

Lent, Holy Week & Easter Resources 2023

Imagine trying to run a marathon without training or preparing for it. How successful do you think you would be? As we get ready for Easter we also need to prepare. This preparation time is known as Lent. Lent happens around the same time every year as the dark and cold days of winter slowly give way to the lighter and warmer days of spring. Just like spring, when increased light and warmth cause new plants to grow, Lent is a time of new growth and new beginnings. We are encouraged to prepare for Easter by thinking about how we could be more like Jesus. For example, if we are being unkind to someone, during Lent we try to change our behaviour and be kind instead. If we have fallen out with someone, during Lent we try hard to change the situation by forgiving or asking for forgiveness. However, during Lent we don't just try to change ourselves for the better; we try to make life better for others too. **Missio Ireland** is a special charity that asks children to help change the lives of children who are living in poverty and fear. We ask them to do this through prayer and to share whatever they can, no matter how little, to help their brothers and sisters in need. This is how they live out the charity's motto '**children helping children.**'

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (22nd February this year). It is modelled on the forty days and forty nights that Jesus spent in the desert. It is a special time of prayer, fasting and sharing. We encourage children to enter the spirit of Lent at home, in school (if classes have returned), and in their parishes (within current safety guidelines) by carrying out the three Lenten promises – Pray, Fast, Give.



What's Included?

To help children and their families, our resources include:

- a prayer service for Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent
- a Lenten Calendar of Kindness with activities to carry out each day
- prayers and actions to do with their families during Holy Week
- a prayer service for Easter Sunday
- our Easter colouring competition for children

All of our resources have been prepared in black and white this year for ease of printing at home. We invite parents and guardians to pray with their children during these sacred days and to join in prayer, from their homes, when Mass and other ceremonies during Holy Week is being held in their local parish church online or being celebrated on TV.

Missio Ireland is the Pope's official charity for overseas mission. We're part of a worldwide network of 120 offices, under the coordination of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Rome. We are the Holy Father's chosen instrument for sharing the Gospel and building the Church throughout the world. If you'd like to learn more, you can contact us at:

Missio Ireland, 64 Lower Rathmines Road, Dublin 6.

T: 01 4972035

E: info@missio.ie

W: www.missio.ie



Ash Wednesday



On Ash Wednesday, we normally place the sign of the cross on our foreheads with ashes. Since Old Testament times, ashes were a way for people to be humble before God and to show they were sorry for their sins and wrong doings. This year, while the reason for Ash Wednesday remains the same, some of our activities will change. Today we can be together in prayer while safely staying apart. In the Gospel, Jesus tells his followers not to show off when they are doing good deeds or fasting. He asks them to pray in private in their own homes. These words take on new meaning this year as we are not able to be marked with ashes and are being asked to stay in our homes. This year, our prayers will be more private but no less enthusiastic! Our good deeds can also be done safely from our homes. This year, Ash Wednesday will be marked in our hearts instead of on our heads!

Let's Pray

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Gospel: A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew (6:1-6; 16-18)

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Make certain you do not perform your religious duties in public so that people will see what you do. If you do these things publicly, you will not have any reward from your Father in heaven. So, when you give something to a needy person, do not make a big show of it, as the hypocrites do in the houses of worship and on the streets. They do it so that people will praise them. I assure you; they have already been paid in full. But when you help a needy person, do it in such a way that even your closest friend will not know about it. Then it will be a private matter. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you. When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners, so that everyone will see them. I assure you; they have already been paid in full. But when you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you. And when you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites do. They neglect their appearance so that everyone will see that they are fasting. I assure you; they have already been paid in full. When you go without food, wash your face, and comb your hair so that others cannot know that you are fasting – only your Father, who is unseen, will know. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you.'

To mark the beginning of your journey this Lent, trace a cross on your forehead and then on your heart and repeat the words '*turn away from sin and believe in the Good News.*'

Prayer: Loving God, may the loss of traditional ashes this Lent be the first thing I let go of, as I deepen my relationship with you. This year, as I wear the mark of Lent in my heart instead of my head, guide me to consider more carefully how I can pray, fast, and share in new ways. Give me the strength to be your witness and to live more like Jesus so that I may know, love, and serve you better. Amen.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen



Holy Week



During Holy Week, we remember the events that happened in the last week of Jesus' life before his death and resurrection. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday (2nd April this year) which is the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey to celebrate the Jewish festival of Passover. Many people hoped Jesus was the saviour they

had been waiting for, so they greeted him on the streets with palm branches. On Holy Thursday, the night before his death, Jesus shared his Last Supper with his disciples. Afterwards, Jesus went to pray to God in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was here in the garden that he was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin (the high priest and the council). He had been betrayed by one of his disciples, Judas. The Sanhedrin handed Jesus over to Pontius Pilate to be crucified. On Good Friday, Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried. He willingly gave up his life on the cross to save us. On Holy Saturday, we will wait and pray before we celebrate the joy of the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, when God the Father raised him from death to new life!

Palm Sunday



Activity: Pick some green branches in your garden to represent the palm branches the people waved on that first Palm Sunday. If you do not have access to a garden, you could draw, colour, and cut out large leaves on paper. Maybe a neighbour might allow you to take a small amount of greenery from their garden, if asked. Tie the branches together with a little piece of cloth to represent the cloaks the people of Jerusalem laid before Jesus. Then follow the prayer service below before hanging the palm display on your front door in the same way you might hang a Christmas wreath.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

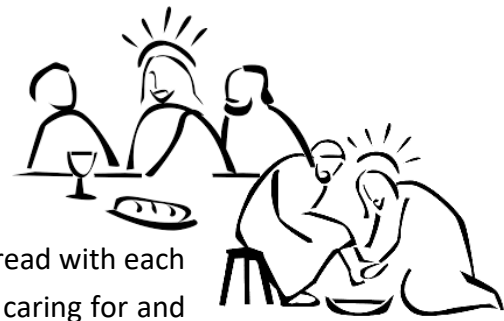
Gospel: A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew (21:1-11)

Jesus sent two of his disciples on ahead with these instructions: 'Go to the village there ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied up with her colt beside her. Untie them and bring them to me...' So, the disciples went and did what Jesus had told them to do: they brought the donkey and Jesus got on. A large crowd of people spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds walking in front of Jesus and those walking behind began to shout, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!' When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was thrown into an uproar. 'Who is he?' the people asked. 'This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee,' the crowds answered.

Reflection: Lord Jesus, today we remember your entry into Jerusalem when the people waved palm branches and sang Hosanna in welcome. As we prepare for Holy Week, we welcome you into our home and into our hearts as we say together 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Holy Thursday



At the heart of Holy Thursday is the command from Jesus to 'do this in memory of me' (Luke 22:19) and to serve others (John 13:15). Jesus asks his followers to be in communion with one another by breaking bread with each other. He asks them to live out that communion in their daily lives by caring for and serving others. The Mass on Holy Thursday (available online and TV this year) models something quite extraordinary that Jesus did with his disciples. Before his last supper, Jesus washed his disciples' feet. This was something a servant would normally do but Jesus wanted to show his disciples that, as his followers, they would need to serve one another too. The washing of feet is about service in love. This is the same love Jesus shows when he gives himself on the cross tomorrow, Good Friday.

Let's Pray

Gather with other members of your family if you can. With an adult helping, place a jug of warm water, a bowl or basin, and a towel on a table.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Gospel: A reading from the Gospel of John (13:1-15)

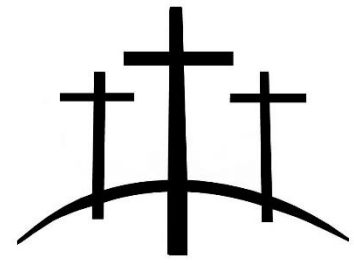
Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved those in the world who were his own, and he loved them to the very end. Jesus and his disciples were at supper....Jesus rose from the table, took off his outer garment and tied a towel around his waist. Then he poured some water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him 'Are you going to wash my feet Lord?' Jesus answered him, 'You do not understand now what I am doing, but you will understand later.' Peter declared, 'Never at any time will you wash my feet!' 'If I do not wash your feet,' Jesus answered, 'you will no longer be my disciple.' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, do not only wash my feet then. Wash my hands and head too!' After Jesus had washed their feet, he put his outer garment back on and returned to his place at the table. 'Do you understand what I have just done to you?' he asked. 'You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you.'

Prayer: Jesus, our friend. Thank you for the great example of love and service that you gave to us. Through the washing of feet, you call us to share this love in our service of others so help us to love and serve one another as you have taught us. Amen.

Activity: If possible, take turns to wash and dry the feet of another person in your home. How does it feel to do this sacred action? How does it feel to have someone else do this for you? Also, try to make a special effort to share a family meal today and to call someone in your family who may be eating alone. You could also say grace (prayer) before and after your meal.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good Friday



Jesus knew that his death was approaching. He was aware of the authorities and how they were plotting to have him arrested, to put him on trial, and to punish him. He told his apostles what was going to happen to him in Jerusalem, but they did not understand. Even when Jesus knew his own life was at risk, he did not stop telling people about God and the love that God has for everyone. Jesus must have been frightened, but he did what God the Father asked him to do. Even when those who followed Jesus betrayed him, and let him down, he did not give up loving them. The cross is therefore a sign of Jesus' love for God the Father and a sign of his love for all of us. Today, on Good Friday, we remember how Jesus died on the cross.

Let's Pray

Gather with other members of your family if you can. Place a cross on a table, a candle, and a Bible if you have one (opened on John 18:1-19:42).

Activity: If you do not have a cross you might be able to make a simple cross with branches from the garden, with ice pop sticks, with paper or with card.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

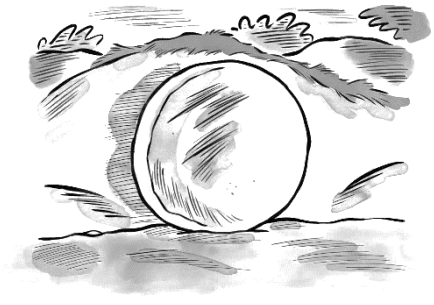
Gospel: A reading from the Gospel of John (19:16-30)

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified. So they took charge of Jesus, he went out, carrying his cross, and came to 'The Place of the Skull' as it is called. (In Hebrew it is called Golgotha.) There they crucified him; and they also crucified two other men, one on each side, with Jesus between them. Pilate wrote a notice and had it put on the cross. 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews...' After the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them in four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took the robe, which was made of one piece of woven cloth without seams in it. The soldiers said to one another, 'let's not tear it; let's throw dice to see who will get it.' This happened in order to make the scripture come true: 'they divided my clothes among themselves and gambled for my robe.' Standing close to Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother, 'He is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'She is your mother.' Jesus knew that by now everything had been completed; and in order to make the scripture come true, he said, 'I am thirsty.' A bowl was there, full of cheap wine; so a sponge was soaked in the wine, put on a stalk of hyssop, and lifted up to his lips. Jesus drank the wine and said, 'It is finished!' then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Prayer: Loving Jesus, today you gave your life for us on the cross. By doing this you showed us how to be generous in loving others and how to forgive those who hurt us. We turn to you in prayer bringing all our worries to the foot of the cross. May it stand as a sign of hope for us in these troubling times and bring peace to each of our hearts. Amen.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Holy Saturday



Something strange is happening. There is a great silence on earth today. A great silence and stillness. 'The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep.' This is a very ancient line from a homily given on Holy Saturday in the 2nd century by Bishop Melito of Sardis. Holy Saturday is a day of patient waiting. A day we, as Church, reflect on the events of Holy Week, in particular the death of Jesus Christ, and await his resurrection. So, we wait throughout this day. The sorrow of Good Friday is replaced by quiet hope because we are certain about his resurrection and the celebration of Easter. After dusk on Holy Saturday, the Easter Vigil is celebrated, marking the official start of the Easter season. Today, we have two prayers for the family – one for Holy Saturday during the day and the other for Holy Saturday evening for the Easter Vigil.

Let's Pray

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer: Lord, today all is silent. You have given your precious life for the salvation of the world and now you rest in peace in the tomb as the soldiers keep vigil. May we also keep vigil with them as you sleep. As we wait, replace our sorrow with quiet hope and grant us the gift of your resurrection. Amen.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Easter Vigil

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Activity: Gather with other members of your family once daylight has passed. Place an unlit candle in the centre of a table with smaller tealights/candles for each person in your family that has gathered with you. You might like to gather outside if you have access to a garden as many Christians would normally gather outside the Church on Holy Saturday night to light the Easter fire and witness the lighting of the Easter Candle from this fire. With an adult, light the main candle and say: *May the light of Christ rising in the glory of his resurrection eliminate the darkness in our world, and bring us hope, peace and new life.* Then light all the other candles from the main candle.



Prayer: On this blessed night we give you thanks, Lord God, that your light has come into our world to overcome the darkness. May its flame burn ever bright in our hearts and may we be filled with the joy of our Easter faith every day. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Activity: Take your main candle and place it safely in the window of your home as a light of Easter hope to the world!

Easter Sunday

Jesus Christ is risen today! **Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Did you notice that Alleluia is not a word we use during Lent? This is because Alleluia is, in fact, a one-word prayer that welcomes the risen Christ. It is a Hebrew word meaning 'Praise the Lord,' so we do not use it during Lent or Holy Week, but we do sing it out loud and clear at the Easter Vigil, at Easter Sunday Masses, and throughout the rest of the year. **Alleluia! Alleluia!**



On Easter Sunday God the Father raised Jesus from death to new life in a glorious new body. Jesus died on the cross, but God did this extraordinary thing of raising Jesus to new life. We call this the Resurrection. However, Jesus' disciples did not immediately recognise Jesus in his new and glorious body after the Resurrection. The Bible tells us lots of stories of how Jesus appeared to his disciples at the empty tomb, when they were hiding and afraid in the upper room, and at the shore of the sea of Galilee. Below is the story of how the women met the resurrected Jesus at the empty tomb.

Let's Pray

Gather with other members of your family and place a candle, some fresh flowers, the Bible (open on Matthew 28:1-10), and your Easter eggs (if you haven't eaten them already!) which are symbols of new life, on a table. An adult should help with lighting the candle.

Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Gospel: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (28:1-10)

After the Sabbath, as Sunday morning was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. Suddenly, there was a violent earthquake: an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled the stone away, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid that they trembled and became like dead men. The angel spoke to the women. 'You must not be afraid.' 'I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has been raised, just as he said. Come and see the place where he was lying. Go quickly now, and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from death, and now he is going to Galilee ahead of you; there you will see him!' Remember what I have told you.' So they left the tomb in a hurry, afraid and yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Peace be with you.' They came up to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. 'Do not be afraid,' Jesus said to them. 'Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'

Prayer: today's prayer is called a Litany. One person leads and the rest reply.

Leader: This is the day the Lord has made. **All: Alleluia, alleluia!**

Leader: God's love has no end. **All: Alleluia, alleluia!**

Leader: God has raised us up. **All: Alleluia, alleluia!**

Leader: And given us the gift of new life. **All: Alleluia, alleluia!**

enjoy your eggs!



Sign of the Cross: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



64 Lower Rathmines Road
Dublin D06 N2H1

01 497 2035 | www.missio.ie
Charity no. CHY 22544

Part of the Global Network of
Pontifical Mission Societies

