

# Family Holy Week Guide

While the season of Lent is an important time in the Church, it is helpful to remember that our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are meant as preparation for Holy Week and the Triduum.



Children learn their priorities from their parents. Let your kids see you praying, reflecting or reading Scripture during Holy Week, and they will learn to do the same.

## The Three Days of the Triduum

The liturgies of the Triduum can serve as primary teaching tools of the Catholic faith. The time from the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday through the evening on Easter Sunday is referred to as the “Triduum,” meaning three days. These days give us the opportunity to share in the mystery and power of God’s love as lived out in the suffering of his son, Jesus. It is helpful to think of these days not as separate celebrations, but as one continuous remembrance in which we meet and follow Jesus.

## HOLY THURSDAY

*So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you?”* — John 13:12

The Holy Thursday liturgy recalls the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus and includes a ceremony called the mandatum, which refers to Jesus’ command to his disciples, “as I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34). In the Gospel, Jesus washing the feet of his disciples powerfully symbolized this. In our ritual remembrance, we, too, are challenged to wash the feet of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**FAMILY ACTIVITY:** Attend a time of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament — even for a short time — together on Holy Thursday. Pray for health, joy and peace in your family and all families throughout the world.



## GOOD FRIDAY

*“It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.* — John 19:30

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. The Good Friday liturgy includes readings from Isaiah, Hebrews and the Passion account from John’s Gospel. Prayers and intercessions for the needs of the Church and the world follow, after which the cross is venerated and holy Communion, reserved since Mass on Holy Thursday, is distributed.

**FAMILY ACTIVITY:** Pray the Lord’s Prayer at bedtime this night in remembrance of Christ’s gift of salvation for all.



### There Was Darkness Over All the Land

Spending time in prayer between the hours of noon and 3 p.m., particularly the Stations of the Cross, is a way to join with Jesus in his suffering. Or you may spend that time in silence. We are called to fast and abstain from meat on Good Friday.

## EASTER VIGIL

*Now in the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So they laid Jesus there.* — John 19:41-42

The Easter Vigil Mass is a rich moment in time in which we are drawn into Jesus’ timeless victory over sin and death that is now ours. It begins in darkness, and then a single candle is lit from the fire — the paschal candle. Still in partial darkness, we listen to Scripture readings. When the Gloria is intoned, the lights of the church are turned on, giving us a vivid symbol of the light that floods our lives through Jesus.

**FAMILY ACTIVITY:** Before attending the Vigil as a family, talk about the symbols that help make the liturgy so rich — fire, water, oil, light and darkness. What emotions do these symbols bring forth in us? What is the Church teaching us through the use of these signs and symbols?



## Holy Week and Kids

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. Try to take a few moments to talk about why we celebrate with these cus-

toms and traditions. Here are some practical ways to help make Holy Week meaningful for children.

- 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 quiet throughout the day. Turn off buzzing phones, loud music and ringing video games, and spend a day without the noise and distraction of the modern world.

