



**WELCOMING
CHILDREN
in WORSHIP**

**THE CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY
OF AMERICA**



HOLY WEEK & EASTER

Adaptive Activities for Children



**National Catholic
Partnership on Disability**

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Introduction

Welcome and thank you for your ministry that serves the liturgical formation of children for their participation in the Eucharist, the “source and summit of the Christian life.” This resource is provided by the Committee on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD). It aims to offer an adaptive catechetical opportunity for all who have a heart for disability ministry to reflect on the liturgical year. We welcome you to this virtual community and hope you find this resource beneficial.

Here you will find reflections to guide children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or diverse learners, through the liturgical season of Holy Week & Easter with adaptive catechesis to help prepare them to participate fully as we journey through Lent. Each offering includes prayer, Scripture, activities and more that incorporate the senses and take into consideration the needs of all learners. We invite you to gather children around the table of the home or the table of the classroom as preparation for their participation at the sacred table of the Eucharist.

Each session with children follows these moments with supporting materials:

- 1. Prayer**
- 2. Sacred Scripture**
- 3. Reflection**
- 4. Faith in Action**
- 5. Activities**
- 6. Saint**
- 7. Resources/Bibliography**

Prayer for Holy Week

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Leader:

Today we begin Holy Week. During Holy Week we remember the last days of Jesus' life. Jesus journeyed into Bethlehem to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. He washed their feet at dinner and then went to pray in the garden of Gethsemane. While he was praying, he was betrayed by his friend Judas and arrested. He was tried and forced to carry his cross to his death. We take time to pray more this week to thank Jesus for giving his life for us. Let us take time each day this week to remember Jesus' journey to the cross.

We adore you O' Christ and we praise you.

Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Leader:

Loving God, thank you for sending us your son, Jesus, to die for our sins. Please forgive us for the times that we have hurt others with our choices, because when we hurt others, we hurt you as well. Help us to remember that Jesus gave us the gift of his life, so that we could be with you some day in heaven. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son, through the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Note: Song Suggestion - *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?*

<https://youtu.be/PY1kOfqW4M8?si=XXc9S56CaPRKavSU>



Photo by Tim Gouw on Unsplash

Prayer for Easter

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Leader:

Today we celebrate because something very exciting happened. Some of Jesus' friends went to his tomb where he was buried, but he wasn't there! Jesus rose from the dead to show us that he had conquered death for us. Now the gates of heaven are opened. Repeat after me as we celebrate:

Christ is risen! Alleluia, Alleluia!
Christ is risen! Alleluia, Alleluia!

Leader:

Dear Jesus, we thank you and praise you for suffering for us on the cross and for rising to new life. You are the savior of the world! Thank you for redeeming us from sin. Give us the strength to be faithful disciples, so that we can live our lives like you did. You are God's greatest gift.

Amen.

Note: Song Suggestion - *Jesus Christ Is Risen Today*
<https://youtu.be/r9a41CvVEHw?si=zAptGGklI91jsZhw>

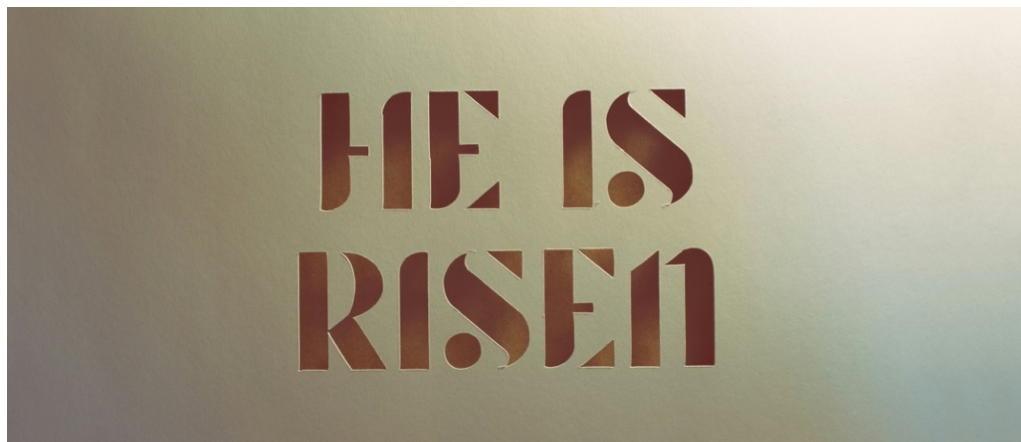


Photo by Kelly Sikkema on Unsplash

Reading of Sacred Scripture

John 20: 1-9

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

On Sunday morning while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran to Simon Peter and to Jesus' favorite disciple and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb! We don't know where they have put him." Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. They ran side by side, until the other disciple ran faster than Peter and got there first. He bent over and saw the strips of linen cloth lying inside the tomb, but he did not go in. When Simon Peter got there, he went into the tomb and saw the strips of cloth. He also saw the piece of cloth that had been used to cover Jesus' face. It was rolled up and in a place by itself. The disciple who got there first then went into the tomb, and when he saw it, he believed. At that time Peter and the other disciple did not know that the Scriptures said Jesus would rise to life.



Photo by Pisit Heng on Unsplash

Vocabulary

Resurrection – Jesus rising from the dead.
(see below)

Tomb - a grave where a person is buried.

Linen - a type of cloth made from a type of plant called flax.



Reflection with Children

When you woke up this morning, the sun rose in the sky and the dark night turned into the light of day. On Easter, the Church celebrates a time when a different Son rose... and we call it the **Resurrection**. Even though He had not done anything wrong, Jesus was nailed to a cross. He died and was put in a tomb with a huge stone over the entrance. On Sunday, one of His followers, Mary Magdalene, went to the tomb. She was surprised because the huge stone had been moved and Jesus' body was not there. All that was left behind was the linen cloth they used to wrap around His body. She was afraid and ran to His friends, Simon Peter, and John who Jesus called His best friend. John looked inside and thought, "How can the tomb be empty? Where did his body go?" Peter went in further and saw cloths that had been used to cover Jesus body, and it was when they saw the cloths they began to believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

But is that the end of the story? Why did Jesus have to die? God knew that people on earth were making bad choices and sinning. He wanted to show the people how much he loved them, so he sent Jesus to teach us how to love one another. Even though some people did not like Jesus, and they killed Him, God raised Jesus out of the tomb so He could live forever, and by doing that, all sin on earth can be forgiven. The Resurrection of Jesus is God's great gift to us. And God asks us to share it in all we do! So, when you wake up tomorrow and see the morning light, smile, and say "thank you God for this new day. Help me to live like your Son, Jesus."

[Easter Children's Sermon \(Luke 24:1-12\) Easy Print & Video \(ministry-to-children.com\)](http://ministry-to-children.com)

Faith in Action

Holy Week and Easter

Holy Week is the most beautiful and special time of the year in our Catholic tradition. It is the week between Palm Sunday and Holy Saturday where we join Christians around the world to remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

During the Triduum, the three days leading up to Easter, including Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, we prepare for Easter by participating in liturgies, and by engaging in special prayers and practices in our homes. As this is a time that offers many opportunities to celebrate different liturgies, let's look at ways that our families might participate in the celebrations of the Church either in our domestic Church or in our local parish.



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At Home – Online Liturgies

This may be a good option for your family. If it is, please research which liturgies will be accessible online for each day during the Triduum and plan your family worship time around them.

Here are a few suggestions to make this a more meaningful experience for your family:

1. Set the scene for Mass by finding a quiet place to participate on-line without distractions.
2. Gather around your prayer table or place one nearby. Include electric candles and invite your child to turn on the candle before Mass begins. Also include Holy Water for you and your family to bless themselves before the start of the Mass.

3. Before Mass begins center yourselves in prayer, recognizing that you are in the presence of God. Close your eyes, inhale and exhale deeply three times. Let each other know how much you appreciate this special time with God and with each other.
4. Set and share expectations for this time at Mass. Participate by whole body listening, praying aloud, singing, standing, sitting, and kneeling as the liturgy requires. Model this for your child and prompt them as needed.
5. Have ready those things that might connect with what is happening at Mass with what you can do in your domestic Church. For example, on Holy Thursday, the priests wash the feet of members of the Church, as Jesus did at the last supper for his disciples. Take turns as a family washing the feet (or hands) of each member of your family.
6. On Holy Saturday, turning off the lights represents the darkness, until it is time to light the candles during the liturgy representing the light of Christ in the world.
7. Attend to Mass as long as you and your family possibly can. Press pause and take breaks when you need to and come back to the liturgy as you are able.
8. At the end of Mass give thanks to God for this time to worship Him with your family.
9. Ask your family members to share one thing they loved the most about the Mass.

At Church – In-Person Liturgies

If you would like to bring your child to Mass during Holy Week, try to bring them to Mass well beforehand if possible. The liturgies during Holy Week are typically longer than Sunday liturgies. It may take some time for your child to get acclimated to going to church and attending Mass, but it is well worth it.

Planning ahead, sharing social narratives, sitting up front so your child can see, bringing a fidget, and sitting your child between you and your spouse, or an older sibling is a good idea. Letting them know what to expect at Mass is also helpful.

Here are some additional suggestions to consider in making this a more meaningful experience for your family:

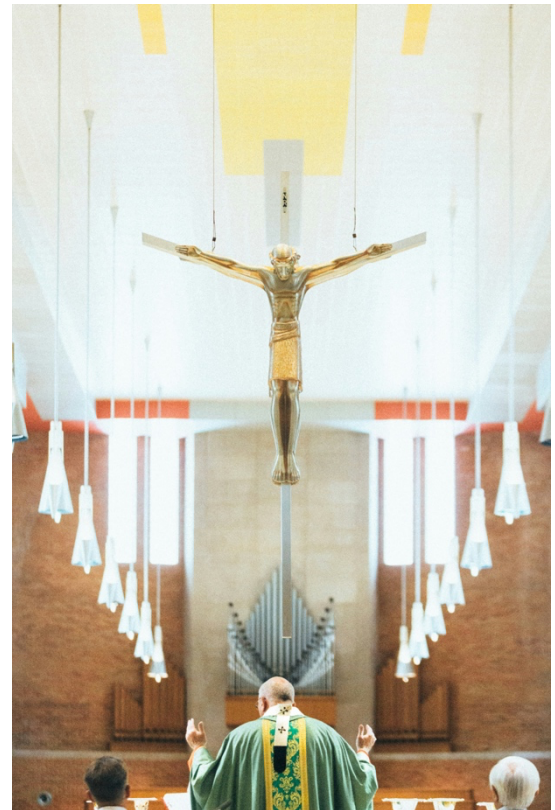


Photo by Jacob Bentzinger on Unsplash

1. Arrive early and find a place where your family can settle in and feel comfortable.
2. If time permits, go around the church pointing out things that will be used during the Mass like the altar, the ambo, etc....as well as things that are important in telling stories of our faith – like stain glass windows and stations of the cross.
3. Before Mass begins center yourselves in prayer, recognizing that you are in the presence of God. Close your eyes, inhale and exhale deeply three times. Let each other know how much you appreciate this special time with God and with each other.
4. Set and share expectations for this time at Mass. Participate by whole body listening, praying aloud, singing, standing, sitting, and kneeling as the liturgy requires. Model this for your child and prompt them as needed.
5. Create a reward system that acknowledges the good choices your child makes at Mass – whole body listening, making eye contact during the sign of peace, etc.... Create a rewards chart that can be marked off throughout the Mass. Discuss their reward beforehand and show them the chart during Mass to remind them what they are working towards. Praise the behavior you want to see and indicate their progress towards their goal on the chart.
6. Bring a picture Missal (Loyola Press) that your child can use to follow along during the Mass. Bring church and liturgical season-related coloring pages and crayons, or flash cards to engage your child when necessary. Allow your child to bring a favorite soft toy, to hold when they become anxious or need sensory input.
7. Attend Mass for as long as you and your family possibly can. If you need to step outside to take a break, and come back in when you are ready, that is fine. Each time you go, try to stay a little longer. The more you bring your child to Mass, the more comfortable they will become and the more they will want to join you and participate in Mass.
8. At the end of Mass give thanks to God for this time to worship Him with your family. Introduce yourself and your child to the priest and thank him for Mass.
9. Ask your family members to share one thing they loved the most about your Mass experience.

Holy Week and Easter are a perfect time to celebrate being Catholic as a family. Praying and participating in Mass and the sacraments together is truly a wonderful way to honor your faith in God and each other. Wishing you a blessed Holy Week and Easter!



Photo by Sarah Noltner on Unsplash

Activities with Children

March Activity for Holy Week & Easter

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday and concludes on Easter Sunday. The Sacred Paschal Triduum takes place during Holy Week; it begins with Thursday of the Lord's Supper at the Evening Mass and goes through the Evening Prayer of Easter Sunday. Some individuals may not give much thought to this holiest time of year. They may just pick up palms at the beginning of the week and then go on an egg hunt at the end of the week. To help your child have a better understanding of the importance of this week, you may want him or her to participate in daily activities. Perhaps your parish has planned events that you could attend, or your family may have a tradition that is carried out each year. If not, the following are suggested activities, as well as links for specified readings, that you may want to consider for each day of Holy Week.

Palm Sunday:

In the Gospel reading (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032424.cfm>), the people of Jerusalem greeted Jesus by spreading palms on the road and crying out "Hosannah" to him. To honor Jesus in your home, help your child prepare a spot to reverently display the blessed palms throughout the year.

Monday of Holy Week:

The response in the Responsorial Psalm (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032524.cfm>) is "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Discuss with your child that Jesus' light helps us to see the difference between good and evil. For today's activity, explain that you will use a candle as a symbol of the light of Jesus. Ask a family member to read the psalm while you assist your child to respond by lighting the candle.

Tuesday of Holy Week:

One of the themes of this Gospel (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032624.cfm>) is betrayal - Judas' betrayal of Jesus and Peter's denial of Jesus. Even though Jesus knows that his

disciples will betray him, he continues to show his love for us by following God’s plan and the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Have your child color or decorate a picture of a heart as a visual reminder of his/her love for Jesus.

Wednesday of Holy Week:

Reading 1 states, “The Lord God is my help”

(<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032724.cfm>). Explain to your child that just as Jesus helps us, we can show our love for Jesus by helping others. Make plans with your child to participate in an activity to help others. It can be as simple as helping with a household chore or getting involved with an organized project in your parish or community.

Holy Thursday:

One part of this Gospel reading (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032824-Supper.cfm>) is a recounting of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. Just as Jesus is willing to humbly serve others, we too are asked to do the same. Assist your child in washing the feet of another family member or loved one.

Good Friday:

A description of the soldiers placing a crown of thorns on Jesus’ head is found in this Gospel reading (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032924.cfm>). Explain to your child that Jesus willingly suffered for us to save the world from sin. As a symbol of Jesus’ great sacrifice, help your child make a crown of thorns out of Play-Doh and toothpicks.



Photo from Midjourney

Holy Saturday:

Explain to your child that Holy Saturday is a day of anticipation of Jesus' Resurrection. Waiting can be a challenge for some individuals. One way to practice waiting is by planting seeds or small plants. "Let the earth bring forth vegetation" is written in Reading 1 (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/033024.cfm>). Make the connection for your child that just as we wait for Jesus' Resurrection, we wait for "the earth to bring forth vegetation" by watching the plant grow over time.

Easter Sunday:

In the Gospel (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/033124.cfm>), the stone was removed from the tomb because Jesus had risen from the dead. As a reminder of Jesus' victory over death and sin, have your child draw a cross on a stone to carry in his/her pocket or backpack.



Photo from Midjourney

Saint for March

St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Solemnity – March 19

St. Joseph is a very important man to our Catholic faith. His feast day on March 19 is called a *solemnity because* he played a very special role in Jesus' life. St. Joseph was a very brave man who said "yes" to becoming Mary's husband and Jesus' foster father here on Earth. He took care of Jesus, taught him about the Jewish faith, and helped to raise him with Mother, Mary. St. Joseph was also a carpenter which means that he built many things out of wood, including furniture. He is the patron Saint of fathers, families, and workers (especially carpenters).

Some fun activities for the Solemnity of St. Joseph:

1. Read to your child the USCCB Gospel reading for the [Solemnity of Saint Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary | USCCB](#). Then watch this video about St. Joseph and the birth of Jesus: <https://youtu.be/BWZ48mG95Xc?si=FBVIfaRVuWRPNSR>.
2. Discuss the life of St. Joseph while you color a picture of St. Joseph. There are several free printables online. Here is an option from "The Catholic Kid" website: [Saint Joseph & Jesus Coloring Page - TheCatholicKid.com](#)
3. Take some time to build something out of wooden popsicle sticks like St. Joseph, the carpenter. Be creative! You could make a boat, a house, or picture frame.

A Child's Prayer to St. Joseph

St. Joseph,
watch over me
and care for me
just as you cared for
the child Jesus;
and by your help,
may I come to know

your Son,
and so grow
in strength
and wisdom
and the favor of God.

Amen.

Courtesy of Teaching Catholic Kids

Holy Week & Easter - Resources

Archdiocese of St. Louis - St. Louis Review - “Holy Week traditions help us to better understand God’s plan for our salvation” by Jennifer Brinker, 4/11/19; <https://www.archstl.org/holy-week-traditions-help-us-to-better-understand-gods-plan-for-our-salvation-3871>

Catholic Icing - free resources: <https://www.catholicicing.com/search/Holy+Week/>

Teachers Pay Teachers - use this website’s search tool to find free resources for Holy Week and Easter: [teacherspayteachers.com](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com)

USCCB - Catholic Current - video interview with Bishop Steven J. Lopes - “Holy Week - A Great Treasure of the Liturgical Year”; 2023; <https://www.usccb.org/resources/holy-week-great-treasure-liturgical-year>



Photos by Matt Marzorati,



Thays Orrico,



Hugo Fergusson on Unsplash



Bibliography

USCCB Daily Readings –

- Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion, March 24, 2024:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032424.cfm>
- Monday of Holy Week, March 25, 2024: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032524.cfm>
- Tuesday of Holy Week, March 26, 2024: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032624.cfm>
- Wednesday of Holy Week, March 27, 2024:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032724.cfm>
- Holy Thursday - Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper, March 28, 2024:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032824-Supper.cfm>
- Good Friday of the Lord’s Passion, March 29, 2024:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032924.cfm>
- Holy Saturday at the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter, March 30, 2024:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/033024.cfm>
- Easter Sunday - The Resurrection of the Lord - The Mass of Easter Day, March 31, 2024:
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/033124.cfm>



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- “Birth of Jesus | Story of Saint Joseph | Stories of Saints | English.” n.d. www.youtube.com. Accessed February 21, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWZ48mG95Xc>.
- Meadows, Chris. 2020. “Meet St. Joseph • Saints for Kids.” Teaching Catholic Kids. March 18, 2020. <https://www.teachingcatholickids.com/st-joseph-saints-for-kids/>.
- TheCatholicKid. 2021. “Saint Joseph & Jesus Coloring Page - TheCatholicKid.com.” The Catholic Kid - Catholic Coloring Pages and Games for Children. January 31, 2021. <https://www.thecatholickid.com/saint-joseph-jesus-coloring-page-cnt-mls/>.