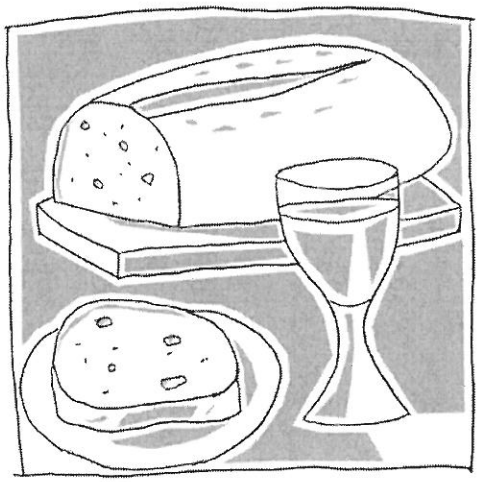
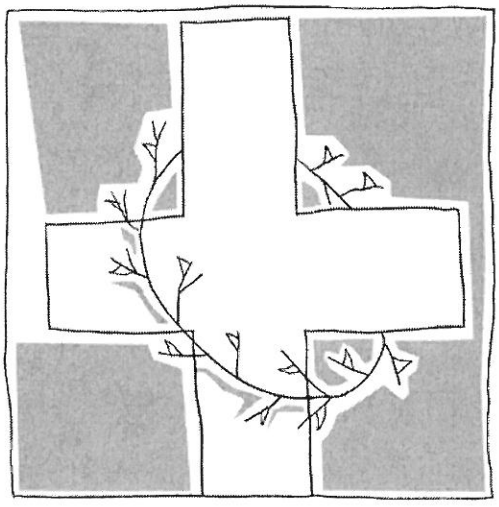
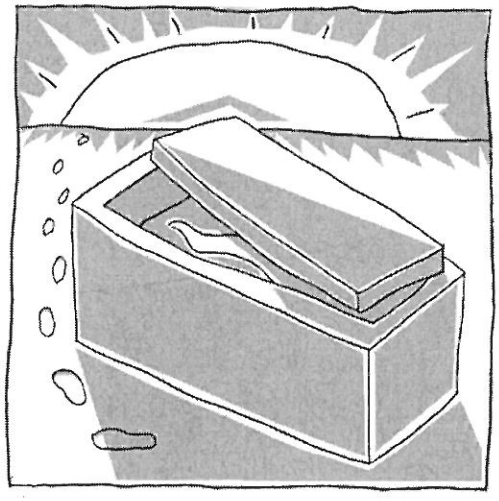
Celebrating Holy Week at Home

Welcome to Holy Week

Holy Week is the most important week in the Church year. We remember and we celebrate the Pascal mystery in a special way this week—that is, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We remember his actions, we explore and reflect on the meaning of his message, and we look for more ways to live as his disciples, both in our homes and in our communities.







Palm Sunday

Family Quiz: Why is this Sunday called Palm Sunday?
(Answer: Because the crowd greets Jesus with palms, like a hero.)

Jesus' Actions

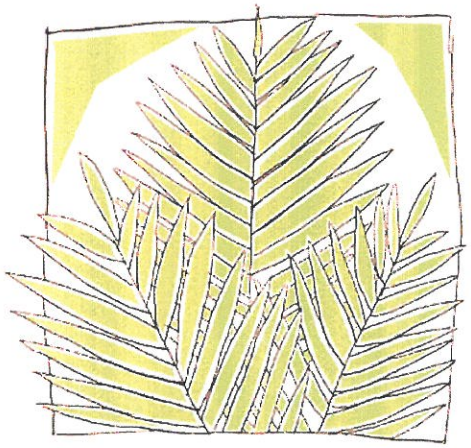
Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Family Activity: Talk about it.

* Have you ever been to a baseball or football game at a large stadium with a sell-out crowd? Have you been to a concert, parade, or even a theme park such as Disneyland where the crowds were huge, where you were trying to get a glimpse of the "main act?"
* On Palm Sunday, as throughout our celebrations of Holy Week, Jesus is the "main act." Imagine the scene as Jesus rides through a huge crowd on the road into Jerusalem.
* Why did they turn out to welcome him, to sing his praises as King?

Our Symbol

The people of Jerusalem welcome Jesus with palms. Why palms? Palm-bearing date trees were valued for their dignity, beauty, and shade. Palms were a symbol of victory and sign that "all is well." They were used at special occasions to welcome heroes and royalty. So no wonder the people greeted Jesus waving palm branches. After all, wasn't he the hero who was going to save them from the oppressive rule of the Romans?



They sing Hosannah to the King.

Family Activity

Bring home palm branches from your Church's celebration today. Arrange the branches on your Lenten prayer space, or weave them through your home cross or other religious symbols which hang on the wall.

Listen to the Word

The liturgy the family will experience today has a bonus: two Gospels. The first describes Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. The second Gospel is the Passion. The Passion

narrative tells the story of Jesus being captured, sentenced to death, and dying on a cross.

Family Activity

Prepare as a family before going to Mass today. Each family member has an assignment as they listen to this Sunday's Gospel readings:

* Preschool children: bring crayons and paper for them. Ask them to draw pictures of the different things they see in Church today—the palms, the cross, etc.
* Children, youth and adults: throughout the Gospel readings, imagine yourselves as a part of the crowd, *and* imagine yourselves as Jesus.
    - What are you thinking?
    - What are you feeling?
    - What would you do if you were Jesus' best friend?

After Mass, be sure to share with each other your answers to these questions.

Prayer for Palm Sunday

Wondrous God, your Son, Jesus was so humble. He always put others first. He obeyed you, and even died on a cross. Then you gave him the highest place. We honor his name above all others. Bless our family as we begin Holy Week. Help us to be a family who prays together this week and who welcomes Jesus into our hearts. We pray this is Jesus' name.

Amen.

Spiritual Reflection

Today the Gospel reading for the blessing of the Palms gives us a glimpse of Jesus' majesty. The people wave palm branches and sing "Hosannah to the King."

As a family, reflect on your experience of Palm Sunday this year. In particular, reflect on the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. Use these questions to guide your reflection:

- Where do we see Jesus' majesty in our home, in our community, in the world?
- If Jesus was coming into our town, how would we greet him?
- What would he see, what would he hear?
- Would he see evidence of God's kingdom here on earth?

Holy Thursday

Family Quiz: Why is this day called Holy Thursday?
(Answer: Because the liturgy celebrated by the Church today recalls the holy gift of Eucharist.)

Jesus' Actions

Jesus celebrates Eucharist in the sharing of the bread and cup. He washes the feet of his disciples.

Family Activity

Place a loaf of unsliced bread and a goblet of wine or grape juice in the center of the family table at supper.

Table Prayer for Holy Thursday

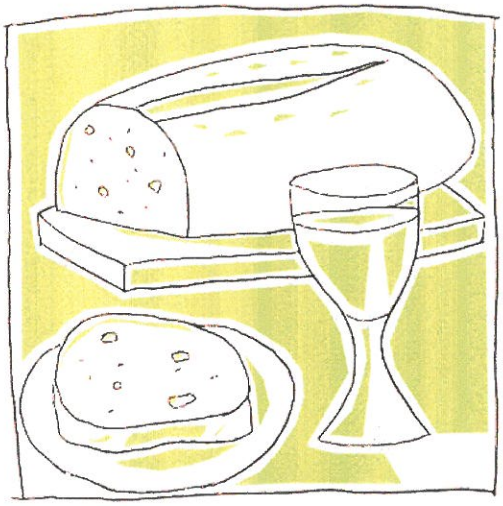
Loving God, tonight we celebrate the great sacrament of your son's love for us. May the gift of his body and blood work in us so that we may live as Jesus did.

Pass around the unsliced loaf of bread. Break off a chunk of bread and say, "Thank you God, Bread of Life." Pass around a goblet of grape juice or red wine. Take a sip and say, "Thank you God, for our spiritual drink."

Blessed are you, O Lord our God.
With this food strengthen us
In this life, and through our death to new life.
We glory in the cross of your Son, Jesus.
Raise us, with him, to life forever with you.
Through Christ, our Lord,
Amen.

Our Symbol

At the Last Supper Jesus washed the feet of his disciples to show them how to serve one another. Sharing a meal together, and serving one another is a sign of forgiveness and a bond of friendship. We celebrate Eucharist and serve others as a witness to being Jesus' followers and sharing his love.



Family Activity

Home Prayer

Place your family Bible and a bowl of water in the center of the family table or Lenten prayer space. Place a hand towel next to the bowl. Family members gather around the table.

Leader:
Dear family, tonight our Lenten observance ends and we begin the celebration of the Triduum, the three holiest days in the Church year. We gather as family and as Church tonight to be watchful and prayerful until Easter Sunday.

Let us listen to the Gospel reading from tonight's solemn liturgy of Holy Thursday.

Scripture Reading

A reading from the Gospel of John, Chapter 13:1-15.

It was before Passover, and Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and to return to the Father. He had always loved his followers in this world, and he loved them to the very end.

Even before the evening meal started, the devil had made Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, decide to betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that he had come from God and would go back to God. He also knew that the Father had given him complete power. So during the meal Jesus got up, removed his outer garment, and wrapped a towel around his waist. He put some water into a large bowl. Then he began washing his disciples' feet and drying them with the towel he was wearing.

But when he came to Simon Peter, that disciple asked, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered, "You don't really know what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"You will never wash my feet!" Peter replied.

"If I don't wash you," Jesus told him, "you don't really belong to me."

Peter said, "Lord, don't wash just my feet. Wash my hands and my head."

Jesus answered, "People who have bathed and are clean all over need to wash just their feet. And you, my disciples, are clean, except for one of you. Jesus knew who would betray him. That is why he said, "except for one of you."

After Jesus had washed his disciples' feet and had put his outer garment back on, he sat down again. Then he said:

> *Do you understand what I have done? You call me your teacher and Lord, and you should, because that is who I am. And if your Lord and teacher has washed your feet, you*

should do the same for each other. I have set the example, and you should do for each other exactly what I have done for you.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Sharing Reflection

Leader:
And Jesus said, "I have set the example, and you should do for each other exactly what I have done for you." (John 13:15)

Leader poses questions for family sharing:

- Why did Jesus wash the feet of his apostles?
- What do you think he wanted them to learn?
- Why does Jesus ask us to wash each others' feet?
- What does he mean?
- How do members of our family serve each other? Let's see if we can name one or two ways we served each other today.

Reflection

Leader:
Let's spend a quiet moment thinking about what it means to wash each others' feet.

Leader now explains that family members will be able to take turns washing the hands (or feet) of each other. First, the family will bless the water.

Blessing of the Water

Leader:
Family, this water reminds us that Jesus asks us to be servants to each other, to be "doers" for others. Let us ask God to bless it.

Family members extend their hands in blessing over the water.

Leader:
Creator God, your gift of water brings life and freshness to the earth. It cleans us when we are dirty, it refreshes us and brings us renewed energy. Renew in us the living spring of your life. May this water remind us that you washed the feet of your disciples and you ask us to wash the feet of each other. You call us to help and to serve each other. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Washing

Each person washes the hands or feet of the person standing to the right. Continue until all family members have washed and been washed. Recite the following prayer together during each washing.

Prayer During the Washing
Lord Jesus, who challenges us to be servants to each other, bless us so that we may care for each other. Bless us so that we may love each other. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Leader:
Loving God, teach us to love one another as you love us. Teach us to reach out to each other and to those around us who are in need and to bring them your love. Bless this family as we pray through these holiest of days, remembering the suffering and death of Jesus, your Son, and celebrating with you the promise of resurrection—life forever with your son, Jesus.

All: Amen.

Listen to the Word

The first reading in tonight's liturgy describes the Passover meal. In the second reading, St. Paul recounts the Institution of Eucharist. In the Gospel, Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. This is the service and love of Jesus which we are asked to share in our lives.

Family Activity

If the family is attending liturgy this evening, send everyone with a 3x5 card, pen and these instructions:

Tonight we are going to listen ever so closely to the readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, Paul's letter to the Corinthians, and the Gospel. Then at the end of the Gospel reading and just before the homily begins, each of us is going to write down on our three by five cards the one verse (or word or phrase) from the readings that we want to share with the rest of the family—this can be the most meaningful verse to us, the one that for some reason was significant to us, or simply the one we remember most easily.

> *At home option*: If your family is not attending the liturgy, read the following Scriptures together as a family: Exodus 12:1-8,11-14; 1Corinthians11:23-26; John 13:1-15. Alternate readers. Give the family members instructions as above.

After liturgy or the Scripture readings each family member shares the verse, phrase or word that they wrote on their three by five cards. Share with each other why that verse is meaningful, or simply why you chose it. Then place the three by five cards in a central place in the home. These Scripture verses can be simple prayers for the family during the remaining days of Holy Week.

Good Friday

Family Quiz: Why is this Friday "good?"
(Answer: Because the cross leads to the resurrection. Resurrection is a "good" thing!)

Jesus' Actions

Jesus prays with his friends. The authorities arrest Jesus. He is tried, sentenced to death, and suffers and dies on the cross.

Family Activity

Begin this solemn day with a special morning offering. Gather around the family prayer space.

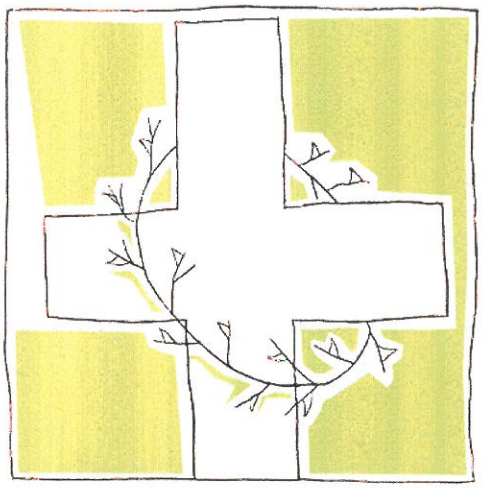
Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.
Leader: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.
All: Lord, have mercy.
Leader:

Blessed are you, O Lord, our God.
Today we pray that we may journey with your Son—
Through his agony in the garden,
his arrest,
his sentencing,
his suffering,
his death.
May we glory in the cross of Christ.
Raise us, with him,
To the joy of the resurrection.
Be with this family today,
We pray this in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

Our Symbol

The cross was the method of punishment and execution of the most despised criminals and the most dangerous political opponents. Dying on the cross takes a long time, is very painful, and very public. This symbol of pain and death is a sign for us of Jesus' love and victory in the resurrection.



Family Activity

* Today, talk about the meaning of the cross. *What does the cross represent?* Family members might mention such words such as pain, suffering, new life, faithfulness, etc.

* Pass the family cross from person to person. When each person holds the cross he or she can pray in silence or out loud for a special intention—who needs to know the great love of God today? Who is in pain who needs our prayers? Who is suffering? Who needs to be renewed? Keep these prayers in mind throughout the day.

Listen to the Word

The first and second readings in the liturgy for Good Friday describe the mystery of the cross: suffering turned into victory. The Gospel is the Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The word passion can also mean strong feelings of love. Jesus' passion is the time from the Last Supper to Jesus' death on the cross, during which he shows his great love for us.

Family Activity

Praying the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary
By praying the rosary, we can meditate on Jesus' passion and death. Choose one, several, or all of the five sorrowful mysteries to pray together as a family today. The rosary begins with the Apostles' Creed which is followed by one Our Father, three Hail Mary's, and a Glory Be to the Father. Next, the Prayer Leader announces the first decade, and the family prays an Our Father, ten Hail Mary's, and the Glory Be to the Father.

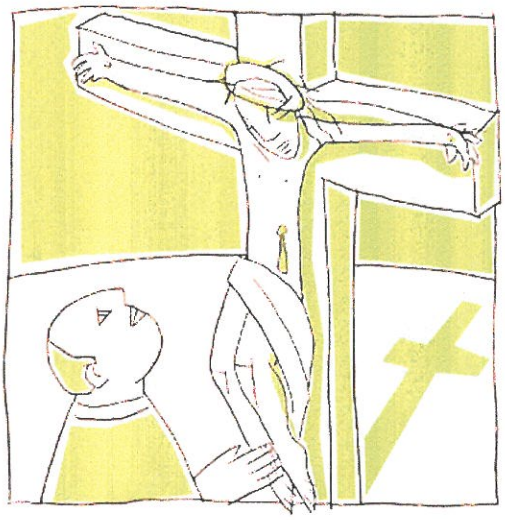
Follow the format below, with a leader reading the Scripture verse or other quote after each Hail Mary. The Scripture verses are from the readings of the Good Friday liturgy and the quotes are from contemporary voices of justice.

Prayer Leader:
We pray together the Sorrowful mysteries of the rosary and meditate on the passion and death of Jesus.

Apostles Creed
I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
And born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,

And is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And life everlasting.
Amen.



Our Father

Hail Mary (three times)

Glory be to the Father
And to the Son,
And to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
Is now,
And ever shall be,
World without end, Amen.

Prayer Leader announces:

The First Sorrowful Mystery—The Agony in the Garden

Our Father

"When Jesus had finished praying, he and his disciples crossed the Kidron Valley and went into a garden." (John 18:1)

Hail Mary

"They are plotting and scheming to murder me." (Psalm 31:13)

Hail Mary

"My life is in your hands. Save me from enemies who hunt me down." (Psalm 31:15)

Hail Mary

"Let us pray for those who are weak. Let us pray for those who betray." (Archbishop Oscar Romero)

Hail Mary

"Be my might rock and the fortress where I am safe." (Psalm 31:2)

Hail Mary

"Our hearts are restless, Lord, until they rest in you." (St. Augustine)

Hail Mary

"When we feel that we are really alone in the world, then (unless we tear one another to pieces) we will begin to love one another." (Teilhard de Chardin)

Hail Mary

"Judas had promised to betray Jesus . . . so he went to the garden with some Roman soldiers and temple police." (John 18:3)

Hail Mary

"Jesus told them, 'I am Jesus!'" (John 18:5)

Hail Mary

"Lord, I cannot do this unless you enable me." (Brother Lawrence)

Hail Mary

Glory Be to the Father . . .

The Second Sorrowful Mystery—Jesus Is Scourged.

Our Father

"No one wanted to look at him. We despised him and said, 'He is a nobody!'" (Isaiah 53:3)

Hail Mary

"He was painfully abused, but did not complain." (Isaiah 53:7)

Hail Mary

"Who could have imagined what would happen to him?" (Isaiah 53:8)

Hail Mary

"They came up to him and said, 'Hey you, King of the Jews!' They also hit him with their fists." (John 19:3)

Hail Mary

"'If I have done something wrong, say so. But if not, why did you hit me?" (John 18:23)

Hail Mary

"Pilate asked Jesus, 'What is truth?'" (John 18:38)

Hail Mary

"I was born into this world to tell the truth." (John 18:37)

Hail Mary

"Truth is fearfully daring, and only heroes can follow the truth." (Archbishop Oscar Romero)

Hail Mary

"Let me die to myself so that I may serve you." (St. Teresa of Avila)

Hail Mary

"Your way of acting, should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else." (St. Benedict)

Hail Mary

Glory Be to the Father . . .

The Third Sorrowful Mystery—Jesus Is Crowned with Thorns.

Our Father . . .

"He suffered and endured great pain for us." (Isaiah 53:4)

Hail Mary

"Are you the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33)

Hail Mary

"My kingdom does not belong to this world." (John 18:32)

Hail Mary

"The soldiers made a crown out of thorn branches and put it on Jesus." (John 19:2)

Hail Mary

"Then they put a purple robe on him." (John 19:2)

Hail Mary

"We must share in the sufferings of the world to lessen them, to show our love for our brothers." (Dorothy Day)

Hail Mary

"But as we share each other's pain, so do we share each other's joy." (Desmond Tutu)

Hail Mary

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." (Martin Luther King)

Hail Mary

"He was silent like a lamb being led to the butcher, as quiet as a sheep having its wool cut off." (Isaiah 53:7)

Hail Mary

"He was condemned to death without a fair trial." (Isaiah 53:8)

Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father . . .

The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery—Jesus Carries His Cross.

Our Father . . .

"Kill him, Kill him!" they yelled. "Nail him to a cross!" (John 19:15)

Hail Mary

"No, not him. We want Barabas!" (John 18: 40)

Hail Mary

"Then Pilate handed Jesus over to be nailed to a cross." (John 19:16)

Hail Mary

"Jesus was taken away, and he carried his cross to a place known as "The Skull." (John 19:17)

Hail Mary

Many were horrified at what happened to him. (Isaiah 52:14)

Hail Mary

Do people weigh you down?
Don't carry them on your shoulders.
Take them into your heart.
(Dom Helder Camara)

Hail Mary

"We know that if we really want to love we must learn how to forgive." (Mother Teresa)

Hail Mary

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going." (Thomas Merton)

Hail Mary

"Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death." (Thomas Merton)

Hail Mary

"Eternity, eternity, when shall I come to you at last?" (St. Elizabeth Seton)

Hail Mary

"I will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer You all the labors and sufferings of the world." (Teilhard de Chardin)

Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father . . .

The Fifth Sorrowful Mystery—Jesus Dies on the Cross.

Our Father . . .

"Pilate ordered the charge against Jesus to be written on a board and put above the cross." (John 19:19)

Hail Mary

"It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.'" (John 19:19)

Hail Mary

"The place where Jesus was taken wasn't far from the city, and many of the people read the charge against him." (John 19:20)

Hail Mary

"Jesus' mother stood beside his cross with her sister and Mary the wife of Clopas." (John 19:25)

Hail Mary

"At the foot of the Cross she became our mother also." (Mother Teresa)

Hail Mary

"He bowed his head and died." (John 19:30)

Hail Mary

"And, by your most bitter death, give me a lively faith, a firm hope, and a perfect charity." (St. Clare)

Hail Mary

"...we are grafted onto Christ's life, to his cross and resurrection." (Archbishop Oscar Romero)

Hail Mary

"We have a great high priest who has gone into heaven, and he is Jesus, the Son of God." (Hebrews 4:14)

Hail Mary

"A fresh kind of life is starting." (Teilhard de Chardin)

Hail Mary

Glory be to the Father . . . Amen.

Family Reflection

Today we have entered into the utter loneliness of Jesus, into his pain and suffering, and his death on the cross. Jesus' passion is part of the deep mystery of our faith—the mystery of redemption. As a family, reflect on your experience of Good Friday this year. Reflect on the passion and death of Jesus. Use these questions to guide your reflection:

- Have there been times in our lives when we sat with Jesus and felt the utter loneliness of the Garden of Gethsemane?
- How have we worn the shoes of Peter, Judas, Pilate? Have we ever walked the way of Jesus?
- How have we helped Jesus carry his cross?
- What does the cross mean in our lives?

- In what ways does the passion of Jesus challenge our family to respond?
- What new understanding do we have about the suffering and death of Jesus? How do we share in this mystery?
- What would we say to Mary at the foot of the cross?
- Jesus promised eternal life to one of the men crucified next to him. What does these words of Jesus teach us about redemption?

Easter Vigil

Family Quiz: Why is this day called the Easter Vigil?
(Answer: Because this is the day before we celebrate Jesus' resurrection.
Vigil means to watch and wait.)

Jesus' Actions

Jesus rises from the dead. He appears to friends and followers and brings his peace.

Family Activity

Tonight people all over the world will be baptized into the Church during the Easter Vigil liturgies. Pray for these people and their families today:

Loving God,
Bless those who will be baptized tonight.
Stir up in them and in our Church that spirit of
Adoption which is given to us at our Baptism,
That they, and we, being renewed both in body and mind,
Will love and worship you in truth.
You call all people to salvation through your son, Jesus.
Let the cleansing waters of Baptism flow,
Watch over all those whom you call.
We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

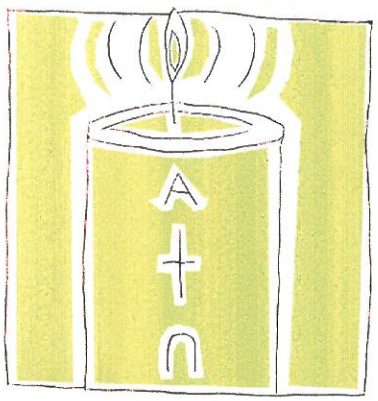
Consider making special Easter cards for the new members of your parish community. Check with the parish office to see how many people are being welcomed into the Church. Deliver the cards to the parish next week.

Family Activity

Transform your family's Lenten prayer space into Easter! Children can collect symbols of new life—flowers, pictures of butterflies, colorful Easter eggs, etc. to create an arrangement for the family Easter table.

Our Symbol

The Paschal candle symbolizes that Jesus is the light of the world. In our church tonight, the lighting of the candle begins the Easter vigil. The candle is lit during the Easter season and used throughout the year both at church and in the home.



Family Activity

Make your own family Paschal Candle. Decorate it with the traditional symbols that are on the Paschal Candle, or any Christian or springtime symbols the family would like to have on their candle (nail polish or acrylic paints work best for this). The Paschal Candle is inscribed with an *alpha* (the first letter of the Greek alphabet) and an *omega* (the last letter) with a cross in between. The four quarters of the cross are identified with the numerals of the current year.

Place your candle in the center of your newly decorated Easter table or prayer space and you will have your very own Paschal Candle to remind you that Christ is our light.

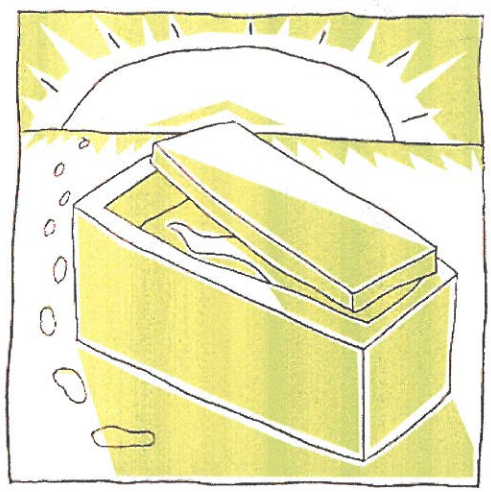
Blessing the Family Paschal Candle

After the family decorates the candle and puts it in place, the head of the household can pray a blessing on the candle while all family members extend their hands over the candle:

Loving God, we ask your blessing on this symbol of Christ our Light. May it be a constant reminder to all of us that we, too, are to bring the Light of Christ to others by our lives of justice and kindness. Amen.

In Greece it is a custom after the Easter Vigil to carry the "light" from the Paschal Candle home to light the lamps in each home. All our light comes from the one light who is Christ. Your family may wish to carry a light from the Paschal Candle at your parish home to light your family Paschal Candle for the first time. (A glass enclosed votive candle works well for this "transport.")

Family Reflection

The celebration of the Easter Vigil goes directly to the heart of the matter for Catholics. The Church uses signs, symbols, words and gesture to tell the story of salvation. As a family, reflect on your experience of the Easter Vigil. Continue your reflection throughout the Easter season.

- In what ways did the Easter Vigil express creation, covenant, church, death and resurrection? How do we experience creation, covenant, church, death and resurrection in our family today?
- Which symbols captured our hearts and our imaginations?
- From our experience of Easter, what do we know is true about our faith, about God, about Jesus, about our Church?
- How will our experience of Easter this year change us?