

Helpsheets for Parents/Carers/Catechists

Holy Week Day by Day

Aim of the booklet:

- to give children a basic overview of Holy Week
- to engage them in the events which occurred during the last days of Jesus' life on earth
- to give them an overview of some of the practices that they will witness in their parishes/homes during this time
- to encourage children to begin to relate Jesus' suffering with his love and sacrifice for us.

Depending on the children's age and maturity, you can extend the themes of the worksheets by including further events not covered in the worksheets, e.g. Peter's betrayal, Pontius Pilate's role, etc.

When reading the text with your child, stop at key words. It is also more engaging for the child if he/she reads some of the text too.

If you are working with a group, children could take turns to read.

Some excerpts from scripture are used or paraphrased, but it is a good idea to read the actual passages from scripture.

You could extend the worksheets with arts and craft activities, e.g. drawing a Holy Week sequencing strip, making a cross/crucifix, designing/colouring Easter eggs ...

Spend approximately 20 minutes on each sheet.

Palm Sunday – Page 2

Read the page with the child/group.

Ask them what date Palm Sunday will fall this year.

Ask what they remember from previous Palm Sundays:

- Did they make their palm into a cross?
- Do they still have a palm in the house? Is it hanging on a wall?
- Have they ever seen a palm tree? (Show them a picture of a palm tree and its leaves). If you have a palm from a previous year, show it to them.

Talk about Jesus riding on the donkey.

Highlight the fact that he looked like a very important person entering Jerusalem on a donkey rather than on foot.

When going through the questions, ask the children why the people loved Jesus so much and encourage them to think of the miracles/stories which the people might have heard about or witnessed to make them love Jesus.

Highlight the word “Hosannah” and ask them to think of when it is used during Mass/in hymns/in prayers.

You could show them images of people receiving ashes on Ash Wednesday and highlight the fact that the palms are used to make the ashes.

Encourage the children to compare Palm Sunday to the arrest of Jesus just days later. The crowds changed their minds so quickly – in the space of only a few days. Mention Pontius Pilate to them: he had the chance to release Jesus because it was a Passover tradition to release a prisoner, but the crowds chose Barabbas.

Pontius Pilate “washed his hands” of the matter even though there was no case against Jesus. Maybe discuss the idea of people following the crowd, people being afraid not to follow the crowd, that people were also afraid of being accused themselves.

Monday of Holy Week - Page 3

Read through the first paragraph.

Focus on the word “market” and ask the children:

- What do people do at a market?
- Have they ever been to one? How busy was it?
- What was the atmosphere like?

Encourage them to compare the noise of a market to the peace in a church.

In the second paragraph, focus on Jesus’ anger at what he saw in the temple. The children might not expect Jesus to have ever been angry, so you need to explain that he was rightly upset because it was his Father’s house and a place of worship.

Read the third paragraph – the story.

If possible, show a picture of a temple.

Discuss how we should behave in a church. You could use this opportunity to check their understanding of some key gestures/practices/features, e.g:

- blessing themselves with holy water from the stoup to remind them of their baptism
- genuflecting
- the tabernacle and the sanctuary lamp
- kneeling down to pray and prepare for Mass
- standing up for the Gospel

Tuesday of Holy Week(1) – Page 4

Read the first paragraph.

Focus on Jesus' popularity and the threat he posed to those in power. Leaders like to stay in power and have the support of the people, but Jesus had lately been gaining more and more followers ...

Remind the children that Jesus was a Jew ... that there were groups of Jews who were extremely strict and observed Jewish laws rigidly and did not like some of Jesus' ways. Ask the children if they know any stories about Jesus mixing with sinners, e.g the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector.

Read the story of the Widow's Mite.

Explain what a parable is and ask if they know other parables.

Encourage the children to think of the message behind the parable: looking after one another ... generosity ... giving as much as you can to others ... not being greedy giving all she had – this is what Jesus did for us!

Tuesday of Holy Week(2) – Page 5

Read through the sheet, stopping to talk about each oil. If in a church group, you could show them the actual oils.

Ask the children if they can remember seeing the oils being used ...

Explain that oils were used to anoint kings and prophets, that our own queen was anointed at her coronation ...that oil signifies cleansing, strengthening, healing and comfort, and the life-giving grace of the Holy Spirit.

When reading the third paragraph about renewing baptismal promises, ask the children if they have done this before ... show them the aspergillum used to sprinkle water.

Mention the role of a "deacon" ... a single or married male cleric who has received the sacrament of Holy Orders ... can proclaim the Gospel, preach

homilies, perform baptisms and officiate at weddings and funerals ... does not celebrate Mass ... does not hear confessions

Wednesday of Holy Week – Page 6

Read the first two paragraphs.

Discuss who the twelve apostles were. Ask the children to name them. Tell them that Judas was one of the twelve ... that he was tempted by the sum of money. Explain what “betrayal” means. You could at this point mention that Peter also betrayed Jesus.

Read the third paragraph.

Explain that Jesus knew he was going to die – it was part of God’s plan, but it was still difficult for Jesus and he needed time to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, that this is when Judas betrayed Jesus.

Emphasise how cruel it was to pretend that he was Jesus’ friend, and to call him “Rabbi” – a word which shows respect. Focus on how it feels to be betrayed or let down by a friend. Ask if they have ever felt let down. Ask if they have ever let someone else down and how both of these situations felt.

Mention that we use the term “a Judas” in our language to describe someone who has been involved in betrayal.

Holy Thursday (1) – Page 7

Read the first paragraph and focus on the idea of a meal:

- Who do we usually share a meal with?
- What do we put on the table?
- When might we have a special meal?

Explain that Jesus, being a Jew, celebrated Passover. The Last Supper was a meal to celebrate Passover but Jesus did something different at this meal this time (the next sheet goes into more detail). Highlight the word “Eucharist” (meaning: thanksgiving; gratitude – at Mass we give thanks to God). Explain that the Last Supper was the first Mass – the institution of the Eucharist - and point out the things that we do at Mass that relate directly to the Last Supper:

- We gather round a table (the altar)
- We share food (the bread)
- We share drinks (the wine)
- We say thanks to God when we pray before and after meals

You could show some images of the Last Supper and refer to each of the apostles who were there, mentioning that Judas from the previous worksheet was there.

Read the second paragraph

Explain that Holy Thursday is the start of the Sacred Triduum. The priest wears white. The triduum recounts the last three days of Jesus' life on earth, the events of his Passion and Resurrection, when Jesus laid down his life in atonement for our sins.

You could mention that they might hear the term “Passion” of Christ, and that this refers to the suffering Christ went through from his arrest to his crucifixion.

Read the third paragraph

Ask the children if they have ever seen people's feet being washed on Holy Thursday ... what was it like, etc. Explain that in Jesus' time, it was common for people to have their feet washed when they visited someone's house as they walked everywhere and their feet got sore and dirty.

Highlight Jesus' humility. He washed *their* feet, yet he was the son of God! Jesus overturns the expectations of the apostles regarding what the Son of God should do/not do. (You could mention that Peter objected to having his feet washed by Jesus). Jesus is a *different* kind of King, and we saw this even on the day he was born – not in a palace but in an old stable. Jesus came to serve and wants us to do the same.

A Very Special Meal – Page 8

The aim of this worksheet is to help the children to relate the Last Supper to Holy Mass.

Read through the sheet, stopping at the following key areas:

“This is my body” and “This is my blood.”

Highlight that the apostles would have been confused at these words, but that later, after the resurrection, they would understand better what these words meant. Mention that the disciples often did not understand Jesus' words immediately and needed time – they were normal human beings. We are just like the disciples: we don't always understand but we keep persevering in faith.

“Do this in memory of me.” Emphasise “this”, i.e. what Jesus has just done – changing bread and wine into his *actual* body and blood.

Focus on the importance of going to Mass. If you don't go, you miss out on something amazing and very important for our souls. Our soul needs fed just as our body needs fed. *Jesus* feeds our soul and we receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

Holy Thursday (2) – Page 9

Read the first paragraph.

Emphasise that on Holy Thursday, we are recalling the events of the night Jesus was arrested. Try to get the children to relate our “keeping watch” to the disciples who tried to keep watch but fell asleep! Focus on how Jesus must have been feeling that night... afraid, abandoned - he knew what was ahead of him and that it was the will of God, but he was still afraid. Jesus is fully divine and fully human too. He needed his friends to stay with him.

Aim to underline the significance of the altar as a symbol of Christ. The altar is stripped bare and the tabernacle is left open. Explain that we feel the emptiness; Christ has now gone away to face his death and, like the altar, the world is empty without Christ.

Good Friday – Page 10

Read the first paragraph.

Explain the word “mourning”: to show sorrow and grief for. Explain that we fast and do not eat meat on Good Friday (or the Fridays of Lent) because we honour Christ who sacrificed his flesh on this day. Explain that abstinence/fasting is also a form of penance or showing that we are sorry for our sins. The priest wears red which is a symbol of blood. Red is worn on feasts of martyrs.

Read the second paragraph.

Explain the word “venerate : to show deep respect for.

Ask if any of the children remember venerating the cross on a previous Good Friday. How did they feel?

Explain that the last words of a dying person are really important because they reveal what really matters to that person.

Then go through each of the seven quotes:

***“Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.”
what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34)***

Jesus forgives everyone - even those who wanted him killed. This is the extent of his love for us!

“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43)

Jesus says this to one of the thieves on the cross beside him. These words tell us that we only have to be truly sorry to be forgiven, and that Christ will forgive everything.

"Woman, here is your son ... Here is your mother." (John 19:26)

Jesus said these words to his mother, Mary, and to John, who remained with Jesus at the foot of the cross while his other disciples stayed away out of fear. Jesus asks John to look after his mum. In these words, Jesus talks to all of us and gives Mary to us too as our mother.

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"

(My God, my God, why have you forsaken me)? (Mark 15:34)

Jesus is fully divine yet fully human. He shows the same vulnerability as us human beings when faced with suffering and when we have been betrayed or abandoned by friends.

"I am thirsty" (John 19:28)

Jesus suffered on the cross from thirst. The soldiers gave him vinegar which made him thirst even more. Jesus also thirsts for us to love him and one another.

"It is finished." (John 19:30)

Jesus had accomplished what God the Father had willed. His suffering was over. What was prophesied in the Old Testament has also been fulfilled.

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46)

Jesus gives himself over completely to his Father. He expresses his faith and trust in God.

Good Friday 2 – Page 11

Read the whole story.

When it comes to the questions, highlight the difference in attitude between the "good" thief and the "bad thief". One is truly sorry for what he did wrong,

the other is not contrite at all. Relate this to the sacrament of reconciliation in which we are called to confess our sins and show true repentance.

This meeting with Jesus is a transformative experience for the good thief.

When we take the time to encounter Jesus closely, our lives are transformed and our desire to live a Christian life is fuelled. Explain to the children that having a friendship with Jesus is a great thing as it changes us for the better, makes us better people. It is the best friendship they will ever have! Ask them about the “good examples” Jesus gives us. In what ways is he a great role model for us?

Focus on the word “paradise” and ask what they think this means. At this point you could discuss “heaven”, that one day we all hope to see God in heaven. Ask them what they think heaven is like.

In this story, Jesus makes a promise to the good thief that this will be fulfilled. Remind the children that Jesus loves everyone – even those who commit great sins – and is ready to forgive us all.

Holy Saturday (1) – Page 12

Read the first two paragraphs.

Highlight the emptiness and silence that pervade this day.

Since it is the last day of Lent, you could revise Lent a little:

Why do we have Lent? How long does it last? What do we do/give up, etc?

Mention different traditions amongst communities. If there are Polish kids in your group, you could ask them to talk about the blessing of the Easter baskets. Why do they do it? Which foods are included in the baskets?

Read the third paragraph.

The children might not have experienced the Easter Vigil. Explain that the Easter vigil celebrates the resurrection, even though it is on Saturday night.

You could talk about the fire/bonfire that is lit outside, that it is a symbol of Christ who is alive, burning brightly. Coals are taken from this fire to light the incense and the new Paschal candle. You could show them the paschal

candle. This candle is joyfully carried into the church which is completely dark

when the vigil begins. The single burning flame is carried by a priest or deacon who then raises it above his head and sings, “Lumen Christi,” (the Light of Christ) to which the people respond, “Deo Gratias” (Thanks be to God). This is said three times as the candle is taken to the sanctuary of the church. We then all light an individual candle from the Paschal candle. Focus on Jesus being the **Light of the World**. What does this mean?

The Easter Vigil (2)

Read the first half of the worksheet.

Explain that many adults – not just children - become members of the Church. Adult catechumens have to prepare for the sacraments just as children do. Mention that many parishes have an RCIA group which meets weekly during the year to learn about Jesus. By being present and praying for these new Catholics, we show our support to these new members of the Body of Christ.

Ask if they know any adults who have done this.

Read the second half of the worksheet.

You could revise what renewing our baptismal promises means – covered in a previous worksheet.

Highlight the fact that the church is no longer bare but is now decorated with beautiful flowers, the alleluia is sung again, etc. The liturgical colour for Eastertide changes to white, a symbol of light, purity, joy, triumph and glory.

Easter Sunday – Page 14

Read the first half of the worksheet.

Emphasise the celebratory theme of Easter Sunday. Ask them to describe any memories they have of previous Easter Sundays. Ask how they usually celebrate Easter Sunday at home. Ask if the children receive Easter eggs. What do the eggs symbolise? You could get them to do a craft activity, designing or colouring an egg, etc.

Read the second half of the worksheet.

Highlight the fact that Eastertide is a lot longer than people realise – it is not just one day. You could tell the children about some of the occasions on which Jesus appeared to people after Easter, e.g. Jesus cooking breakfast for the disciples by the shore after a fishing trip, the Walk to Emmaus, etc.

Easter Sunday Morning – Page 15

This is a long story!

Break it up by stopping to discuss key areas and using the pictures as stimuli for discussion:

- The empty tomb
- The two disciples eagerly running to the tomb
- The two angels in the tomb
- The feelings of Mary Magdalene and the two disciples (shock, amazement, belief, disbelief, joy, etc).

You could discuss the idea of belief. What makes us believe in Jesus? What strengthens our faith? Belief/faith was difficult even for people who lived in Jesus' time and witnessed or heard about Jesus' miracles. (Mention Doubting Thomas who would not believe until he saw Jesus' wounds). If we have moments when we question our faith it is okay, but we must still persevere. Highlight the fact that faith is a journey and that Jesus is always walking alongside us. We can't see him but we encounter him through the sacraments which the Church has given us so that Jesus can be reached.