

Celebrate Easter As A Family



Giggles quickly turned into belly laughs as I crawled on all fours, the preschooler perched on my back. Older siblings emptied the coat closet and spread their jackets on the living room floor topped with palm branches cut from green construction paper. Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week and the Sunday when mom turns into a donkey.

Easter is proof that we are loved. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, abandoned his throne in heaven to live among us, paid the penalty for sin through his death on the cross, and rose again to make forgiveness and eternal life with him available to the world.

Matthew 21 through 28 is the account of the final week of Jesus' life. Knowing he would soon say, "See you later" to his beloved inner circle, Christ packed those last days with critical actions and words. Similar to observing Advent in the weeks leading to Christmas, following Christ through the days leading to his resurrection reminds us of the reason for our faith.

Beginning one week prior to Easter Sunday, our family tradition is to read and illustrate Holy Week, including Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. The process goes like this:

Starting with Matthew 21, read a chapter aloud each day, ending with Matthew 28. For each day's reading, children create a drawing illustrating what occurred in that chapter.

For example:

- Read Matthew 21
- Write "Palm Sunday" at the top of your art paper
- Draw palm branches and a donkey for the illustration
- Complete the page with a key scripture from that chapter at the bottom of the page such as, "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest,*" (Matthew 21:9)

At the end of the week, you will have eight drawings and Scriptures depicting the events marking that important week as Jesus completed his earthly ministry. In the same way we display Christmas décor, post these drawings in the house. After Easter, the drawings can be made into a book or taped together and rolled into a scroll to be displayed next year.

Additional ways we have celebrated Easter as a family are:

1. Tell the resurrection story with these 12 visual aids:
 - Cracker – the last supper (Matthew 26:17-35)
 - Silver coin – Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 coins (Matthew 26: 14-16)
 - Rope – Jesus was arrested (Matthew 26: 47-75)
 - Purple cloth – the soldiers placed a robe on Christ and mocked Him, calling Him "King of the Jews," (Matthew 27:28)
 - Thorn – soldiers placed a crown made of thorns on His head (Matthew 27:29-31)
 - Cross – Jesus was crucified on a cross (Matthew 27:32-56, Mark 15:21-32, Luke 23:26-49, John 19: 16-27)
 - Nail – heavy iron nails pierced the hands and feet of Jesus (Matthew 27:35, John 20:25, Acts 2:23)
 - Sponge – someone offered Jesus a sponge soaked in vinegar and wine (Matthew 27:48)
 - Spear – after Jesus died, a soldier pierced His side with a spear (John 19:35)
 - Gauze – Joseph of Arimethea wrapped the body of Jesus for burial (Matthew 27:57-61)
 - Rock – the tomb was sealed (Matthew 27: 62-66)
 - Empty hands – Jesus is alive! The tomb is empty! (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20)
2. Make a celebration banner that can be hung each year commemorating the fact that Jesus Christ is risen indeed.
3. Bake and serve large pretzels. Traditionally pretzels are eaten on Good Friday. The shape of the pretzels is reminiscent of arms crossed in prayer.

4. Make a Scripture cake. This treasured recipe was a favorite at church socials years ago.

3/4 cup soft Genesis 18:8
1-1/2 Jeremiah 6:20
5 Isaiah 10:14, separated
3 cups sifted all-purpose Leviticus 24:5
3/4 tsp. 2 Kings 2:20
3 tsp. Amos 4:5
1 tsp. Exodus 30:23
1/4 tsp. each 2 Chronicles 9:9
1/2 cup Judges 4:19
3/4 cup chopped, blanched Genesis 43:11

Turn into greased 10-inch tube pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 70 minutes or until cake is golden brown and cake tester inserted comes out clean. Cool before drizzling with burnt sugar syrup.

Burnt Sugar Syrup
1-1/2 cups Jeremiah 6:20
1/2 cup Genesis 24:25
1/4 cup Genesis 18:8

Melt Jeremiah 6:20 in heavy skillet over low heat. Continue cooking until syrup is deep amber. Add Genesis 24 and cook until syrup is smooth. Remove from heat, add Genesis 18 and stir until melted. Cool. Drizzle over Scripture Cake.

5. Sing together several Easter themed songs.
6. A reminder of Christ's gift, the crucifix is woven into art and architecture. Look for the use of the crucifix in your area.
7. The crown of Holy Week is Easter Sunday. In and out of church, Easter baskets and egg hunts celebrate the season. Our family invited our widowed neighbor to dye and hunt for eggs the Saturday prior to Easter. When the children were particularly young, dye was messy and prohibitive, so we bypassed the dye in favor of coloring hardboiled eggs with crayons and markers.
 - Easter baskets can be a dollar store sand bucket filled with flip flops, sand toys, coloring book, markers, garden seeds, and books that encourage relationship with Jesus.
 - If Easter candy is not an option, consider healthier diet-friendly items such as nuts, granola bars, and dried fruit.
 - Local churches, youth organizations, and community centers host free egg hunts. Greet those you know and meet new friends.

As I taught the kindergarten Sunday school class about Palm Sunday, a wide-eyed five-year-old asked, “Were you there?”

“Let’s get an idea what it was like to be there,” I responded. We cut palm branches from green construction paper, spread sweaters on the carpet, and the children took turns pretending to be the young colt who carried the Gospel in human form past onlookers who called, *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*”

For additional ideas for family devotions and celebrations, see [*The Ten Best Decisions A Single Mom Can Make*](#) by Pamela Farrel and PeggySue Wells and drop by [Single Mom Circle.com](#).

PeggySue Wells is the bestselling author of 29 books including [*Chasing Sunrise*](#), [*Homeless for the Holidays*](#), and [*The Ten Best Decisions A Single Mom Can Make*](#).

