

Greetings! Happy Easter!

Easter is the key experience of the Christian faith. Yet we often find it difficult to talk with children about Easter. What makes it hard to talk with our children about Easter is that we cannot come to Easter without death. Often our own discomfort and uncertainty with issues of mortality, Jesus' horrific death on the cross and the cruelties it reveals about humanity may cause us to avoid conversations with our children about the events of Holy Week and subsequently keep them from the real joy of Easter.

Here are some tips for helping your family understand parts of the journey that lead us to Easter!

Share the story: Explore with elementary aged children the biblical account of the events of *Holy Week*. You do not have to read each detail and verse but share a little about the various events to give context for Easter morning.

(Jesus into Jerusalem John 12: 12- 15; Jesus' Washes the disciples feet 13: 1-20; Last Supper Matthew 26: 17- 25; Lord's Supper Matthew 26: 26-30; Jesus Prays Matthew 26: 36-46; Arrest of Jesus Matthew 26: 47- 50; Pilate sentences Jesus Matthew 27: 24 – 26; the Crucifixion Mark 15: 25 -26, 33 – 39; the burial Mark 15: 46-47; the tomb is empty Mark 16: 1-8) Our church uses

Be personal: Begin by telling your kids what Easter means to you personally. You can read book after book and scripture after scripture to them, but if they don't see Easter affecting you in a personal way - well it's just another bedtime story. Share memories of past Easters. Share some from your childhood as well as remember together past Easters in the family.

Honesty: Talk to your kids honestly. Allow them to ask questions about the Easter story and allow yourself to not know everything. Your children will ask you tough questions like "Why did Jesus have to die?" and "Why didn't God help him?" Answer as best as you can – chances are you ask yourself these same questions sometimes! Admit that you don't understand it all yourself, but explain as best you can and encourage your children to share what they think. Never hesitate to say, "I am not sure, I wonder about that too."

Prepare: Give some thought to questions your child has asked or you think they might wonder about regarding the journey to Easter. Spend some time answering the questions in your mind to have some ideas about what you want your children to understand about the events leading to Easter and Easter.

Questions Children may ask:

Why was Jesus killed?

Jesus taught people about God's love, and he cared for people whom others ignored or ridiculed. It's really hard to understand how a man we see as good could then be mocked, tortured, and put to death.

The scripture tells us that there were people who did not like Jesus, his teachings, or his actions. Talk together about why people might not like what Jesus had to say about loving your enemy, trusting God's love for all, and God's gracious forgiveness. We can help children understand that it was not God who put Jesus to death but other people who were scared and upset by what Jesus taught.

How could Jesus be alive again?

Talking about the resurrection can be as frightening to adults as talking about death. How in the world do we explain to our children that Jesus was dead and in the grave for three days, then lived? Can you explain the resurrection?

Probably not. It is a mystery and a wonder -- and a statement of faith. Saying "I believe" does not always mean understanding fully and event or happening. The good news is Jesus is with us always.

In talking about this with children, it may be helpful to say, "I wonder about that, too." You may want to share other things that happen in the world that you do not fully understand. Invite your child then to reflect on times when they might not have factually understood an event but felt it to be real.

The secular celebration of Easter can be confusing to children and as with Christmas often the religious and secular practices get tangled. History shows that spring festivals celebrating the end of winter and the re-birth of the earth have been honored long before the Christian celebration of Easter. Many of the spring festival customs have blended into our Easter celebrations.

It is important to keep talking with children about Easter. What happens in church is important and valuable but most learning about faith happens at home.

Blessings to your family this Easter!

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