

DOYLESTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Summer Growth Groups

JESUS:

A PILGRIMAGE
JAMES MARTIN, SJ





A note for you...

Thank you for taking the time to engage with your own spiritual curiosity. You might be asking yourself, another book on Jesus?

Knowing my future was Seminary for Grad school, while I was studying in college, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to study the geography, economy, the culture, the language, and the history of the ancient world. This was so that I would better understand the world Jesus encountered that we see in the Gospels. Though that was many years ago, I keep wanting to study it more. Was studying the only way though?

A pilgrim is a person who journeys to a sacred place for religious reasons. The word “pilgrim,” derived from the Latin *peregrinum*, conveys the idea of wandering over a distance, but it is not just aimless wandering. It is a journey with a purpose, and that purpose is to honor God. Reading the Bible, in all its ancient context and human voices, points us to something bigger, someone bigger. I hope you will come along, wrestle, laugh, and maybe fall in love with the Bible all over again. Thank you for joining a growth group. I have written this guide to specifically for DPC to help facilitate the above objectives.

This book and this author were new to me but quickly became a favorite. Apparently I’m late to the game, since he has written or edited more than a dozen books, appeared on notable talk shows, and he is currently touring with a newly released book. I hope we are able to put together a group to go see him in person. Details TBD.

Let’s grow together.

Rev. Becca Bateman
Associate Pastor
Doylestown Presbyterian Church



Before you meet with your group Pre-session

In the opening chapters of his book, *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, Fr. James Martin invites us to consider, along with disciples, pharisees, early church apostles, theologians, Popes, and church leaders through the centuries, “*Who do people say that I am?*” In other words, “Who is Jesus?”

Wherever you are in wondering this question is your place in your pilgrimage. We are invited along with James Martin as he recounts, in travel blog style, his visit to ancient places where Jesus was present. His findings are real. God comes alive in the details. The Gospels gift us with a glimpse into the life and context of Jesus.

Questions to ponder:

- **Tell us about a time when you realized reading or hearing about something wasn’t enough, you needed to experience it for yourself. What changed?**
- **When you picture the places where Jesus lived, what do you see? Where do those images come from? And what might be missing?**
- **After this growth group, what do you hope will be shifted in your faith or your life by the end of it?**

Closing

What tools do you need before you begin. A bible, the book *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, perhaps a journal to write all your extra notes, this guide, snacks, doodling supplies, and what else?

If the idea of Pilgrimage is interestesting to you, take a look at these resources [Here on Catholic Encyclopedia](#) is a list of one hundred or so of Catholic Pilgrimages and [here on Fish Eaters](#) is a shorter list of popular pilgrimage sites.



A Spiritual Practice to incorporate into daily life

What are ways you are getting to know Jesus in your life?

Fr. Martin encourages us by stating, “Beyond academic studies, I have come to know Jesus in three other ways: Prayer, experience, and pilgrimage.” Thirty-seven years ago (in 2026), he entered into the Society of Jesus, the Roman Catholic religious order better known as the Jesuits who are modeled after St. Ignatius of Loyola. He goes on to share how Ignatian contemplation encourages a practice called, *The Prayer of Examen*.

In the in between times of when you meet with your growth group this season, we invite you to practice the [Daily Prayer of Examen](#).

Why?

It can be hard to set aside time for theological reflection into our daily lives. These four short questions are a meaningful way to incorporate a pattern into your life. Inspired by the Ignatian practice of the Examen. These simple questions will help you to prayerfully reflect on your day, to help see God’s hand at work in your every day experiences, and offer a chance to re-center yourself.

Where has God felt
most present today?

Where have I felt
most distant from
God?

Who or what should I
be praying for?

How do I feel about
the day ahead?

On a mug, as a reminder, when you stop for a cup of coffee or tea it is an opportunity to stop, pause, & reconnect with God.



Consider Making A Group Covenant

Step 1

If you are diving into this book with a growth group, consider making a group covenant. A group covenant is a shared agreement for how we will treat one another as we learn, question, and grow together. What do you need from others in this group to be open and curious? What do you hope this group will feel like?

Step 2

Circle some covenant values you might want to include.

Feel free to add, edit, or choose from these:

- We commit to confidentiality, what's shared in the group stays in the group.
- We honor different perspectives and questions without needing to debate them.
- We give everyone space to speak, no one dominates, and no one is forced to share.
- We practice curiosity over certainty.
- We speak with grace, listen with humility, and respond with kindness.
- We agree that growth sometimes comes through discomfort.
- We believe disagreement does not equal disconnection.
- We welcome laughter, silence, and everything in between.
- _____
- _____



Outline Jesus: A Pilgrimage

SESSION

- | | | |
|----|------------|---|
| 01 | Chapter 3 | Bethlehem |
| 02 | Chapter 4 | Nazareth, God meets us in ordinary places |
| 03 | Chapter 10 | Happy, Western side of the Sea of Galilee |
| 04 | Chapter 18 | Bethany, friendship, grief, & presence |
| 05 | Chapter 19 | Jerusalem cross/resurrection |
| 06 | Chapter 22 | Risen |

Overview of the Introduction

It is a hope that the individual participants will take time to read the chapters entitled Introduction & Pilgrims yourself.

It is twenty-five pages, no packing necessary, shorter than a plane flight to the Holy Land! It lets you get to know Fr. Martin and the world, travel blog writing style.

You might consider reading the entire book, and I would encourage that if you have the time. It's a rich and thoughtful journey. However, for the purpose of this study, we have chosen six chapters. These chapters are not random, they trace some of the most meaningful moments in Jesus' ministry, places where something essential is revealed about who he is and how he moves among people.

This study is not simply to learn about Jesus. This study is about paying attention to how we come to know him and the travel companions you find yourself with in your growth group.

This Pilgrimage is to encounter Jesus. Not just as a figure in history but as someone who is still known, still followed, still experienced. Fr. James Martin writes out of that tension. He writes as someone who has studied Jesus, someone who has followed Jesus, and someone who has, in a very real sense, met Jesus in the landscapes of the Holy Land and in the quiet movements of faith.

May you discover that Jesus can never be fully explained. May you take the time to be in your pilgrimage. May you encounter Jesus in these chapters and into a deeper awareness of where Jesus might be found, in the places you already are.

Along the way, we may find ourselves returning to the same question that has followed Jesus from the very beginning: *"Who do you say that I am?"*



Session 1 Jesus: A Pilgrimage Bethlehem

Main Idea

Jesus comes from humble beginnings. This should be an example for our own faith. Humility, not power, leads to holiness.

Gathering Question

Describe where and the circumstances behind an unlikely place you have encountered God. (mentally, emotionally, or physically)

Scripture

Matthew 1:18-25
Luke 2:1-20

Reading

Jesus: A Pilgrimage...
Bethlehem, chapter 3
pages 51-69

Opening

There is something almost disorienting about Bethlehem when you see it. It likely does not match the image you have carried. A fortress-like church guarding a fragile mystery with a doorway so small you cannot enter standing tall. You have to bow or kneel to shuffle through the door. What does it mean that the place we remember for God entering the world, requires us to lower ourselves?

The Gospel writers tell the nativity in different ways, not to confuse us, but to remind us: this is not a story to be mastered. When you share the birth story, you likely share it in your own words as well. It remains, as it has for centuries, a mystery to be entered.

The gospels tell the story of the birth of Jesus in very humble beginnings. Why would God come this way, fragile, dependent, needing to be held? This is not usual in comparison of the great gods of Greeks and Romans, who were distant unless they were playing tricks on humanity. Perhaps that is what makes the nativity story stand out. The One who sustains all things arrives needing to be sustained. We are not simply observers of this story, we are participants. Like Mary and Joseph, we are called to nurture something holy that does not arrive fully formed, but grows quietly in our lives.

Maybe that is where Bethlehem leaves us, not with answers, but with an invitation. Are we entering as tourists, keeping our distance? Or as pilgrims, open to being changed? In receiving this chapter, ask again, with fresh wonder: Who is this child, and what does it mean that God has come to us this way?





Highlights from chapter 3, Bethlehem

“The present day Church of the Nativity is a squat, buff-colored, fortress-like edifice built on the site of the fourth-century church mentioned by St. Jerome... the doorway was made progressively smaller and more difficult to enter... which was designed to prevent looters from entering the church with ease. Today the great church is a three-foot-high doorway. Thus, to enter the Church of the Nativity, one must bow or kneel.” Page 55

“How can we respond to the entrance of God into our lives in much the same way that Mary and Joseph did, as the parents do today: by protecting and nurturing something unique. Faith needs to be nurtured... We are called to nourish our faith (with prayer, worship, reading, service and spiritual conversations) in the same way Mary and Joseph were called to nourish the infant Christ.” Page 65

“During the ride back to Jerusalem on the Number 21 bus, I thought about exits and entrances. The image of the Door of Humility stuck with me, as did the legend on a small sign near the entrance to the Church of the nativity: “We are hoping that: if you enter here are a tourist, you would exit as a pilgrim. If you enter here as a pilgrim, you would exit as a holier one.” Page 67

Fr. Martin reflects that without opening ourselves up to the possibility of the miraculous, we cannot fully enter into the world that God has in store for us.

Questions to promote personal reflection & discussion within the group

- Would you choose to go to Bethlehem if you had the chance on your Holy Land trip? Why or why not?
- Share what memory or ways you learned about the nativity story in scripture?
- What details about the birth narrative of Jesus stand out to you, give you the most questions, or comfort you?

Questions from the book

- Does it surprise you that Luke and Matthew wrote differing accounts of the birth of Jesus? Why might the Gospel writers present the same story in different ways for their different communities?
- How does the example of Joseph in the Nativity story speak to you?
- God entered the world in the most vulnerable state imaginable- a newborn child utterly dependent on others for his care. What might that say about God’s love for humanity? What might it say about the way God invites us to love?

This chapter looked closely at the holy family’s humble beginnings.

Closing practice to share with the group

Sing “O Little Town of Bethlehem” together

Closing practice to do in the between times

Prayer of Examen

Additional resources

[Click here](#) for stories of twelve famous Christmas Carols

Session 2 Jesus: A Pilgrimage Nazareth

Main Idea

Taking time to wonder about the humanness of Jesus only adds to the godliness of Jesus.

Gathering Question

Share a place in your early years that was formidable for you.

Scripture

Luke 2:41-52

Reading

Jesus: A Pilgrimage...
Nazareth, chapter 4
pages 70-95

Opening

Nazareth feels quiet in a way that can almost unsettle us. After the wonder of Bethlehem, we want more. We want more stories, more moments, more clarity. Instead, we get silence. Years of it. Jesus living an ordinary life, mostly hidden from view. I wonder if that is not a gap in the story, but part of the story itself. The Son of God spends most of his life not in miracles or teaching, but in the slow rhythms of work, family, and daily life. There is something both mysterious and strangely comforting in that. Especially when you realize what was just nearby.

A place like Sepphoris was a busy, cultured, full of opportunity city, only a few miles away. Jesus could have stepped into something larger, more visible. Instead, he remains in Nazareth, in a place of simplicity and subsistence. It raises a quiet question, what does it mean that God chose not only to enter the world humbly, but to stay there for so long?

Jesus was shaped perhaps differently than we had anticipated. With still the lingering question, did the Son of God always fully comprehend his unique purpose?

This leaves us with a question worth sitting with. Then also, what if God is doing more in the unseen parts of our own lives than we realize?





Highlights from chapter 4, Nazareth

“Many of us wish that we could gain access to the story of Jesus’ years in Nazareth. But like those monastery walls, the New Testament keeps that part of Jesus’ life hidden from view. I am fascinated by the Hidden life. On the one hand, it is marvelously mysterious: we know very little about what Jesus did during the years in Nazareth. At the same time, it’s not an insurmountable mystery. We have plenty of solid biblical, archaeological, and historical studies that can tell us a good deal about life in first-century Nazareth...” Page 73-74

“And yet, just four miles from Nazareth was Sepphoris, a bustling city of thirty thousand, which was being rebuilt at the time of Herod Antipas. The city’s extensive ruins show an amphitheater seating three to four thousand people, courts, a fortress, a royal bank, and houses with frescoes and gorgeous mosaic floors; it was a cosmopolitan place where Greek would have been spoken. Jesus’ hometown, by contrast, was a place of subsistence only...” Page 80

“Think of the values that a carpenter needs. you need persistence... patience... fairness... the ability to cooperate and even to lead. All these traits would serve him later in his ministry. They were useful tools. Many of Jesus’ parables are about work and workers... He understood the work that women did as well, having watched his mother, women in his family...” Page 90-91

Questions to promote personal reflection & discussion within the group

- Would you choose to go to Nazareth if you had the chance on your Holy Land trip? Why or why not?
- Fr. Martin mentions that he wonders what Jesus’ actual voice sounds like. How do you listen for Jesus’ voice in your personal meditation?
- How does pondering the value of Jesus’ ordinary life help you to measure more fully the potential sanctity of your own ordinary life?

Discussion Questions from the book

- What was the most surprising aspect of the description of daily life in Nazareth?
- One interesting facet of the hidden life is the possibility that Jesus visited the town of Sepphoris, then being rebuilt by Herod. Given what was said about Sepphoris in this book, how might visits there have influenced Jesus?
- Jesus lived an ordinary life in Nazareth for (roughly) thirty years, in large part working as a *tektōn*. How does his working life influence your understanding of him?

This chapter looked closely at the upbringing of Jesus which the scriptures leave much to question but outside sources create a more broad picture.

Closing practice to share with the group

Share a basic & ordinary life skill you think might be life giving to others

Closing practice to do in the between times

Prayer of Examen

Additional resources

[Click here for a picture](#) of a modern rendering of houses in ancient Israel

Session 3 Jesus: A Pilgrimage

Happy (Sea of Galilee)

Main Idea

Hearing Jesus is speaking to all people is unsettling and comforting at the same time.

Gathering Question

Is there a physical place that you have found to be a place that is, as Fr. Martin shares, “easy to pray”? Either because of a guide or the nature of the space, why?

Scripture

Matthew 5:1-12

Luke 6:20-23

Reading

Jesus: A Pilgrimage...
Happy, chapter 10
pages 167-181

Opening

There is something almost overwhelming about standing near the place where these words might have first been spoken. We’ve heard the Beatitudes before. Whether familiar or still confusing, when you place them back into a real landscape with ordinary people gathered, people who knew hunger, grief, and uncertainty, one begins to hear them differently. This is not abstract teaching. This is Jesus looking at actual people and saying, in effect, you are not forgotten. It raises a question that lingers longer than we expect: what kind of world is Jesus describing, where being “blessed” are the ones we overlook.

Really comprehending what the Beatitudes teach is a realignment of a whole thinking process. Perhaps that is what makes the Prayer of Examen (our spiritual practice, see page 4 of this guide) so powerful, it is specifically designed to shift your focus from “what’s next” or “what’s missing” to where life and grace are happening right now. While culture often encourages a mindset that we will be happy once we reach a certain goal, the Examen functions by grounding you in the present. Imagine hearing, maybe for the first time, that your life, in all its struggle, is not outside of God’s care but at the very center of it. That you belong. That you are seen. It is almost too much to take in. Maybe that is where this leaves us, not with a list to achieve, but with a question we cannot easily move past. What would it mean to believe that Jesus is speaking these words not just to them, but to us?



Highlights from chapter 10, Happy

“The Beatitudes are the series of Jesus’ statements that begin with “blessed are,” found in both Matthew and Luke, which offer different versions of Jesus’ list. The Gospel of Matthew, the Beatitudes begin what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount: “When Jesus saw the crowds, writes Matthew, “he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to sepal, and taught them saying: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit...” Page 168

“This does not mean that Jesus was making a blanket statement about the inherent goodness of poverty or mourning per se. We must for example, distinguish between the voluntary poverty of the disciple and the involuntary poverty of the person struggling to make ends meet... Likewise, Jesus is not saying that mourning day and night for the rest of your life is desirable. What he’s saying is more subtle.”

Pages 175-176

“So it’s conceivable that the main reaction of the original hearers of the Sermon on the Mount is something we tend to overlook in the Christian life: happiness. on that day, wherever the mountain was, I’ll be that the poor were delighted to hear themselves included in Jesus’ vision. I’ll bet that the forgotten were happy that Jesus was promising them a place at the table. I’ll bet that the oppressed were joyful to be elevated, finally. And I’ll bet Jesus was smiling when he said it. For happy was he.” Page 180

Questions to promote personal reflection & discussion within the group

- Would you choose to go to the Sea of Galilee if you had the chance on your Holy Land trip? Why or why not?
- Share specific prayer requests that match up with the Beatitudes for each pg 180-181 or use the guide on the following page of this booklet.

Discussion Questions from the book

- “Blessed are the poor” is Luke’s version of this verse of the Beatitudes. What does that mean for you?
- What is for you the most challenging of the Beatitudes, in Matthew’s version (pp 180-181)?
- Do you know anyone you would call a “person of the Beatitudes”?

This chapter looked closely at a sermon, likely pieced together, of Jesus’ words.

Closing practice to share with the group

Either read your individual prayers to a group member or read the beatitudes together replacing the word “happy” or “joyful” with “blessed.”

Closing practice to do in the between times

Prayer of Examen

Additional resources

The Beatitudes are still something to wonder through, [try this video](#) by The Bible Project



**SPIRIT OF GOD,
MAKE THESE WORDS
NOT SIMPLY
SOMETHING I READ,
BUT SOMETHING
THAT BECOMES ALIVE
IN ME.**

**NO RIGHT ANSWERS,
ONLY HONEST ONES**



BLESSED...

Blessed are the poor in spirit

God, help me to release my need for _____.
Teach me to depend on you in _____.

Blessed are those who mourn

God, I bring to you my grief over _____.
Comfort me, and help me to care about what you care about.

Blessed are those who meek

God, in a world that pushes me to prove myself,
teach me to be gentle in _____
and to trust you in _____.

Blessed are those who hunger & thirst for righteousness

God, stir in me a deeper desire for _____.
Help me to act justly in _____.

Blessed are the merciful

God, show me where I am holding onto resentment
toward _____.
Give me the courage to offer mercy in
_____.

Blessed are the pure in heart

God, search my heart and reveal _____.
Make me whole and undivided in _____.

Blessed are the pure in peacemakers

God, show me where I can bring peace in

Help me to listen more deeply to
_____.

Blessed are those who are persecuted

God, give me courage when following you costs me

Remind me that I am not alone in
_____.



Session 4 Jesus: A Pilgrimage

Bethany

Main Idea

In order to experience new life, we have to listen to God- just as Lazarus did.

Gathering Question

Retreats have often been a part of the journey of a Christian. Perhaps as a group or personal retreat. Share an experience of a retreat that stands out to you.
(Or if you have not been on a retreat, is there an experience that you might reflect on now that had aspects of a retreat now that you come to think about it?)

Scripture

John 11: 1-44

Reading

Jesus: A Pilgrimage...
Bethany, chapter 18
pages 312-330

Opening

Bethany is not just the place of a miracle, it is the place of friendship, grief, and waiting. It is the place where we see the vivid tension of Jesus human and divine. Does the story shift at the love between friends, at the awe inspiring miracle, or the moment Lazarus comes out? Or does it shift when we as listeners hear the depth of Jesus' voice in our own life and come out, fully alive, free, and ourselves? This is also a story about presence in the midst of loss. Martha runs to him, full of emotion, grief, hope, maybe even frustration, and in that moment, she sounds like all of us who have waited for God to arrive sooner, to act differently, to be where we needed God to be. We too, in our darkest moments, want someone to come close, to understand, and to be with us. Bethany reminds us that Jesus does not stand at a distance from that longing—he steps directly into it.

This story doesn't end at the tomb. Bethany is not only about what Jesus once did—it is about what Jesus is still doing, calling each of us, in ways both gentle and loud, toward a life we may not yet fully believe is possible.





Highlights from chapter 18, Bethany

“Here’s a fact about Jesus that is sometimes overlooked: he had friends...” Page 314

“When Martha hears that Jesus has finally come, she leaves her sister behind and rushes to meet him. What was going through Martha’s head as she ran? She was probably overjoyed at his arrival, after spending several days longing for his consolation... all of us want friends near us in dark times.” Page 316

“Sometimes, however, God needs to speak more loudly. That’s one way to look at Jesus’s speaking in a “loud voice” in the story. God may need to get our attention- in a very blunt comment from a friend that prevents us from doing something sinful, in an intense prayer experience that floods us with peace, in a Bible passage that hits us like a thunderclap, or in a homily that seems tailor-made for us-so that the dead part of us can hear.” Pages 324-325

Questions to promote personal reflection & discussion within the group

- Would you choose to go to Bethany if you had the chance on your Holy Land trip? Why or why not?
- What feels too impossible for God at this time to you?
- Which section of this chapter caused more connection for you? The early part about Jesus having friends? The middle part about this being Jesus’ greatest miracles? or The end part about the self reflection one is called to in hearing Jesus’ voice ourselves to “come out”?

Discussion Questions from the book

- In the Gospel of John, Lazarus is called not “Lazarus of Bethany,” “Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha,” or even “Lazarus, your friend,” but *hon phillis*, “he whom you love.” what Does this tell you about Jesus?
- When Mary and Martha say, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died,” are they scolding him, expressing disappointment, or professing their faith?
- What parts of yourself might you want to leave behind in the “tomb”? How is Jesus calling you to new life?

This chapter we visited the town where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, may we also hear the voice of Jesus, so that the dead part of us can hear.

Closing practice to share with the group

Fr. Martin shared a retreat experience in this chapter, what about that sounds enticing to you for you participate in?

Closing practice to do in the between times

Prayer of Examen

Additional resources

A [Christianity Today](#) article about loneliness. A [BBC](#) article with meaningful questions

Session 5 Jesus: A Pilgrimage

Jerusalem

Main Idea

It is in Jerusalem that Jesus would use his high profile to establish new social norms.

Gathering Question

During the Pandemic that began in 2020, church worship services were offered online. Familiar practices still continued as worshipers were invited to gather with their own communion supplies. What were some communion elements you gathered?

Scripture

John 13:1-17

Reading

Jesus: A Pilgrimage...
Jerusalem, chapter 19
pages 331-335

Opening

Jerusalem does not feel simple or neatly contained. Everything seems layered as an old city with many stories of a timeline that is as far wide as it is deep. It contains places of trial, suffering, and resurrection pressed close together. It is here, in the center of attention and tension, that Jesus steps forward rather than pulling back. His actions are not quiet or safe. They challenge expectations, disrupt systems, and begin to reshape what people understand about power, community, and God. As he does at the beginning of his ministry as well as when the disciples approach the city, Jesus asks a question that refuses to stay in the past: Who do you say that I am? In Jerusalem, that question becomes something lived. Around the table and in the act of washing feet, Jesus forms a community marked not by status, but by mutual care and shared belonging. These are not just rituals to remember, but practices that reveal what it means to follow him. We are called to receiving and embodying love at the same time.

Yet, none of this is without risk. These choices carry weight, even danger, and Jesus seems to know it. Perhaps that is what lingers most. Not just what happened in Jerusalem, but what it invites in us now. If we took seriously both the table and the towel, if we remembered and also lived - what might begin to change? As that question settles in, another remains close behind: *Who do you say that I am*, and how is your answer shaping the way you live?





Highlights from chapter 19, Jerusalem

“Stepping onto the worn, almost glassy, paving stones of the Old City meant entering a jumble of places relating to the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus...some of them separated by only a few steps.”
Page 332

“While the disciples are on their way to Jerusalem, Jesus asks “who do people say that I am?” A surprising question for the disciples-and the one that began this book.” Page 335

“Do you fully understand the mystery of the Eucharist?” Page 341

“After all, what he says about the Eucharist, “do this in memory of me” at the Last Supper in the Synoptics, he also says about the Food washing in John: “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” Page 351

Questions to promote personal reflection & discussion within the group

- Would you choose to go to Jerusalem if you had the chance on your Holy Land trip? Why or why not?
- Now having sat with the question, “Who do you say that I am”? a while, do you, like the disciples who spent a lot of time with Jesus, have a renewed response?
- Communion is reviewed in this chapter, as well as a lengthy parallel of the act of foot washing. In what ways does this add a curiosity you didn’t have before?

Discussion Questions from the book

- Gerard O’Collins, SJ, notes that Jesus understood the Cleaning of the Temple to be a “dangerously provocative act.” Other scholars suggest that Jesus also knew his entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday would have been seen as a threat. Does his recognition of the inherent danger of these actions, and what may have been an intentional use of symbolic gestures, influence your understanding of Jesus?
- Do you agree with Sandra Schneider’s suggestion that the Food Washing was more about establishing a “community of equals: than about “humble service”? Could the two ideas coexist among a group of friends?
- Would Christian churches be any different if they performed the Food Washing as often as they celebrate the Eucharist or the Lord’s Supper?

This chapter we visited Jerusalem, a well traveled city by pilgrims of many faith traditions, and a well known story. How different might churches be if we modeled it?

Closing practice to share with the group

If there was ever a time to be invited into the practice of washing each other’s feet, now would be the time.

Closing practice to do in the between times

Prayer of Examen

Additional resources

[CLICK HERE](#) For a TED Talk on Death and Resurrection in bread baking

Session 6 Jesus: A Pilgrimage

Risen

Main Idea

Mary recounts the words of Jesus, first to herself, then to the disciples, and anyone who would listen. And so we also hear these words today.

Gathering Question

Think of a place in your own life that holds more than one story: joy and grief, loss and growth. Share about it, what happened there, how has it shaped you?

Scripture

John 20:1-18

Reading

Jesus: A Pilgrimage...
Risen, chapter 22
pages 395-421

Opening

There is something disorienting about the place where death and life meet so closely. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher gathers grief, confusion, and hope into a single space, holding both the weight of the cross and the mystery of resurrection. It is not a place that resolves easily. Instead, it invites you to stand in the tension between what feels lost and what might still be possible.

In the garden, it is not certainty or understanding that leads to recognition, but something more personal. Mary hears her name. What she has experienced cannot be contained or explained, it must be told.

The resurrection does not first arrive as an idea to be understood, but as a reality to be encountered. It is through her voice that the news begins to spread, a reminder that faith is not only learned, but lived and shared.

Perhaps that is where this chapter leaves us, not with proof, but with possibility.

If resurrection comes in unexpected ways, what might we be missing? What parts of our lives have we quietly named as finished, beyond hope or renewal? If we listen closely, could it be that we are still being called by name invited to see that new life is closer than we think?





Highlights from chapter 22, Risen

“The question of whether the inclusion of women in Jesus’ ministry broke social boundaries may be disputed. What is not disputed is that throughout Christian history women’s contribution has often been downplayed, ignored, or mislabeled... So one of the first witnesses of the Resurrection- in some accounts the first witness- was classified as a prostitute.” Pages 400-401

“Mary Magdalene reminds us that the most powerful tool for spreading the Good News is not knowledge, but experience. There is a place for both in the Christian life, and scholarship and learning have provided inestimable riches for the faith. But the true disciple does not say simply, “I have studied Jesus,” but as Mary Magdalene did, “I have seen the Lord.” Page 407

“How many of us believe parts of our lives are dead? How many believe that parts of our family, our country, our world, our church cannot come to life? how many of us feel bereft of the hope of change? This is when I turn to the Resurrection.” Page 415

“It was another reminder that spiritual experiences often don’t happen when you expect them and do when you don’t. God is always a God of surprises.” Page 420

Questions to promote personal reflection & discussion within the group

- How reverently intimate do you think you would get with a holy site or place if you had the chance on your Holy Land trip? Why or why not?
- What has been a time, upon later reflection, you had an unplanned experience with God?
- In your pain or suffering, what has moved you from being like the terrified disciples cowering behind closed doors to be blinded by dawn that Jesus’s new life?

Discussion Questions from the book

- Why do you think Mary was at first unable to recognize the Risen Christ?
- As Stanley Marrow, SJ, said, the Risen Christ is “identifiable” with Jesus of Nazareth. That is, the “Jesus of history” is the same person as the “Christ of faith.” How does this influence your understanding of him?
- In your own words, what does it mean to “accept our crosses?” Have you experienced the “paschal mystery” of death and birth in your own life?

This chapter visited the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the site of Jesus’ resurrection.

Closing practice to share with the group

You’ve traveled as a group to many sites that are holy through this book and the writings of James Martin, SJ. Consider as a group where you would like to “go” next?

Closing practice to do in the between times

Prayer of Examen

Additional resources

Consider downloading [meditation timer](#), a gong sound for mindfulness exercises.