



HOLY WEEK FROM HOME

A GUIDE FOR CATHOLIC FAMILIES



THE FAMILY

The Domestic Church

“The family is, so to speak, the domestic church” (*Lumen Gentium #11*). It is in the home that we first learn who God is and how to worship him from our hearts. In this time of stay-at-home orders, many families are spending more time together than ever before. For us Christians, this is an opportunity to experience the reality of the domestic church in a new way – by coming together in our homes to celebrate Holy Week.

This guide contains suggestions on how to make this Holy Week a time of joy, peace and grace for you and your loved ones even while away from church. Before you begin, consider creating a sacred place in your home – a place set aside for your family to gather in prayer. Include items like a crucifix, bible, rosary, other holy images or icons, and, if possible, a chair that is only used for prayer and reflection.

Did You Know?

The Last Supper took place in a home around a common table. Early Christians continued this practice of gathering in people’s homes for many years. It wasn’t until Emperor Constantine’s conversion in 313 that Christianity grew steadily, and special buildings were constructed solely for the worship of God.

During these times of quarantine, we have a unique opportunity to enrich our families and homes with the beautiful rituals and symbols of Holy Week. As we prepare for Easter, we are called to celebrate these sacred days with those closest to us, in our homes – the domestic church.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The following pages include ideas on how to celebrate Holy Week in your home, as well as the day’s scripture readings and highlights from the liturgy. Come together at a certain time each day, follow the steps outlined in each section and offer your own personal prayers and intentions as a family. Remember, this guide is for you – feel free to adapt and use it in the way that best fits your family’s needs and situation.

PALM SUNDAY – March 28, 2021

THE START OF HOLY WEEK



Today we celebrate Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Just one week before he was to suffer and die for us, our Lord enters the city to cheers and praise from the crowd. Palms were laid on the streets, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. Our readings today give us a glimpse of the mysteries of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, preparing our hearts for the new life he promises.

As you celebrate Palm Sunday in your home, take extra time to read the Gospel for today. It is the passion narrative that recounts the events of Christ's final days. Reflect on how Jesus sacrificed everything – including his life – to redeem us from our sins. Notice the gentle, tender moments as Jesus encounters his own loved ones, friends and disciples during his final days and hours.

Did You Know?

The palm branch is a symbol of victory over death. In Mesopotamia, people carried palms to funeral processions as it represented eternal life. As another sign of victory, palm branches were the original "trophies" and awarded to victorious athletes. To this day, the palm is used in sacred art to symbolize martyrdom.



FOR REFLECTION

- The people of Jerusalem welcomed Jesus with cries of praise and thanksgiving. What are some ways that you can welcome Jesus into your home today to praise and thank him?
- When you sing the "Holy, Holy, Holy..." at Mass today, remember you are joining the choir of angels in the heavenly liturgy to give praise to God the Father, Son, and Spirit.
- From the cross, Jesus said "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matt 27:46; Psalm 22). Do you ever feel abandoned by God? If so, Jesus assures you "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20).
- What made the centurion say, "Truly, this was the Son of God!" after Jesus died?

PREPARING FOR TODAY'S LITURGY

- If your parish has palms available for pick up, be sure to get one for each family member.
- Download and print the scripture readings at uscgb.org.
- Have a small 'procession' of your own around your home with the blessed palms.
- Sing or listen to *All Glory, Laud and Honor*, the traditional hymn for Palm Sunday.
- Today's liturgical color is red. Consider wearing red or accenting your home or your crucifix with red. Red calls to mind the blood which flowed from the side of Christ to save us from our sins.



HOPE AND NEW LIFE

As we begin Holy Week, God is inviting us to make this time sacred – to set aside, at least for a few moments each day, the busyness of our lives. He is calling us to open our hearts and minds to Christ's passion, death on the cross and resurrection. Today and every day, let us experience the selflessness of Jesus' love for us, as he gives his life to redeem us from our sins. Remember to take time to be renewed in the hope God promises each of us and to share that hope with those closest to you, so that they too may experience the joy of new life in Jesus.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Procession with Palms	MT 11:1-10
First Reading.....	IS 50:4-7
Second Reading	PHIL 2:6-11
Gospel Reading	MK 14: 15-47

HOLY THURSDAY – April 1, 2021

A MEAL LIKE NO OTHER



Today is Holy Thursday, the day Jesus gathered with the apostles for the Last Supper. In that upper room with those closest to him, Jesus gave us three remarkable gifts – the gift of priesthood, the gift of the Eucharist and the gift of a love that is stronger than even death.

During the Holy Thursday liturgy, we commemorate the moment when Jesus washed the feet of the apostles. We also participate in the first Eucharist, when Jesus transformed simple gifts of bread and wine into his Body and Blood. As we gather in our homes this evening, we can celebrate these same realities. We join Jesus in giving generously of ourselves and humbly serving those around us.



FOR REFLECTION

- Why do you think the Gospel of St. John recounts the washing of the feet and not the institution of the Holy Eucharist? How are the two connected?
- Jesus said the greatest among you will be the servant of all. Do you believe that? How will you be great today? How can you serve others at home?



Did You Know?

Early Roman Christians began a tradition of visiting the basilicas in Rome on the evening of Holy Thursday. This ancient tradition continues today! Although we are not able to physically visit other churches, use the internet to visit different churches around the world and spend some time praying in each church.

PREPARING FOR TODAY'S LITURGY

- Download and print the scripture readings at usccb.org.
- Prepare for the ritual of the Washing of Feet. Get a basin, towel and pitcher of water ready for a parent to wash children's feet. Explain how Jesus humbly served those around him.
- Holy Thursday is considered the "birthday" of the priesthood. Pause as a family to pray in a special way for Pope Francis, your local bishop and your parish priests.
- The Holy Thursday liturgy usually ends in silence. Try to maintain this same spirit of silence in your home for the remainder of the evening. You may also consider praying the rosary from the family.

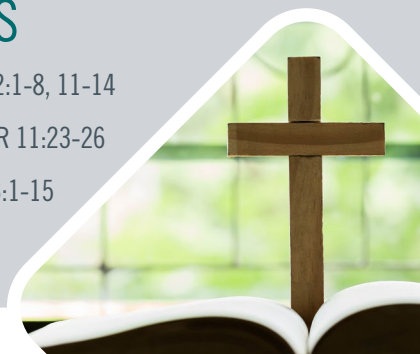


THE LORD'S SUPPER IN YOUR HOME

Today's commemoration is called the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Jesus and his disciples celebrated a feast which included lamb and wine. In celebration of this special day, you may want to gather as a family to share a meal around your table tonight. Make your favorite food, use the family china, decorate the table and celebrate our Passover from death to eternal life. Remember, the Last Supper took place at a table just like yours.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading EX 12:1-8, 11-14
Second Reading 1 COR 11:23-26
Gospel Reading JN 13:1-15



GOOD FRIDAY – APRIL 2, 2021

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

Central to our solemn celebration today is the sign of Christ's ultimate sacrifice – the cross. Today we recall the events of Jesus' passion and death. Our Lord is mocked and ridiculed by the guards. His clothes are ripped from his body. He walks the long, strenuous journey to Calvary. And, ultimately, he is nailed to the cross.

But today is not a day for sadness or despair. We call today 'Good' Friday because, by his death, Jesus frees us from sin and death. The cross is the perfect expression of God's love for us. God's only begotten Son sacrifices his life on the cross, so that we may not only die with him, but also one day rise to new life.



Did You Know?

The ritual of venerating the cross began in Rome in the fourth century when the cross of Jesus Christ was discovered by St. Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine, on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 326.

PREPARING FOR TODAY'S LITURGY

- Download and print the scripture readings at usccb.org.
- Prepare a crucifix from your home and place it in a central place. Offer a prayer of veneration as you pass it throughout the day.
- Take time to pray the Stations of the Cross as a family or observe silence from 12 to 3 p.m., the hours when Jesus is believed to have hung on the cross.
- During the Good Friday liturgy, allow time for each family member to reverence the cross. Like you would at church, you may kneel before it, kiss it or touch it with reverence.
- Today is a special day of fasting. Avoid eating meat or snacking between meals. Use this opportunity to explain to children the value of uniting these little sacrifices with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading..... IS 52:13 – 53:12
Second Reading HEB 4:14-16; 5:7-9
Gospel Reading JN 18:1 – 19:42



FOR REFLECTION

- Jesus says, "If anyone wants to be my disciples, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). How can you deny yourself today? What are some of the crosses in your life that you carry?
- Why is today called *Good* Friday?
- What does St. Paul mean when he says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us" (Romans 8:18)? Do you consider your sufferings as nothing compared to the glory that awaits you?

FROM DEATH TO NEW LIFE

As we recall Christ's suffering and death, we recognize that there is more to the story. Jesus not only dies for our sins, but also will rise from the dead to bring us a share of the new life he promises. Today truly is 'Good' Friday. Let us find new ways to unite our fear, uncertainty and suffering to the suffering of Jesus on the cross. As we kneel before the crucified Jesus, let us ask him once again to prepare our hearts to receive the great joy of his resurrection this Easter Sunday.

THE OFFERTORY: SHARING YOUR LIFE WITH GOD

God shares his life with us in the liturgies we celebrate. The offertory (collection) is a way that we share our lives – our livelihood – with God. Visit your parish's website or drop off/mail your gift today.



EASTER SUNDAY – APRIL 3, 2021 ALLELUIA, HE IS RISEN!



Easter is the most sacred and joyful celebration for Christians – Jesus is risen from the dead! His death and glorious resurrection free us from sin and restore our place as sons and daughters of God. We have much to celebrate. Today, voices from around the world join as one, as the Church resounds with a joyful “Alleluia.”

As you celebrate Easter in your home today, let this same joyful spirit carry over into everything you do. Consider decorating your home with greenery and flowers. Dress up like you would if you were going to your parish church. Reach out to friends and loved ones. And be sure to set aside time to pray and joyfully celebrate Jesus’ triumph over sin and death. We have new life in him!

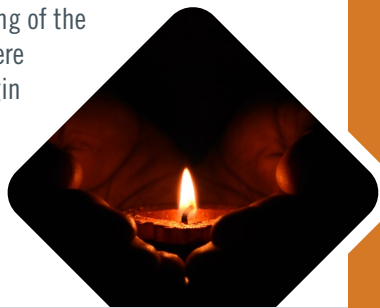


Did You Know?

The butterfly is a beautiful symbol of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The caterpillar symbolizes earthly life, the cocoon resembles the tomb of Christ, and the butterfly wonderfully represents his resurrection and ascension to new life.

PREPARING FOR TODAY’S LITURGY

- Download and print the scripture readings at uscgb.org.
- Drape your crucifix with a white cloth and decorate your place of prayer with flowers and greenery.
- Consider dressing for Mass at home as you would for Easter Sunday Mass at church.
- The Easter Vigil begins after dark with the lighting of the paschal candle. If possible, darken the room where your family is gathered and light a candle to begin your time of prayer.
- Use holy water to sprinkle the family at the renewal of the baptismal promises.



SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading..... ACTS 10:34A, 37-43
Second Reading..... COL 3:1-4
Gospel Reading..... JN 20:1-9

FOR REFLECTION

- Jesus’ resurrection makes all things new! Start fresh by renewing your baptismal vows:
 - Do you reject Satan, all his works and all his empty promises?
 - Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth?
 - Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?
 - Do you 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?
- St. Paul says that nothing can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:39). Do you believe that nothing can ever separate you from the love of God?
- St. Paul exhorts us: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth” (1 Cor 5:6). How can you seek what is above and think of what is above each day?

BLESSING OUR HOMES

In some communities, it is customary for houses to be blessed after Easter to celebrate the Lord’s resurrection. During this time of quarantine, we have the opportunity to ‘bless’ our homes through our shared prayer with family and in quiet moments with God. These are certainly unique and challenging times, but as Christians we have so much to celebrate. As we face fear and uncertainty, let us be renewed today in the joy and peace of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus is with us in a special way at this time. Let us celebrate the new life he offers us – today and every day.



A PRAYER *for Parents*

*God, our Father, I thank you for the gift of my children
and for the privilege and responsibility of being a parent,
for this is my way of holiness.*

*May I regard each of my children as a sacred pledge of your love
and a beautiful sign of your confidence in me. Help me to pass on to
my children our greatest treasures – faith in your truths,
hope in your goodness, love in your name for all.*

*I entrust my children to your loving care. Banish from our home
any bitterness or lack of forgiveness. Let us have time, deep concern,
and a sense of sacrifice for one another. Teach us never to be ashamed
that we are, in name and in fact, a Catholic family striving to live
in the way of Jesus, who is head of our home.*

*Give us your Holy Spirit to unite us throughout this life
and let the circle of our family be unbroken in the
Kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

Amen.





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