

2020 Key Stage 3 Assembly: Preparing for Easter: Holy Week and Eggs

Aim: To reflect on the events of Holy Week and Easter through symbolic objects attached to the story

Materials

- A palm (or branch from a tree)
- A towel
- Bread
- A cross
- A white shirt
- A real Easter Egg

1. The week before Easter is known as Holy Week. Holy Week and Easter describe the most powerful and important events of the New Testament. The story of the death and resurrection of Jesus involves many aspects which can be symbolized by the objects in front of me. In a minute I am going to ask if you know what each object represents and we will listen and reflect upon parts of the story of Holy Week and Easter. But first, let's look at the symbol most commonly associated with Easter – the Easter egg.
2. Hopefully, you will be surprised with some Easter eggs this Easter. Does anyone want to guess how many Easter eggs will be sold in the UK this year? 80 million!! That's more chocolate eggs than people in the country! And even more interesting there is only one Fairtrade egg that actually mentions the Easter story: this one. (Hold up the Real Easter Egg).

Mind you, it's pretty surprising that we give eggs at all. Eggs aren't mentioned at the Last Supper (though if you ever go to a Jewish Passover meal, you will see them there on the seder plate). So why do you reckon you will get an egg on Easter Sunday? There are all sorts of reasons.

- ✓ Jesus came back to life at Easter and an egg is a great symbol of new life and hope.
- ✓ Some people think the hollow egg is like the tomb or resembles the stone that was rolled across the tomb.
- ✓ And some people think it's all to do with pancakes. Does that surprise you?

Pancakes? On Pancake Tuesday, Christians used to use up all of their eggs and fatty, rich food before Lent. A good way to use up eggs was to make pancakes. And then Christians wouldn't eat eggs or red meat again until Easter. So there are eggs at both ends, on Pancake Tuesday and Easter Sunday like bookends...if you can use eggs as bookends – sounds a bit messy to me.

Of course Easter eggs are all chocolate now and people give up other things for Lent like sweets and fizzy drinks. And some people take something on like praying each day, or raising money for charity. We do these things to prepare ourselves for Easter and to be like the disciples who followed Jesus. When you think about it though, the disciples had a week full of shocks and surprises. Let's try to put ourselves into their heads that week by considering some objects we might associate with Holy Week.

3. Explain that you are going to hold up some objects that represent the events that happened in the week before the first Easter. Ask what they think, which part of the story each object may represent and how they think the disciples may have felt at that point in the story. You may want to have a reading and reflection for each object as suggested below.

Hold up the Palm: Palm Sunday/ The entry into Jerusalem

Reading: John: 12: 12-13

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He was greeted with celebrations. Crowds waved palms in the air as a sign of welcome and joy. Interestingly, even today we associate palms with celebration. For example, did you know the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival is the Palm of Gold?

Reflection: Lord, we imagine how excited Your disciples must have been as You entered Jerusalem surrounded by crowds. Every day when we remember how God raised You and showed the true power of His love to overcome death, fill us with joy because You are our friend who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hold up the towel: The washing of the feet

Reading: John 13:12-15

Jesus knelt and washed His friends' feet as an example of how they were to love one another. We call this day Maundy Thursday. It is called Maundy Thursday because on this day Jesus gave His disciples a new command to love one another as he had loved them. The word Maundy comes from the word 'mandatum' which is Latin for command. We get our word mandate from the same root.

Reflection: Lord, as You knelt before them and washed their feet, Your disciples must have been shocked. You were teaching them to serve each other and to love each other as You loved them. Help us to serve those around us, especially those who are suffering and needing help. May we show Your love in our actions and words towards all those we meet as we act in Your name.

Hold up the bread: the Last Supper

At the last supper, Jesus shared his Passover meal with His friends. He told them to remember Him whenever they shared bread and wine. Sharing bread and wine is central to Christian worship in many Christian traditions.

Reading: Matthew 26:26

Reflection: At Your last supper, You predicted that You would be betrayed and die. Your disciples were horrified to hear this but You gave them a way to remember You when they ate together. When we come together, help us to feel Your presence with us and to remember that at the end of all Your suffering was the joy of the Resurrection which is the joy promised to all who follow you.

Hold up the cross: Jesus' death

Death on the cross was one of the most humiliating and painful of deaths in the Roman Empire. It was the death for a common criminal and the Romans used to mock early Christians for worshipping Jesus who had died such a death. Jesus though transformed this event into the most astonishing example of God's love and His own forgiveness even of those who had put Him there.

Reading: John 19:25-30

Reflection: When You died, Your family and friends must have felt great sorrow. Even on the cross, You thought of them. Before You died, You made sure that Your mother would be cared for. Help us to follow Your example and remember those who have lost loved ones. We remember in silence all those who have lost family and friends. May they find comfort in

the love of all those around them

Hold up the white shirt/vestment: The angel at the tomb

On that first Easter day, the women had gone to anoint the body of Jesus. What they found was an empty tomb and angels in clothes that gleamed like lightning with a message of great joy. Their gleaming clothes could represent the awesome and overwhelming shock of the fact that Jesus had risen.

Reading: Luke 24:1-6

Reflection: Lord, seeing the angels at the tomb, the women were in shock. But they believed the message that You had risen and they rushed off to tell the disciples. Help us share the shock and excitement of that first Easter so that we may joyfully feel Your living presence with us each day of our lives.

Finally hold up the Real Easter Egg and ask who can remember why we share eggs at Easter. Explain that they are indeed a symbol of new life. Explain that when we open the egg it is hollow like the empty tomb and that sharing our eggs and happiness on Easter Sunday reminds us that Lent is over and that Jesus has promised to be with us forever.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we give thanks for your Resurrection. We remember that You have shown how loving others is what God wants from us and that the love of God is stronger even than death. Help us serve You and each other with love and joy. Amen

