HOLY WEEK
IS THIS STORY TOO DIFFICULT FOR CHILDREN?

Many people debate about taking children to Mass during Holy Week. Certainly, the Liturgies can be longer—Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. Some ask, is this story too hard for children? After all, even though Palm Sunday starts out pretty joyful, in fact, Jesus’ last days were filled with betrayal, loneliness, doubt, pain and violence.

But, the story of Jesus’ suffering and death is not as unfamiliar to children as we may like to believe. Most children know pain. Some children know death. They know what it’s like to feel lonely, to feel afraid, to feel bullied, to feel hurt. We need to tell the story in an age-appropriate way, describing how people were mean to Jesus and eventually hurt him, and how Jesus could have run away, but he didn’t because he loved people too much to abandon them. This story connects with children’s own pain and lets them know that they need not experience it alone. It’s a story that also tells them it does get better, that there is hope beyond pain, and that God doesn’t abandon them in the dark but leads them to the light. That’s a story every child longs for. And I suspect, every adult too.

The other important aspect of the story of Holy Week is that is does not end in the tomb. The most important part of the story is that Jesus rose from the dead. There is always hope. The resurrection of Jesus opens up the possibility of eternal life for all of us. With Jesus, it’s never a question of “is this all there is?” There is always a way through pain, sorrow and loss. Jesus is there, hands outstretched, offering hope. And whenever it seems hard to find Jesus, look for His helpers. Whenever there is misfortune, the helpers of Jesus are there, hands and hearts outstretched, offering comfort and help.

LIVING FAITH
PALM SUNDAY
OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD
APRIL 5

THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY
Matthew 21:11
When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, “The Lord needs them.” And he will send them immediately.’ This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ‘Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’ When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, ‘Who is this?’ The crowds were saying, ‘This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.’

TAKING THE GOSPEL HOME
Today is a special day, the beginning of what Christians call “Holy Week,” the heart of our Christian year. Today, we hear two readings from St Luke’s Gospel. At the beginning of Mass, we heard a story about how Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem. People were so happy to see him that they waved palm branches in the air as a sign of welcome.

The second gospel reading is called the Passion and tells the story of how—not long after the joyous welcome into Jerusalem, Jesus was arrested, tried, crucified and buried.

There is a huge contrast between these two Gospel readings.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- How could people welcome Jesus so joyfully one day and, just a few short days later, turn against him?
- Have you ever seen people turn against one another? What are the reasons that this happens?
FROM DEATH TO LIFE AND BEYOND

IN HOLY WEEK
WE CELEBRATE THE PASCHAL MYSTERY OF JESUS
WE SHARE THIS JOURNEY IN THE SACRAMENTS AND IN OUR LIVES

PALM SUNDAY
The crowds shout out in joy, welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem.
What have been some of the high moments in your life?
Have you been able to recognize Jesus walking with you in these times or experiences?

HOLY THURSDAY
Jesus shares the Last Supper with his friends.
He gives us the gift of His Body and Blood, the Eucharist.
But Judas leaves the dinner table. A friend becomes a traitor.
Jesus realizes that He is about to die. This causes Him great pain.
Jesus asks God to take this trial away from Him. But He says, “Thy will be done.”
Have you ever experienced the disappointment of having friends turn against you? What did that feel like?
Where did you turn for help or hope?

GOOD FRIDAY
Jesus dies on the Cross.
Why? Because He loves us so much.
Have you ever done something really hard, or given up something, because you want the best for someone you love?
Have you ever gone through a really difficult experience, and felt as if it was the end for you?

THE TOMB
Jesus spent three days in the tomb.
Often, in dark moments, we don’t see the way ahead.

PENTECOST
Jesus sends the Holy Spirit on the Apostles.
Jesus offers us a new spirit for our new life.
What gifts have you needed as you set out on new beginnings or new paths?

ASCENSION
Forty days after His Resurrection, Jesus returns to His Father in Heaven.
When in your life had you had to mourn a loss and then let go in order to move on?

EASTER SUNDAY
Jesus rises from the dead.
Life wins over death, and hope wins over despair.
How do you need hope in your life at this time?
What is the new life you seek this Easter?

Video reflections can be found here:
Palm Sunday https://youtu.be/SoujG6h7UGI?list=PL58g24NgWPIzvBk2IQVES_xC4WTm6-CDI
Holy Thursday https://youtu.be/x1R9Z9gkOck?list=PL58g24NgWPIzvBk2IQVES_xC4WTm6-CDI
Good Friday https://youtu.be/Rk72MuWqF3Q?list=PL58g24NgWPIzvBk2IQVES_xC4WTm6-CDI

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