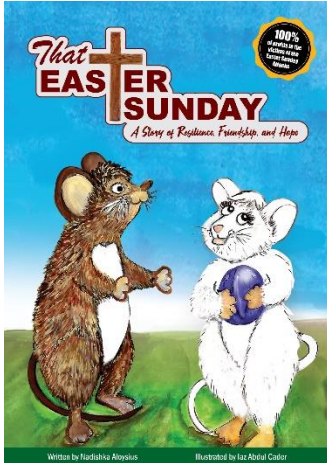


# THAT EASTER SUNDAY

## TEACHERS' GUIDE



**LEVEL:** Grades 3 - 5

### **THEMES**

Asian Interest, Sri Lanka, Death, Friendship, Easter, Christianity

### **SYNOPSIS**

Vibhu is a little church mouse who lives with his friends and family in Sri Lanka. One Easter Sunday, while the Humans are celebrating mass, a bomb (known as the Big Boom in the story) devastates the church. Vibhu spends the next few hours searching for his best friend Seha who is missing after the blast, to no avail. He has to soon accept that she will not return.

He retreats to his favourite statue of the risen Jesus for a few days, trying to cope with his grief. The spider Ari advises him and with the help of his family he is able to come to terms with his loss. They bury a box containing Seha's possessions and Vibhu finds solace in the resumption of services and the beautiful organ music he loves, and looks forward to meeting Seha again someday.

### **BACKGROUND**

Sri Lanka is an island nation situated in the Indian Ocean. It is known for its endemic wildlife, Ceylon tea, famous historical sites, lovely beaches, and cricket. It is called the Pearl of the Indian Ocean.

### **Introduction from the Author**

On 21 April 2019, Easter Sunday, three churches in Sri Lanka and three luxury hotels in the commercial capital, Colombo, were targeted in a series of coordinated Islamic terrorist suicide bombings. 259 people were killed, including at least 45 foreign nationals and three police

officers, and at least 500 were injured.

This book is written in memory of that horrifying day, when we awoke to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, only to realize that hundreds had died while celebrating Holy Mass.

I remember the absolute shock we all experienced as the news reports rolled in that day. My main aim in writing this book is to ensure that those who lost their lives will never be forgotten. I also hope that this story will give both children and adults who read it a sense of catharsis and strengthen their faith in humanity and God.

I know the story has strong Christian overtones, but I feel it can be read by anyone of any ethnicity or religion. The days following the bombings were dark and desperate, and I hope we never return to such a juncture as a nation ever again.

### **PRE-READING QUESTIONS**

1. Let's find Sri Lanka on a map. Have you heard of it before?
2. Explain the historical background to the story and tell them it is a sad story
3. Do you know what Easter is?
4. Have you ever experienced something sad in your life?
5. Do you remember how you coped with your feelings and who helped you?

**It is suggested that the teacher reads the story aloud with pauses for discussion along the way**

### **DURING / AFTER READING**

#### **SOME PARTS OF THE STORY ARE BASED ON TRUE EVENTS**

Here is a list of actual events that are mentioned in the book: (Video in Resources at the end)

1. The first and second attacks occurred during the Holy Mass
2. The churches were packed – there were worshippers standing outside
3. Photos taken just after the event show the destruction as described by Vibhu
4. A second vehicle bomb detonated outside St. Anthony's church a few hours after the first attack.
5. The armed forces (in uniform) headed the clean-up crews
6. The statue of the Risen Jesus was covered in blood spatter

7. It is encased in glass and can be viewed at St. Sebastian's Katuwapitiya
8. A group of Buddhist monks were among those who assisted in cleaning and renovation
9. On 23rd April the first mass funeral was held at Katuwapitiya. The description of the coffins, wounded and tents is taken from photos of the day.
10. "A river of brown flowing through a land of white" refers to the Sri Lankan custom of wearing white to a funeral.
11. Each newly renovated church has a memorial to the victims

After the first reading of the story, you can use this information to revisit the tale and try to identify the moments above.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What do you remember about Seha – her likes, dislikes, and personality?
2. What about Vibhu's likes, dislikes, and personality?
3. How do you think Vibhu felt when he first heard the big BANG?
4. How do you think he felt when he saw the injured cat?
5. Why did they help the cat?
6. Think about how the different characters reacted to the bomb – Ari, Vibhu, Vibhu's mother, the ants etc. Why did they behave like that?
7. How do you think Vibhu felt when he realised he will never see Seha again?
8. Why did he spend so many days on the statue?
9. What do you think of Ari – How does she help everyone in the story?
10. Why did Ari prepare a box full of Seha's things?
11. How do you think Vibhu felt at the end of the story?
12. Why do you think the Humans left the damaged statue of the Risen Jesus intact and encased it in glass?

13. Is there anything we can learn from this story?
14. According to your culture, how do you remember those who have died?
15. How can we help others who are grieving?
16. If you are teaching in a Catholic setting you can discuss the many religious symbols in the story.
17. If the book is read in a religious setting, end with a prayer.

### **ART ACTIVITY**

Ask the children to draw a picture of any part of the story that made an impression on them

### **WRITING ACTIVITIES**

Imagine you are Vibhu and you are writing a letter to Seha (after her death) explaining how you feel and what has been happening.

If teaching in a Christian setting: Write a prayer for those who died in the bomb, and those who survived.

### **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Students can research details about Sri Lanka, (or specifically the Easter Bomb attack) and make a presentation to the class

Students can research funerals and rituals across other cultures and compare with their own

Discuss other natural or man-made disasters happening at the moment.

## **ORDER INFORMATION**

**The book is available on Amazon**

[getbook.at/ThatEasterSunday](http://getbook.at/ThatEasterSunday)

## **RESOURCES**

More lesson ideas from a Catholic perspective

<http://melindaharrington.com.au/uncategorized/that-easter-sunday/>

Which parts are true

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjtGORJZGYU&t=52s>