

We Celebrate Holy Week

For the Parents:

The liturgy of Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion anticipates the whole drama of Holy Week. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem hints at his Resurrection. (reading the Passion Gospel is optional due to length) The Passion Gospel moves us from triumph to tragedy. The scenes tell not only of Jesus' suffering and Death, but also of Judas's betrayal, Peter's denial, and a soldier's faith. We hear the Passion story according to Matthew on Sunday, reenact parts of it on Holy Thursday, and then read John's Passion narrative on Good Friday.

Gathering Prayer:

Begin with the Sign of the Cross

Dear Jesus, this Sunday we begin the remembrance of your suffering and Death and of your glorious Resurrection to new life. Be with us. Send your Holy Spirit into our minds and hearts. Amen.

End with the Sign of the Cross

Palm Sunday Discussion:

On Palm Sunday, the priest processes (walks around) the church as Jesus walked into Jerusalem. We hold palm branches up high like the crowds who welcomed Jesus. During this time the Jewish leaders are frightened that Jesus will change the balance of power they have with the Romans. They do not like Jesus' teaching. After Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, they begin to look for ways to kill him. But Jesus' followers were excited to see him and celebrate him coming into Jerusalem. Read aloud the Gospel, Matthew 21:1-11.

The Entry into Jerusalem. Matthew 21:1-11

When they drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethany on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tethered, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them here to me. And if anyone should say anything to you, reply, 'The master has need of them.' Then he will send them at once." This happened so that what had been spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled: "Say to daughter Zion, 'Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had ordered them. They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their cloaks over them, and he sat upon them. The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road. The crowds preceding him and those following kept crying out and saying: "Hosanna* to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." And when he entered Jerusalem the whole city was shaken* and asked, "Who is this?" And the crowds replied, "This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee."

Words to Learn

Read the definitions.

HOSANNA! A Hebrew phrase that means "God, save your people!"

JESUS A Hebrew name that means "God saves."

Point out that Hosanna is like a prayer: "God, save your people!" and that Jesus is like an answer to prayer: "God will save the people."

Holy Thursday Discussion:

On Holy Thursday we experience Jesus' trial, suffering, Crucifixion, and Death. (optional) Read Matthew 26:14—27:66.

Jesus Suffers and Dies for Us

This week, we walk with Jesus through the Paschal Mystery of his suffering, Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection. We are saved out of God's love for us. "He loved us and sent his son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). This means that Jesus makes things right through his Death. Jesus dies so that our sins are forgiven—even the Original Sin that we inherited from our first ancestors. Jesus is called a suffering servant. This means that Jesus humbly accepts and follows God's plan for his life, knowing that it will end in his death.

Whom do you know that puts their needs after the needs of others?

Name a charity your family supports with money or volunteer service.

Why is it important to you?

Jesus Celebrates the Last Supper with His Friends and Washes His Friends' Feet

In the Gospel of John, he tells how Jesus washed the feet of his friends, a job usually done by servants. The Church remembers Jesus' example at Mass on Holy Thursday by reading the story and washing feet. What can we do for one another today that is like washing people's feet in Jesus' time?

Celebrate this Last Supper prayer service based on the Gospel Reading for the Evening Mass on Holy Thursday, John 13:1–15. Pick a Narrator, someone to read John, James, Peter and Jesus.

Narrator: Jesus Christ is our teacher and Savior.

All: As Jesus did, so we must do.

Narrator: This is the story of how Jesus washed his friends' feet. Jesus rose from the meal that he was eating with his friends and took off his cloak. He picked up a towel and tied it around himself.

John: What do you suppose Jesus is doing?

Narrator: Then Jesus poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and dry them with the towel he had around him.

James: Washing people's feet is a job for servants. Why is Jesus doing a servant's work?

Narrator: Then Jesus came to wash the feet of Simon Peter.

Peter: Are you going to wash my feet?

Jesus: You may not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

Peter: You shall never wash my feet!

Jesus: If I do not wash you, you will have no share in my heritage.

Peter: Then wash my feet, and my hands and head as well.

Narrator: After Jesus had washed their feet, he put his cloak back on and reclined at the table once more.

Jesus: Do you understand what I just did for you? You call me "teacher" and "Savior," which is fitting. But if I washed your feet—I, who am teacher and Savior—then you must wash each other's feet. What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do.

Narrator: Let us tell about the people we know who teach us how to follow Jesus today. Each person takes a turn telling about a person who should receive a Great Christian Service Award.

Narrator: Jesus showed us that serving one another is giving life to one another.

All: We can love and serve. We can give others new life.

Project

Jesus repeatedly asked his disciples to keep watch while he prayed in the garden, but they did not; instead they slept. Often in our own lives, we ignore people who ask us to do something in order to do something we want to do more. Have your child identify one thing you repeatedly ask them to do and commit to doing it either the first time they are asked or without even being asked. Take a few minutes daily to reflect and discuss how they did.