**LEARNING FOCUS 5: Good Friday – the crucifixion.**

In Luke’s Gospel we hear Jesus speaking words of forgiveness as he is dying on the cross. Jesus asks His Father to forgive those who are crucifying him.

*The Thieves*

*The soldiers led Jesus away. On the road they met a man called Simon. He came from Cyrene. He was on his way from the country into the city. They forced him to carry the cross behind Jesus. A large crowd of people went after them. Among them were women who cried when they saw Jesus. Jesus turned to them and said, “Do not weep for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children.” Jesus was nailed to a cross outside the city walls. There were two others put to death with him, one on his right and the other on his left. When Jesus was dying he said, “Father forgive them. They do not know that they are doing.” The soldiers played a game of dice to decide who would have his clothes. There was a notice nailed to the cross of Jesus. It said, “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews!” One of the men on the cross made fun of Jesus saying, “If you are a real king, why don’t you save us all?” The other man told him to be quiet because Jesus had done nothing wrong. Then he said to Jesus, “Please remember me. Don’t ever forget me.” Jesus said, “I will remember you today and you will be with me always.” (based on Luke 23: 26-43)*

*The Death of Jesus*

*People passing by insulted Jesus. They shook their heads and said, “Come down from the cross and save yourself.” The chief priests and the teachers of the law jeered at Jesus, saying to each other, “He saved others but he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now and we will believe in him.” The two who were crucified with him insulted him too. At midday the whole country became dark. This lasted three hours. At three o’clock, Jesus cried out, “Eloi, Eloi Lama Sabactani,” which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?’ Some of the people there heard him and said, “Listen, he is calling for Elijah.” Someone soaked a sponge in cheap wine and put it on the end of a stick. He held it to his lips saying, “Let’s see if Elijah will come and take him down from the cross.” Then Jesus gave a loud cry and died. When the centurion, who was standing opposite saw how he died he said, “This man really was the Son of God.” Some women were there watching from a distance. They were Mary of Magdala, Mary the Mother of the younger James and of Joseph, and Salome. They had followed Jesus and had helped him when he was in Galilee. Many other women were there who had come up to Jerusalem with him. (based on Mark 15:21-41)*

**TASK**

Discuss these key questions:

* What do Jesus’ words from the Cross tell us about him?
* How does Jesus’ death help us to understand his humanity?
* Why do you think the repentant thief asks to be remembered?
* What do you think he must have believed about Jesus?
* What does the centurion mean when he called Jesus *‘the Son of God’* and why do you think he said this?
* What do you think Mary and the women felt?

**OPTIONAL TASK:**

* Compose a prayer or reflection which gives thanks for Jesus’ sacrifice.

**LEARNING FOCUS 6: Easter Sunday**

All four Gospel writers tell the story of Jesus’ Resurrection on Easter Sunday morning and the empty tomb. Read the following two different accounts of the Resurrection story:

*The Empty Tomb - Matthew’s Story*

*After the Sabbath, very early on Sunday morning, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake. An angel of the Lord came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was lit up and his clothes were as white as snow. The guards were so afraid that they trembled and could not do anything. The angel spoke to the women, “Do not be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here. He has been raised from death. Come and see the place where he lay, and then go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead and is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.” Filled with deep wonder and great joy the women ran to tell the disciples. Suddenly, Jesus was there, coming to meet them. “Peace be with you,” he said. The women went up to him, took hold of his feet and bowed down and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must go to Galilee; they will see me there.” (based on Matthew 28:1-10)*

*John’s Story*

*Very early, on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala went to the tomb She saw that the stone had been moved away from the entrance to the tomb. She went running to tell Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said to them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb. We do not know where they have put him.” Peter and the other disciple went to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and got there first. He bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground but he did not go in. Simon Peter came up behind him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying on the ground as well as the cloth that had been round Jesus’ head. This was not with the other linen cloths but was rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in. He saw and believed. The disciples then went back home. (*based on John 20:1-10)

**DISCUSS THESE KEY QUESTIONS**

* What are the similarities and differences between each story?
* In each story who is first to discover the empty tomb?
* Which version of the story do you like best and why?
* In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus speaks to the women. Where else do we hear that greeting?
* Why do you think the women were not believed?
* What do you think about the reactions of John and Peter at the tomb?

**TASK**

* Design a religious Easter card depicting the Good News of the Risen Christ and giving reasons for your choice of words and symbols. Inside the card, include a suitable quote from Scripture and a greeting to share with others.