

PASCHAL MYSTERY REFLECTION

SPEAKER PREPARATION MATERIAL

Speaker: Assistant Spiritual Director or someone who has a mature faith and is able to communicate it well with others

Time: Third reflection of Die Day

Length: 25-30 minutes

Scripture: John 12:24

Previous Reflection: The Faith Journey

Following Reflection: Metanoia

Setting:

The participants and team are in a community of welcome and acceptance, a safe environment where they can be themselves instead of conforming to the image they sometimes project at school, at work, at home, or among their friends. At TEC, they can examine their hearts, their lives, who they are, and who they are called to be by God. They sense the importance of their Christian heritage (Bible Enthronement) and begin to examine their own personal faith journeys and relationships with God (The Faith Journey reflection).

Progression:

The participants may now consider the story of Jesus in relation to their own personal stories. Jesus is God's gift to us; he brings us love, a self-giving love. His presence transforms our lives. Jesus taught us to trust in God's unconditional love. Our fears, tensions, mistakes, shortcomings, frustrations, and sins do not diminish God's love for us. He told us that every person is important because our Father created and loves him or her. "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love." (John 15:9) God loved us enough to die for us and to teach us what true love is.

Purpose:

Paschal Mystery is the key reflection of the TEC weekend. This spiritual core of TEC radiates forth, energizing the weekend with its dynamic pattern: from death to self, to life in Christ. During TEC, the truth of the paschal mystery will be celebrated in liturgies, symbols, and reflections in order to provide the space where conversion may occur. Openness to encountering Jesus dominates the purpose of the Paschal Mystery reflection.

Faith Awareness:

Participants and team attempt to understand more deeply that the paschal mystery has two aspects: **by his death**, Christ liberates us from sin; **by his resurrection**, he gives us new life. This reinstates us in God's grace, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Through his paschal mystery, Jesus restores our relationship with the Father and makes us God's sons and daughters with him.

The paschal mystery encompasses Jesus' passion, death, resurrection, ascension, and gift of the Spirit. For the purpose of this reflection, we focus on the die-rise dynamic. Each Christian, individually, and the Christian community, as a whole, experiences life in the rhythm of the paschal mystery. United with Christ in his passion and death, we are transformed by God's love. With Christ, we die to self so that something greater can live in us. Christ's life, death, and resurrection unfold in us, calling us to a radical change in our attitudes, a self-sacrificing love, like death. We are called to let go, to give our lives to God. This conversion turns our lives upside down and gives us a new way of looking at life.

As your reflection helps bring about this conversion of experience through God's love in Jesus, it prepares the participants to experience "metanoia," or a change of heart. The sharing conveys that the death-to-life process leads to joy and freedom rather than destruction. With confidence and hope, you bring this truth to life. Because this reflection is about a mystery, use images, examples, memories, and stories that make it more understandable and help them respond with generosity.

Response:

The participants become aware that God's love is overwhelming, astounding, and too great for us to understand fully. The manner in which Jesus lived out that love and shared it with us through his sacrificial death and glorious resurrection remains the ultimate example for a truly spiritual life. Participants may be asking themselves what they need to die to in order to respond more fully to Jesus in their lives. Participants may sense more courage and trust in God's love and mercy, preparing them for deeper conversion.

Scripture for further reflection:

John 12:23-26

John 16:20-22

Luke 9:23-24

Romans 6:3-4

1 CCC, paragraph 654

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OUTLINE

After reading and praying with the scripture for this reflection, please study the outline carefully. Time constraints may require you to be selective. As you develop your personal stories and examples, consider the points in bold as most essential to sharing and the continuity of the weekend.

Scripture: Make sure to read John 12:24 from the enthroned Bible at the point in your reflection where you feel it is most apropos.

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. (Jn 12:24)

Introduction: Share a personal story or incident that involves mystery or sacrifice.

I. **A mystery is a reality that exists on many levels**

- A. A mystery may be too rich in meaning for most language.
- B. Life is a mystery as it unfolds in us.
- C. Love is a mystery; it sometime defies logic, circumstances, or maybe our will and upbringing, but it can also give us purpose and direction.
- D. Why God chose to come into our world as Jesus to share his love with us is yet another mystery -- the incarnation.

II. **Jesus loved life and lived it to the fullest.**

- A. Jesus was a human being who loved people and nature.
 - 1. He shared his life with a close-knit group of friends. (Bring to life Jesus' humanity.)
 - 2. Briefly tell one story to illustrate Jesus' humanity (such as fishing, humor, eating, drinking, etc.).
- B. He never counted the cost of giving his love to everyone he met.
 - 1. All were important to Jesus and he challenged them to become closer to the Father.
 - 2. He taught, healed, helped, included, and loved those he met.

- C. Even on the cross, he was thinking of others.
 1. He asked his Father to forgive those who nailed him to the cross.
 2. He was mindful of his mother and John, asking them to take care of each other.
- D. In death, his finest hour, his love and forgiveness triumphed over evil and despair.
 1. Jesus' death was a real death.
 2. In spite of Jesus' love, he was betrayed by his friends: Peter swore publicly he did not know him; Judas sold him for 30 pieces of silver; the rest ran away.

III. On the cross, Jesus offered his final commandment.

- A. Jesus' final wish: "This I command you: love one another." (Jn 15:17)
 1. Loving as Jesus loved means dying to oneself and loving whatever the cost.
 2. Dying to self is to surrender.
- B. Surrendering means "Death" to self, which leads to Resurrection.
 1. Resurrection brings us New Life.
 2. Maturity is the result of New Life, which again moves us to Giving Away which is a Surrender, and the process continues.
 3. Our surrenders require introspection and awareness that dying is involved.

IV. Jesus knew that to live life to its fullest requires undergoing constant deaths.

- A. Shortly before his death, Jesus talked to his friends about the grain of wheat. (Jn 12:24)
 1. READ SCRIPTURE PASSAGE FROM ENTHRONED BIBLE.
 2. Jesus showed us what complete generosity, living life with all our heart, involved.
 3. On TEC, we speak of dying to things that keep us from Christ. Offer an example of what letting go or surrendering might involve. (Jn 12:24)
- B. Each of us, like Jesus, experiences a clash of values, disappointments, and the need to forgive others.
- C. Share an experience of death or loss that led to a new closeness and relationship with Christ – an experience of life-giving death.

V. Conclude your reflection by sharing the TEC community's understanding of wheat as

below. (Choose several general letters beforehand.)

- A. Read aloud John 12:24 again.
- B. Show the sign of wheat; explain the meaning TEC assigns to the grain, including the team's sacrifices for the participants.
- C. Read selected general wheat letters and the wheat being done by the wider TEC community.
- D. Introduce the concept of the Wheat Team. This is not the time for personal introductions of Wheat Team members.
- E. Invite participants to read the individual letters that the Wheat Team hands to them.

Reminder: This is not the time for large group open sharing. As participants silently read wheat letters, you may step down, as the Lay Director and/or Spiritual Director will lead the next sequence.