER

Year A

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

From *Christian Worship: Manual*: “By the second century, the feast of Easter had developed as an annual commemoration. The festival day was soon preceded by a time of fasting in preparation for the celebration followed by a fifty-day season of rejoicing concluded by Pentecost.”

The earliest origins of the church year as we have come to know it include the remembrance of Christ’s resurrection (Easter), the season of preparation that came before it (Lent), and the seven-week joyful celebration that followed it (Eastertide). This resource is shared as one way in which the connection and progression from Ash Wednesday to Ascension can be seen by God’s people. Please note that several themes are given further explanation.

LENT: FIELDS OF BATTLE

Ever since the fall into sin, a battle has been being fought between the forces of good and the forces of evil. During the season of Lent, we follow Christ as he willingly takes up that battle as our substitute and representative.

Ash Wednesday: Satan vs. Adam in the garden.
Though not one of the assigned lessons for Ash Wednesday, Genesis 3 is the suggested sermon text in this year’s Lent series from Northwestern Publishing House, “From Garden to Glory.” Preaching on the fall into sin and the first promise of the Savior is very fitting on Ash Wednesday and sets up the preacher perfectly for Lent 1, when the Second Adam does what the first Adam could not. Doing so also highlights the hymn of the day chosen for Ash Wednesday, “In Adam We Have All Been One” (CW 396).

Lent 1: Satan vs. the Second Adam in the desert

Lent 2: Law vs. promise at the well

Lent 3: Blindness vs. sight on the Sabbath

Lent 4: Selfishness vs. service in the kingdom

Lent 5: Death vs. life at the grave

HOLY WEEK: THE FINAL BATTLE

Christ’s work as the conqueror of our foes reaches its conclusion as he willingly surrenders himself to them in order to defeat them for us.

Palm Sunday: The willing ride

Maundy Thursday:	The fullness of love <i>The story of Jesus' washing his disciples feet (as opposed to the institution of Holy Communion) serves as the appointed gospel for year A. That story (and John's entire passion history that follows) is introduced this way: "Having loved his own who were in the world, [Jesus] now showed them the full extent of his love" (John 13:1).</i>
Good Friday:	The perfect sacrifice
Easter Vigil:	Waiting for the word <i>Just as the Israelites eagerly waited for Pharaoh's word ("Take your flocks and herds...and go," Exodus 12:32) on the night of the Passover, so God's people gather at dusk, the start of the third day, eagerly awaiting the first word of Christ's victory: "He is risen! He is risen indeed!"</i>
Easter Sunday:	Victory from the jaws of defeat <i>This phrase was first coined in reference to the outcome of a battle during the Mexican-American War. Using it on Easter is especially fitting in Year A, when the first lesson is Jonah's prayer from the belly of the great fish.</i>

EASTERTIDE: THE VICTORS' SPOILS

For forty days we followed our Savior in his battle against sin. Having celebrated his victory over the grave on Easter Sunday, we now spend fifty days rejoicing in the spoils of war that are ours in him.

Easter 2:	Forgiveness through faith
Easter 3:	Hope from promises kept
Easter 4:	Full life through the gate <i>Though Easter 4 is often referred to as "Good Shepherd Sunday," the appointed gospel for Year A is the opening verses of John 10, where Jesus refers to himself as the gate.</i>
Easter 5:	The only way to the Father
Easter 6:	The fruit of the Spirit
Ascension:	A hidden reality <i>Christ's ascension assures us of several things. The lessons for Year A highlight the fact that, just because something is hidden, doesn't mean it isn't real. Even though the clouds have hidden Jesus from our sight, he promises to be with us always. The book of Esther (CW: Supplement first lesson) clearly demonstrates God's governing rule of history, even though by name he is entirely hidden. In the same way, the true reality of our new and glorious life in Christ is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3, CW: Supplement second lesson).</i>
Easter 7:	The certainty of glory
Pentecost:	One last gift <i>This theme can be used to tie Pentecost to everything that leads up to it. The assigned lessons for Year A emphasize the fact that the Holy Spirit is the promised gift "from the Father (Joel 2) and the Son (John 16)." Now that Christ's saving work is complete (John 16:11), the Spirit will be the one to guide Christ's church during the last days (Acts 2:17).</i>