
JOE PAPROCKI, D.MIN.

7 WAYS *to*
PRACTICE

Lent



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Lent is the season when God calls his people to return to him with their whole heart. God says that when we return to him, we will find him gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in kindness.

During the 40 days of Lent, we reflect on how we can more fully turn our lives over to God so that we can celebrate Easter with joyful hearts. The Church has given us many tools to help our reflection and conversion. Among these are the following:

1. Ash Wednesday
2. Prayer
3. Fasting
4. Almsgiving
5. Reconciliation
6. Stations of the Cross
7. Holy Week

This eBook explores these seven ways to practice Lent by offering background on each tradition, an accompanying prayer, and activities for catechists to share the riches of Lenten practices with those they serve. By deepening our understanding of the disciplines, practices, and devotions of Lent, we will live Lent more fully and grow in relationship with God and one another.

1. Ash Wednesday

Background

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season. This season prepares us to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus at Easter. For people aged 18–59, Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting (only one complete meal and two smaller ones with no food in between). For people aged 14 and over, it is also a day of abstinence from meat (which is a symbol of abundance and wealth). On Ash Wednesday, we are reminded of what we are when no longer sustained by God: dust. The message of Ash Wednesday is not morbid—it is a joyful reminder that, with God’s life within us, we are so much more than dust and ashes! In Old Testament times, people expressed grief and sorrow by covering themselves in ashes.

In many ways, Ash Wednesday is the most visibly Catholic day of the year, a day on which Catholic sacramentality (the outward expression of faith) literally adorns most Catholics right on their foreheads. The ashes, made from burning the blessed palms used on the previous year’s Palm Sunday, are placed on our foreheads in the Sign of the Cross as a reminder of our mortality and total dependence on God as well as on our commitment to repent (turn away) from sin. This visible reminder of our mortality makes us rethink how we are living at the moment.

When we receive ashes, the priest or minister uses the words, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return,” (based on Genesis 3:19) or “Repent, and believe in the Gospel,” (from

1. Ash Wednesday

Mark 1:15). Although Ash Wednesday is not a holy day of obligation, all Catholics are encouraged to attend Mass and receive ashes to mark the beginning of the holy season of Lent.

PRAYER

O, God of second chances, thankfully you give us this time during Lent to be filled, directed, and empowered by your Spirit. As we enter fully into Lent, show us what we need to see to more fully follow your Gospel. What in our lives needs the anointing of your Spirit? What in our lives needs clarity on the direction we are being invited to? What in our lives do we need strength to feel empowered to go out and do in your name? We seek to be filled, directed, and empowered by your Spirit, O God of second chances, to overcome the temptations in our own lives as your Son overcame the temptations in the desert. We seek to be filled and directed by your Spirit as we go out into our public ministries, as Jesus was directed to do after his time alone with you.

(prayer by Becky Eldredge, Ash Wednesday 3-Minute Retreat Reflection)

Activities

Grades 1–3

Chains of Love

Discuss simple ways the children can make family or school life more pleasant for the people around them. Every time someone

serves or helps another, that act of love can be made concrete by adding a link to a “chain of love.” The children can color and decorate their links. By Easter, the combined chains will be long enough for use as classroom decorations. (from *Christ Our Life* Grade 1)

Grades 6–8

Conversion Skits

Have small groups work together to prepare and present skits about a character who chose to make a bad choice but then had an experience of conversion. Remind young people that when we make a bad choice, we damage our relationships with God and with others. Point out that when we choose to turn back to God, we also commit ourselves to repairing the relationships we have harmed through our bad choices. Encourage young people to focus on what the character does to repair the relationships that he or she damaged as a result of the bad choice. (from *Finding God* Grade 8)

Family

Family Preparation for Lent

Gather as a family and read the Gospel reading from Ash Wednesday: Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18. Remind yourselves that Jesus expected that his disciples would give alms, pray, and fast. However, Jesus instructed his disciples that these things should not be done for show. Determine one way that your family will give alms during Lent to share what you have with people in need. Decide to pray together as a family during Lent (for example, the family could pray Psalm 51 or the Lord’s Prayer together). Choose one thing that your family will give up during Lent as a reminder of your love for God. Agree to encourage one another in whatever Lenten promises each has made individually. Pray that God will bless your family’s Lenten promises.

1. Ash Wednesday

Adults

Arts & Faith: Ash Wednesday

Reflect on Pieter Brueghel's *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* with this [Arts & Faith video for Ash Wednesday](#). Consider how you might need to look inward this Lent like the woman at the well in the painting. Bring your thoughts to prayer and commit to some form of almsgiving, prayer, or fasting this Lent.

2. Prayer

Background

Bad habits are hard to break. That doesn't mean, however, that it can't be done. In his book, *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg tells us that certain habits can be thought of as "keystone" habits, meaning that they create a chain reaction when altered. For example, developing the habit of exercise often leads to better eating and sleeping habits. Jesus identified three "keystone" habits which we practice each Lent: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Let's take look at prayer.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) describes prayer as the "lifting of our minds and hearts to God." (CCC 2259) In ancient times, the heart was thought of as the seat of all knowledge; in biblical thinking *to know* carries the connotation of "being joined with," as a husband and wife are joined in sexual union. The word *lifting* implies that something needs to be raised or picked up from a lower level to a higher level. *Lifting up our hearts*, therefore, means raising our level of knowledge from the level of self-centeredness to the level of God-centeredness. To lift up our hearts means to be joined with God; to be joined with God means to be in communion with God.

Prayer takes many forms. Vocal prayer, using words either spoken out loud or in the silence of our hearts, is the most natural form of prayer and, for most people, is the place where prayer begins. We can speak to God using our own words or using the words of traditional prayers. Meditation, or reflective prayer, is thinking about

2. Prayer

God—often with the aid of a Scripture passage, an inspirational reading, or sacred images. When we meditate, we attempt to become aware of and “plug in to” God’s power and presence in our lives. Meditation involves actively focusing our attention and engaging our imagination. Contemplation is simply resting quietly in God’s presence. In contemplation, we do not attempt to speak to God but simply marvel at his glorious presence. It can be compared to enjoying a beautiful piece of art or a nature scene. No words are needed.

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, you teach your people to pray through the guidance of the Church. Thank you for showing us so many ways to be in prayerful communion with you and with the Father and with Jesus. Help us to find the way to pray that is best for us right now in our lives. Help us to grow in our prayer lives, so that we may better recognize God’s presence in our lives and respond by loving him and by loving our neighbors. Amen.

Activities

Grades 1–3

Family Prayer Box

Tell children that one way to pray is by writing or drawing their prayers of praise, thanks, need, or love down on paper and then putting them into a Family Prayer Box. Show the children a model

2. Prayer

of a Family Prayer Box. Ask the children to decorate prayer boxes to take home and use with their families. Tell the children that each person in the family can add a prayer to the box at any time and that all can gather daily to pull out and pray one of the prayers.

Grades 4–5

Prayer Partners

Arrange with your catechetical leader and other catechists to pair children from different classes. Explain to children that they will serve one another as prayer partners during Lent. Say: ***During the season of Lent, remember to pray for your prayer partner. Know that your prayer partner is praying for you.*** (from *Finding God* Grade 4)

Grades 6–8

A Personal Prayer Survey

Write honest answers to all the questions below. Spend some quiet time really thinking about your answers and what they say about you and your friendship with God.

My best times of day to pray: _____

My favorite vocal prayers or kinds of prayers: _____

Some things I often ask for from God: _____

Some things I thank God for: _____

Some things in my life with which I really need God's help: _____

I tell God about these fears I have: _____

3. Fasting

Background

We mentioned that prayer, fasting, and almsgiving can be thought of as “keystone” habits. These are habits that, when altered, lead to changes in other habits. Let’s take look at fasting. Psychologist Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs teaches that physiological needs must be tended to first before one can progress to paying attention to deeper needs such as self-actualization. This same wisdom is at the heart of the Catholic practice of fasting: The key to moving up the ladder of spiritual mastery begins at the physiological level. The way to one’s heart is indeed through one’s stomach. Before attempting to master one’s intangible spiritual desires, it makes sense to master some tangible physical desires, the most obvious of which is our hunger.

Since biblical times, fasting and abstinence have been viewed as appropriate expressions of repentance for sin. Before Jesus began his ministry, he fasted in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights. (Matthew 4:1–2) He was tempted to turn a stone into bread—to take care of his own physical needs. Instead, he remained focused on what truly sustained him: the Word of God. We are also tempted to think that many things in life sustain us when, truly, God alone sustains us. Through fasting, Catholics learn to practice self-denial, to lead a life of moderation that deepens our compassion for people in need, and to develop a deeper hunger and thirst for God.

3. Fasting

Fasting is also a form of discipline, a way of admitting that we are tempted with obsessions with food, drink, sex, television, and so on. Through fasting, we strive to bring our relationship with our self into line. For Catholics, fasting is not just an individual practice—it is one that has social implications. While fasting, many Catholics donate the food they would have eaten (or the equivalent value thereof) to an organization that feeds the hungry. In this way, fasting restores our relationship with our neighbors all over the world.

PRAYER

Lord, Jesus, you fasted for 40 days in the desert, opening yourself up to your Father's will before you began your public ministry. Help us practice fasting with a spirit of openness to the Father's will, so that we may be more sensitive to the needs of others and remain focused on our baptismal call to holiness. Amen.

Activities

Grades 1–3

Why Pretzels?

Hold up a pretzel for the group to see. Explain that long ago during Lent, the people fasted from milk, butter, eggs, cheese, cream, and meat. They shaped flour, water, and salt to look like arms crossed in prayer and baked the small breads that we call pretzels. Give each

3. Fasting

child a pretzel as a reminder that Lent is a time for special prayer and sacrifices.

Grades 6–8

Review the Rules

Review with the class the fasting and abstinence laws of the Church. Remind them that every Friday of the year is a day of penance. Some Catholics, encouraged by their bishops, abstain from meat or some other food every Friday.

Grades 9–12

A Group Fast

Have a volunteer read aloud Mark 1:12–13 (Jesus in the Wilderness). Point out that during Jesus' 40 days in the desert he fasted and prayed. Talk about what it means to fast: to do without food. Explain that, during Lent, Catholics practice fasting in order to remind ourselves that our deepest hunger is for God and to practice solidarity with those who have less. As a group, brainstorm a list of favorite snacks and write them on the board. Ask the young people to identify snacks that are healthy and circle them. Distribute an index card to each child and invite each one to jot down the names of three or four snacks that were not circled that they will promise not to eat during Lent. As a group, agree on a time during the week when you will all fast from any food (for example, Wednesday evenings from 6 to 9 P.M.) Explain that such a group fast is a way of experiencing community.

Adults

Lenten Message from Pope Francis

Read and reflect on [Pope Francis' 2014 Lenten message](#), and particularly pay attention to the lines: "Lent is a fitting time for

3. Fasting

self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty. Let us not forget that real poverty hurts: no self-denial is real without this dimension of penance. I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt.”

4. Almsgiving

Background

The third Lenten “keystone” habit—habits that, when altered, lead to changes in other habits—is almsgiving. The fact is, we become self-centered at an early age. If you’ve ever watched toddlers playing with one another, you know what I mean. All it takes is for one to grab hold of a playmate’s favorite toy and the fun begins: “Mine! Mine! Mine!” It is at this point that parents make their best effort to increase their toddler’s vocabulary by one more very important word: “Share!” Sharing, however, does not come easily for most of us. Our selfish tendencies are exacerbated by a society that promotes a mentality of scarcity. For those who live under God’s reign, however, there is more than enough to go around. Likewise, rather than seeing ourselves as owners, we come to recognize that we are stewards called to share material possessions with others. This is the essence of almsgiving.

Of the three “keystone” Lenten habits, Scripture clearly considers almsgiving as primary: “Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness . . . It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life.” (Tobit 12:8–9) Almsgiving need not be limited to sharing material goods but can also extend to sharing our time and talents with others.

4. Almsgiving

In many ways, almsgiving is the natural outflow of prayer and fasting; it is an essential ingredient of the Christian life. It is also a way of showing love for God, for in loving our neighbor, we are also loving God. Almsgiving is a form of dying to oneself by setting aside one's own needs in favor of another's without expecting anything in return. In doing so, we come to the realization that St. Ignatius came to centuries ago: that God's grace is enough for us.

PRAYER

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are a community of love, so intimate that you are One. Because we are made in your image, help us to live in community with one another, generously giving alms to those in need. Help us to share generously of our time, talent, and treasure, and help us to live in solidarity with all your children. Amen.

Activities

Grades 4–5

Almsgiving — Not Just Money

It is also considered “almsgiving” to give time and goods to those in need; for example, donating time to a soup kitchen, giving clothes to charity, visiting people who are shut-in, or driving those without transportation. Discuss with your group some of the non-monetary ways to give alms, and invite young people to write commitments to give of their time and goods regularly during Lent.

Grades 6–8

Matthew and Almsgiving

Have a student read aloud Matthew 6:1–4. Ask: ***What does Matthew's Gospel tell us about almsgiving?*** (that it should be done quietly) ***The Church wants us to be particularly mindful of people who are in need, especially during Lent. What kinds of needs might we address during Lent?*** (economic, spiritual, physical, and emotional needs) ***How can we help people who are in need?*** (by giving money to the missions, service to elderly people, and time to those who are lonely; by showing kindness to others; by praying for victims of violence) Read again the Gospel passage from Matthew and invite children to reflect on the passage in prayer and consider how they might practice almsgiving this Lent. (based on an activity from *Christ Our Life* Grade 7)

Family

Almsgiving Box

The Lenten discipline of almsgiving—helping those in need—is not just a generous thing to do; it is a practical way to improve your community. Decorate a box in which to collect alms during Lent. This can be used to collect funds for your parish Lenten project or for a cause of the family's choice. Decide as a family how you will fill your box. Suggestions that you can adapt to fit your family's situation include: putting in a dollar every time your family eats at a restaurant, 10 cents for every DVD you own, or 25 cents every time a child finds a peaceful solution to conflict with siblings. Place the box in your family's prayer center to help you with almsgiving this Lent.

5. Reconciliation

Background

If someone you are in love with never says the words “I love you,” then that love suffers. The words “I love you” are efficacious—they achieve the effect that they express. The same is true for the words “I’m sorry” and “I forgive you.” If someone you are in love with cannot say the words “I’m sorry” or “I forgive you,” then the relationship suffers. These words are also efficacious. Saying the words “I’m sorry” or “I forgive you” actually completes the experience of reconciling a relationship. All of this applies to our Catholic understanding of forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Unless we can name our sins and say the words “I’m sorry” and hear the words of Jesus actually spoken—“I forgive you”—our relationship with Jesus and others suffers. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, like all sacraments, is efficacious: it achieves that which it expresses.

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation includes the following:

- **Contrition.** We identify our sins (through an examination of conscience), express sincere sorrow for our sins, and commit ourselves to not repeating them.
- **Confession.** We name the sins aloud to the priest.
- **Absolution.** We are set free (loosened) from our sins by the priest through the words of absolution.

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- **Satisfaction.** We strive to repair the damage our sins have caused by performing works of penance.

There is no one way that you have to follow to go to confession, however, the following process is typical: greeting and blessing from the priest; a reading from Scripture (optional); confession of sins by the penitent; the giving and accepting of a penance; an act of contrition; the priest's absolution; a proclamation of praise by the penitent; dismissal of the penitent by the priest.

When we sin, which we unfortunately continue to do even after Baptism, we are invited to renew our Baptism through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and to experience anew God's mercy.

PRAYER

Lord, Jesus, you are my Divine Physician, the healer of my soul, my body, and my spirit. I pray that I may turn to you in my brokenness, knowing that through your Cross and Resurrection, you have overcome all evil, even death. Heal me of my sinfulness and fill me with your grace. Amen.

Activities

Grades 4–5

Reconciliation Is the Key

Explain to the children that Reconciliation is the key to staying close to God. God will always forgive us if we ask, but we must ask. Pass out one piece of construction paper per child. Have the children divide the paper into fourths widthwise and fold the two outer fourths in toward each other. What results should resemble a folio envelope, with two sides that open down the middle. Instruct the children to write “God’s Love” on the inside back of the envelope (so that when you open the sides, you will see the words). Tell the children to decorate around the words. Punch holes along the center opening, one hole on each side. Thread yarn through the holes to make a tie closure. Pass out the scissors and cardboard. Ask the children to cut out a key shape from the cardboard (they can draw a template if they want first). Punch holes and thread the top of the key with yarn. Write “Reconciliation” on the key and tie it to the folio. Remind the children that Reconciliation is the key to opening ourselves up to God’s love.

Grades 6–8

Examination of Conscience

Remind the young people that we need to review our lives and to be reconciled with God and others. Review with the young people the steps for making a good confession. Explain the importance of preparing for the sacrament by making an examination of conscience. Invite the group to brainstorm areas of their lives that would be important to include when making an examination of conscience. Write their answers on the board. Divide the young people

5. Reconciliation

into groups of three or four. Instruct the young people to create a 20-point examination of conscience for people their own age. Invite each group to share their questions, while the other groups listen for similarities and differences. Have the entire group agree on 10 to 12 questions they think would make the best examination of conscience.

Adults

Lectio Divina

Use *lectio divina* to pray with the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke 19:1–10). *Lectio divina* is Latin for “sacred reading,” and is an ancient form of Christian prayer in which you use your imagination while reading Scripture. It is a way of spending time with the Word of God and having a prayerful conversation with God. To get ready for *lectio divina*, quiet your thoughts. The first step is to read a Scripture passage slowly. The second step is meditation—letting the words sink in an echo within you while you reflect on what God might be saying to you. The third step is prayer. God speaks to you, and you respond with your own words. The final step is contemplation, sitting quietly with God, beyond words and feelings.

6. Stations of the Cross

Background

It's not unusual for us to retrace the steps of our childhood, visiting homes, schools, and neighborhoods where we grew up and where significant events in our lives occurred. We also retrace the steps of famous people—Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Eleanor Roosevelt—to learn more about them by visiting places that represent important events in their lives.

One very popular and traditional Lenten devotion is the Stations (or Way) of the Cross, in which we retrace the events of Jesus' suffering, Death, and Resurrection. In the early days of the Church, Christians visited the Holy Land to walk in Jesus' footsteps. As the Church grew, it became more difficult for people to physically visit the Holy Land. Instead, it became common for churches to have images—either pictures or sculptures—of the fourteen Stations of the Cross. These are artists' depictions of fourteen events in the story of Jesus' suffering and Death on the Cross.

It is customary for Catholics to pray the Stations of the Cross (using a devotional prayer guide) while actually walking from station to station. In this way, our prayer is embodied, as we walk from scene to scene, reflecting on the suffering and death of Jesus. This time-honored devotion thus includes words, images, and movement, involving all of our senses in a meditative walk with Jesus. In essence, the Stations of the Cross prayer is a pilgrimage-in-place, joining us

6. Stations of the Cross

to the Church in the Holy Land, where Christians physically retrace Jesus' Way of the Cross. These are the 14 stations:

1. Jesus Is Condemned to Death.
2. Jesus Takes Up His Cross.
3. Jesus Falls the First Time.
4. Jesus Meets His Sorrowful Mother.
5. Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross.
6. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.
7. Jesus Falls a Second Time.
8. Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.
9. Jesus Falls the Third Time.
10. Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments.
11. Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross.
12. Jesus Dies on the Cross.
13. Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross.
14. Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb.

The Resurrection of Jesus is sometimes included as a fifteenth station.

6. Stations of the Cross

PRAYER

We adore you, O Christ and we praise you, because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world. Help us to walk with you on your journey to the Cross so that we may rise with you to new life on Easter. Lord Jesus crucified, have mercy on us.

Activities

Grades 1–3

Stations of the Cross Mural

Explain the Stations of the Cross to the children and help them reflect on the events at each station. Discuss what those events tell us about Jesus' love, and how the difficulties we experience each day are related to the sufferings of Jesus. End each meditation with a prayer, asking God's help in following Christ's way of love. Let the children make a mural of the Stations of the Cross. (from *Christ Our Life* Grade 2)

Grades 6–8

Clay Imprints

Before the activity, invite the young people to share what they already know about the significance of the Stations of the Cross. Continue the discussion by saying: **We pray the Stations of the Cross and meditate on the events of Jesus' suffering and Death. Remembering each station is like following in Jesus' footsteps through Jerusalem.** When you feel that the young people understand the significance of following Jesus' footsteps by observing the

6. Stations of the Cross

Stations of the Cross, provide each child with a ball of clay. Invite the young people to flatten the clay to the shape of a thick pancake. Direct them to imprint the clay with their hand or bare foot. As the imprints dry, ask the young people to write on a piece of paper one way they will walk in Jesus' footsteps or lend a helping hand like Jesus in their observance of Lent. When the clay prints have dried, invite the young people to copy their way to be like Jesus in the imprint of their foot or hand. Provide the young people with dark markers to write their promises. Invite the young people to share their clay imprints and their plans to observe Lent with the rest of the group. Encourage the young people to share their imprints with friends and family members at home. Close the activity by saying: ***Jesus carried his cross willingly. We want to follow Jesus willingly, even when it is hard. Walk with Jesus this Lent and prepare to rejoice with him on Easter.***

Grades 9–12

Passion Monologues

In the tradition of Ignatian contemplation, take some time to imagine yourself as one of the characters in the Passion narrative (soldier, Simon of Cyrene, Mary, Pilate, weeping woman, John the apostle, or bystander). Write a one-page monologue from the character's point of view. In it, you might tell a friend what you have experienced, how you felt, and what you hope for the future. Some or all of these accounts could be used in a simple prayer service based on the Passion of Christ.

7. Holy Week

Background

The word *holy* means to “set apart.” When we consider something holy, that means that we set it apart from the ordinary. Holy Week is a time “set apart” from the rest of the calendar so that we might recall the suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday as we recall Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem. We receive blessed palms and we listen to the reading of the Passion of Jesus. The *Triduum*—meaning “the three days”—begins at sunset on Holy Thursday with the celebration of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, when we recall the Last Supper that Jesus ate with his Apostles. Following the Gospel and the homily, a solemn washing of the feet takes place to symbolize Jesus’ washing of the feet of the Apostles.

On Good Friday, we once again listen to a proclamation of the Passion of Jesus, this time from the Gospel of John. A very significant and solemn part of the Good Friday service is the Veneration of the Cross at which the members of the assembly are invited to come forward and show reverence or respect for the Cross of Jesus by either touching it or kissing it. On Holy Saturday, we are led from the Death of Jesus to his glorious Resurrection. At the Easter Vigil, the priest lights and blesses a bonfire to symbolize the light of the Risen Christ which is then spread throughout the darkened church to the people holding taper candles. In a church that is lit only by candle light, the cantor announces the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in a joyful song called the *Exsultet*, which means “Rejoice!” Following the homily, we celebrate

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the new life of Jesus in those who are celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist).

Holy Week is to the year what Sunday is to the week—a time set apart for God.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, you were fastened with nails to the wood of the Cross and raised on high for all to see. As the sun grew dark and the earth quaked, you surrendered your spirit to your Father, descended among the dead, broke open the gates of hell, and freed those bound in darkness. As angel choirs rejoiced, you were raised to life again on the third day. By these mighty deeds on our behalf, rescue us from our blindness and tepidity, inspire us anew by your Holy Spirit, and lead us into a life of prayer and service worthy of your awesome sacrifice. Amen.
—(adapted from *A Catholic Book of Hours and Other Devotions* by William G. Storey)

Activities

Grades 1–3

Storyboard of Holy Week

Discuss the events of Holy Week. Have children draw some of the events of Jesus' life remembered during Holy Week, such as Jesus

7. Holy Week

entering Jerusalem, washing the disciples' feet, praying in the garden, and dying on the Cross. Collect drawings and form a storyboard to display in the classroom. (from *Finding God* Grade 2)

Grades 4–5

Holy Week Prayers

Remind the students that the Easter Triduum celebrates a passing through death to life. Explain that we live this same journey every day in big and small ways. Ask the students to list situations in which people face suffering and death today. Then have them write on strips of paper prayers for these situations or for these people. The prayers may be written as intentions, similar to the Prayer of the Faithful for Mass, or the students may use their own form. Have them work together to create a collage on a large cardboard cross, using their prayers as well as pictures symbolizing their prayer intentions. Display the cross in your classroom if you meet during Holy Week. (from *Christ Our Life* Grade 6)

Family

Reading the Passion

Palm Sunday, also called Passion Sunday, marks the beginning of Holy Week. During this week, we prepare ourselves for Easter by prayerfully reflecting on the events of Jesus' Passion and Death. During this week, your family might display a crucifix in a prominent place as reminder of the salvation that Christ won for us. This can also serve as the focal point for family prayer during Holy Week.

Because of the length and complexity of the Passion narrative, it is difficult for children to remain attentive when it is proclaimed in its entirety. Families can make it a tradition to read a portion of this Sunday's Gospel each day of Holy Week, providing ample opportunity for children to ask questions and respond to the events

7. Holy Week

described there. In this way, the entire week can become a “way of the cross.”

The Passion as found in Mark’s Gospel might be read as follows throughout the week:

Sunday: Mark 11:1–10 (Gospel at the Procession with Palms)

Monday: Mark 14:1–11

Tuesday: Mark 14:12–26

Wednesday: Mark 14:27–52

Thursday: Mark 14:53–72

Friday: Mark 15:1–41

Saturday: Mark 15:42–47

After reading from the Gospel each night, the family might reflect on the reading together. Conclude your prayer time together by praying the Lord’s Prayer or by singing an appropriate hymn such as “Jesus, Jesus,” “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?” or “What Wondrous Love Is This.”