

FAMILY GUIDE TO Holy Week and Easter

Our remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus makes Holy Week the most sacred time of the year for Catholics. The week begins with Palm Sunday, which commemorates the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. At sundown on the following Thursday, we begin the Triduum, a word that simply means “three days,” which concludes at sundown on Easter Sunday. Easter begins the joyous celebration of Christ’s resurrection and victory over death.

THE TRIDUUM INCLUDES:

HOLY THURSDAY



HOLY THURSDAY commemorates the Last Supper when Jesus gave us the gift of himself in the Eucharist and set an example of service by washing the apostles’ feet.

GOOD FRIDAY



GOOD FRIDAY recalls the crucifixion and death of Jesus. The church is bare on Good Friday, the altar stripped of ornamentation and the tabernacle left open and empty. Mass is not celebrated on this day.

HOLY SATURDAY



HOLY SATURDAY is a day of waiting as we prepare our hearts and homes for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Vigil Mass draws us into Jesus’ victory over sin and death that is now ours.

EASTER



EASTER, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, begins at the Easter Vigil and continues with Masses on Easter Sunday.



It’s not always easy for children to understand these profound mysteries of faith, but it is possible to lay a spiritual foundation so they will grow in understanding throughout the years. Here are some practical ways to help make Holy Week and Easter meaningful for the whole family.

Deepen Your Holy Week

- Celebrate Palm Sunday by making crosses out of palms.
- Before coloring Easter eggs, let children write messages on the eggs in crayon that celebrate the true meaning of Easter. For example, “Christ is risen,” “Alleluia,” “Jesus loves us.”
- Emphasize the importance of service on Holy Thursday by helping someone in need.
- Acknowledge the sadness of Good Friday by encouraging kids to write letters or draw pictures for people who are grieving the loss of a loved one.
- If your parish is having a blessing of Easter foods on Holy Saturday, let your children pack the basket with butter, eggs, sweet breads and other items that your family will enjoy on Easter Sunday.
- Bring your children to church on Holy Saturday to help decorate for the Easter liturgies.

Keep Christ at the Center of Your Easter Table

EASTER CANDLE: The candle represents the light of Christ, which has overcome the darkness. You might want to start your own family tradition by using a white pillar candle as your family’s Easter candle. Encourage your kids to decorate the candle with stickers, markers or (carefully) pushpins. Light the candle on Easter Sunday and during every meal throughout the Easter season.

EASTER LILIES: Using white lilies as Easter decorations in homes and churches came into practice in the 1800s. The white flower is a symbol of purity. The lily’s trumpet-like shape heralds the triumph of Jesus over death. Decorate the pot of this year’s lily with white ribbons or write on a terra-cotta pot with white chalk, “Jesus is alive!” or “Happy Easter!”

SWEET BREADS: In pagan times, people made wheat cakes and offered them to the goddess of spring. Christians adopted the tradition by baking special sweet breads, cakes and pastries as a special treat to celebrate Easter and the end of the long Lenten fast.

LAMB: In the Jewish religion, a lamb was sacrificed at Passover time. Christians adopted the symbolism of the sacrificed lamb to represent Jesus as the Lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the world.

SHARE THE STORY

Attend Holy Week liturgies in your parish and help children make the connection to the story during the blessing of the palms, the washing of the feet, the veneration of the cross and the joyful “Alleluia”s of Easter. For more ideas and information about how to celebrate Holy Week and Easter as a family, visit osvparish.com and click on Take Out extras.

