

High Feasts & Holy Days

Lesson 8: Holy Week Preparation (April 9-16, 2017)

4.9.2017

Objectives: Introduce observances during Holy Week, the great celebration at the heart of the Christian year that culminates in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Materials: flipchart, index cards, lesson attachments, and items below:

- Red, purple, black cloths, crucifix
- palm fronds
- bowl of water and towel
- Da Vinci's *Last Supper*
- bread and grape juice
- candle, bells
- Bible
- red Easter eggs
- Easter lily and basket

Time allotments suggested and meant to be adapted for **75 minute class**.

1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
 - ▶ What’s the more important celebration for you, Christmas or Easter?
 - ▶ What traditions/celebrations does your family have (if any) for Easter?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. Silly Fun: “If you” (5 minutes max)

Each youth writes an “If you...” question on a card, then places it face down in a center pile. Be creative! (For example, “If you could bring someone back to life, who would it be? If you could win any famous prize, what prize would you want to win? If you could ask God/Cosmos one question to be answered, what would you ask?”) Each person takes a turn picking up a card, reading it aloud, and giving their response. The card is returned to the bottom of the pile before the next person takes a card.

3. **Chalice Lighting:** Light the chalice, saying these words together: *“We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”*

Teacher reads: (from teacher and Franciscan monk, Richard Rohr.)

“The cross solved our problem by first revealing our real problem, our universal pattern of scapegoating and sacrificing others... The cross is the standing statement of what we do to one another and to ourselves. The resurrection is the standing statement of what God does to us in return.”

4. **Joys and Sorrows** (10 minutes): Listening is a precious gift that we offer one another at church. Using the balance scale and the blue (sorrows) and yellow (joys) stones, invite youth to share a joy and/or a sorrow from the past week, as a way of *meeting* one another with our lives and *sharing* in community. You will want to set limits (e.g. two stones max per person) so that no one monopolizes sharing time.

Each Sunday, a copy of the congregation’s Embracing Meditation will be made available to your class, so that stones can be put in for those whose names are being spoken in the Sanctuary.

5. **Preparation for Holy Week observances** (60 minutes)

Have youth divide into five teams, with each team choosing one of the five observances of Holy Week as their focus. (If needed, teachers can also be teams.)

- Each team chooses their observance, and will present that material to the class. (See attachments).
- Give each team 10 minutes to look over their material, divide up parts, and practice how they will present it to the larger class. (Creativity encouraged! Present material as a documentary on the History Channel, curators of the history museum, a panel of experts offering their comments, etc.)
- Each team should take about 3-4minutes to deliver their content.
- When ready, teacher prompts each group to present in chronological order of observances during Holy Week. (***Note:** Each presentation is followed by 5 minutes of class discussion.)

Discussion: After each presentation, teachers facilitate discussion, including questions below: (5 minutes each):

#1 Palm Sunday – discussion questions:

- The colors red and purple are used to signify, respectively (1) passion/suffering and (2) the view of Jesus as of the royal house of King David. What other examples of the use of color can you think of, where color is strongly associated with a particular holy day or event?

- Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday, alternatively, convey contrasting understandings of what Jesus' entry into Jerusalem meant: the triumphant arrival of a liberating King or the crucifixion/death of a suffering prophet. What other holidays carry similar ambivalent or competing understandings? (*Hint: Thanksgiving or Columbus Day from differing viewpoints.*)
- The cross is a symbol that also carries multiple and seemingly ambivalent understandings: symbol of death and life, of sin and redemption, of sorrow and joy. What does the cross mean for you?

#2 Maundy Thursday – discussion questions:

- Foot-washing was a challenging example of service, humility, and care for others. What acts of service, compassion, or justice have you experienced that challenged you out of your comfort zone and stretched your understanding of service and care for others?
- Some of you may have participated in Communion or Eucharist in the past. Or if not, you may have eaten food blessed/cooked/prepared by someone special... or used a recipe that was your grandmother's special recipe. What would it mean to eat such food "in remembrance of" that person?
- Jesus' command ("mandate" or *maundatus*) that his disciples love one another is spoken during a very ordinary, concrete context of foot-washing and sharing food, and not during a classroom lecture or sermon. Why do you think? What might it say about love?

#3 Good Friday– discussion questions:

- Crucifixion was a political act, a form of torture used to intimidate and deter enemies of the state. What do you know of Jesus' ministry that made him an enemy of the Roman Empire? (*Hint: consider Jesus' proclaiming a different reign called the Kingdom of God... forgiveness of debts that required no money or selling of indulgences... inclusion of poor/marginalized/widows/orphans and questioning poverty, hunger, injustice.*)
- The church/mosque/temple/sangha has historically existed alongside the state, at times supporting and at other times challenging the vision and power of the state. What are examples from history when they have been in conflict? (*Consider: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Henry David Thoreau, Aung San Suu Kyi, etc.*)

#4 Holy Saturday – discussion questions:

- How many of you were baptized, or dedicated, or had some blessing ceremony when you were younger?
- Why do you think the early church held baptisms on this day? (*Hint: consider baptism as a symbol of new birth – of coming out from the waters anew – alongside the meaning of the crucifixion and resurrection.*)
- A vigil is a period of devotional watching/praying and keeping awake, during the time usually spent asleep. Vigils are commonly observed surrounding events of death, loss, tragedy, protest, or other moments of suffering. Why do you think this is so? (*Hint: think about keeping awake, being “vigilant”?*)

#5 Easter Sunday – discussion questions:

- How do you and your family celebrate Easter, if at all?
- The Biblical account does not make explicitly clear what happened on resurrection morning. All that we have is an empty tomb and accounts from followers who bear witnesses to the risen Christ. What do you believe: a bodily resurrection from death, or a spiritual resurrection of Jesus in the faith of his followers?
- As we have seen with other holy days, what do you think about Easter as a blending of Jesus’ resurrection with the goddess Eostre with the Spring Equinox?

6. **Say goodbye until next time:** Extinguish the chalice, saying together:

“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”

7. **Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- return blue/yellow stones to containers
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets