



DIOCESE OF LANSING
M I C H I G A N

Going Deeper: Butterflies and Easter

The Butterfly life cycle symbolizes the life of Christ: The caterpillar or first stage stands for Christ's life on earth. The cocoon stage portrays Christ's death at the cross and his burial. The third stage and most important phase is the rebirth after three days. The butterfly's final stage is Christ's resurrection from the dead, so it is just right that it is a symbol of Easter.

The metamorphosis of the caterpillar into a butterfly is a symbol of resurrection. During the process of transformation, the chrysalis experiences darkness and constriction inside the cocoon.

Elaine Jordan, on her article "the Butterfly, symbol of the soul" says: "In Christian art, the caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly came to signify the life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Some Renaissance images of the Christ Child show a butterfly alighting on his hand. The metamorphosis in the life of the butterfly also came to represent the change and transformation of the faithful Catholic soul. A butterfly starts as a lowly caterpillar that crawls on the earth; then, it metamorphoses to a chrysalis hibernating in a cocoon; finally, it emerges as a beautiful flying insect. Its brilliant colors and flickering flight link it to the sun, light and ascent into the spiritual realm. These stages in the life history of the butterfly were transposed onto the life of the Catholic, who after Baptism, emerges to a new life."