



Seeds of Faith

Supporting families

March/April 2016

Family Life



As we approach Holy Week and Easter we are confronted with the question "What does it mean for us to follow Jesus?" The disciples

faced the same questions and found them terrifying. Many of them ran away and even after the resurrection it took time and the gift of the Holy Spirit before they were prepared to go out and be recognised as followers of Jesus Christ. Even today it is not easy to stand up as people of faith. Every Sunday as we leave Mass we are sent out to live our faith in our homes, our schools, our places of work and our wider community.

As parents, what do we expect of our children when we send them out into the world? It might be just sending them out to play with their pals or it might be waving goodbye to an adult child who is emigrating. Whatever the reason we generally want our children to go out into the world with the values they have been brought up with. We see them as being ambassadors for our family.

In the same way when we are sent out from our celebration of Mass we are expected to go out carrying with us the values we have received there. We have been nurtured with the Word of God and strengthened by the Eucharist. We are now asked to go out into the world and be ambassadors for the gospel.

Many children around the diocese will be confirmed over the coming weeks. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to them so that they can go out into the world as people of faith. Talk to any child preparing for confirmation and you will probably find that they have a clear sense of how they will need all the various gifts of the Spirit to help them to be strong and faithful Christians.

The Chrism Mass will take place in the Cathedral of the diocese on Holy Thursday morning. At this Mass the oil of chrism will be blessed and this oil will be used in baptisms and confirmations throughout the diocese in the coming year. The oil of chrism invites us to recall that we were chosen in baptism to share the work of Jesus: offering our lives with his (we share his priestly role), witnessing how God's Word shapes our lives (we share his call as prophet) and working to make God's reign a reality in our place and time (his role as king). All this is included in the dismissal as Mass ends: "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."

Perhaps this Easter we could pray for the courage to live confidently as people of faith, prepared to say, "Yes this matters to me."

Praying as a family

During Lent we are invited to keep Jesus company as he travels towards Jerusalem and the cross. A good way to do this is to read a little bit of the gospel every day during Lent. You could read the gospel which is used in mass each day during Lent or, for something simpler you could start reading from chapter 19 to chapter 23 of Luke's gospel. Just take a little bit each day, think about what is happening, what emotions are around, what feels important in the story. Then from Easter Sunday you could start reading a little bit of chapter 24 of Luke each day.



- Use your imagination to get into the story.
- How would you feel if you were right there in the middle of everything that is happening?
- What do you think the different people in the story are saying to each other?
- What would you like to say to Jesus?
- Can you see any connections between what is happening in this story and things that have happened in your own life?

Gospels for March – April

The gospels of these next three Sundays are about getting another chance. Children can relate to this. When they get it wrong at school or at home, and even in their games with each other, they plead for the chance to show they will do better next time. We can open the conversation by sharing some of our memories of times we were glad to be given another chance. In these Gospels Jesus shows that God understands how we may need another chance to show that we really have learned a lesson, and that we can do better next time around.



The following three Sundays bring us to the stories of Holy Week and Easter. A good starting point might be how much we remember already, and then what is new, or a bit different, as we hear the story again.

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| 6 March | Luke 15:1-3,11-32 | A father and his two sons |
| 13 March | John 8:1-11 | Jesus saves a frightened woman |
| 20 March | Luke 19:28-40 | The Palm Sunday story |
| 25 March | John 18:1-19;42 | Good Friday |
| 26 March | Luke 24: 1-12 | The women at the tomb (Vigil) |
| 27 March | John 20:1-9 | The disciples find the tomb is empty (Easter Sunday morning) |
| 3 April | John 20:19-31 | Jesus helps Thomas to believe |



Sacred Space

During Lent and Holy Week we are reminded of Jesus' suffering on the cross. We are also reminded of how many other people suffer in our world today. In our Sacred Space we could have reminders of people who suffer—a cross reminds us of Jesus and we could put a Trócaire box to remind us of people who suffer because of poverty. We might have the names of people we know who are sick at the moment. We might have cuttings from newspapers about places in the world where there is war and violence. In our prayers through Lent and into Holy Week and Easter we could remember all these people who suffer and think about what we can do to make the world a better, fairer and happier place—how can we help to make the resurrection joy real in their lives?



Lord Jesus,
You gave your Church the mission
of proclaiming the Good News
to the whole world.
You sent the Holy Spirit to strengthen those
who would be your witnesses.
May that same Holy Spirit
strengthen our faith
and inspire us with words and deeds
so that through us,
the people of our time
will hear of You,
will believe in You,
and will come to know You.
Who live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, for ever and ever.
Amen



“Spring is sprung—the grass is riz
I wonder where them birdies is?!”

As we move through Lent and in to
the season of Easter why not spend
some time together as a family out-



doors. Spring is about new life. We catch glimpses of
resurrection in the plants and trees which begin to grow
again. What signs of spring can you see? You could keep
notes on a calendar of all the “firsts” of Spring

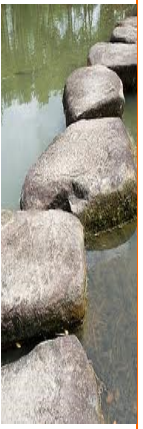
- The first buds on trees and hedges
- The first of particular flowers and bulbs
- The first sightings of particular birds
- The first frogspawn

And what about a bit of moonwatching! Track
the phases of the moon on its way towards
the Easter full moon on Wednesday 23rd
March. On your calendar draw the moon as
you see it each night and watch it grow!



Stepping Stones on the Journey of Faith

The Dismissal is the moment when many parents breathe a
sigh of relief! For their children, the Mass is ended and they
can go home to play. But for older members of the
community, the Mass marks a new beginning.



After a time of thanksgiving for all that we have received, we
stand and, in the Prayer after Communion, pray that we shall
take what we have received into the world. A blessing is
called down upon us and we are told to “Go”. It may be- “Go
forth, the Mass is ended.” “Go and announce the Gospel of
the Lord” “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life” or
“Go in peace” Whichever wording is chosen, the emphasis throughout is
on the word “Go”.

This is not lack of hospitality on the part of the Church! The Church is
reminding us that we are not called to be what some refer to as a “holy
huddle” safely tucked behind the closed doors of our church. We are
dismissed to carry on our mission - to be missionaries - to take the Christ
we have received in Word and Communion out with us into the world. We
may see this as our “Mission Impossible” - or at the very least our
“Mission Very Difficult” - but it is what being a Christian - a Catholic is
about. We have been entrusted with the Good News and are called to be
witnesses to that in our daily lives.

In practical terms, our Dismissal may include references to forthcoming
activities in the life of our community. These are important because, in
their own way, they too help to develop the life of the worshipping
community. They may be purely for fun - or they may be extending the
pastoral care needed by people in the community - but they all bear
witness to the fact that we have gathered and celebrated our one-ness in
the Body of Christ.

Many people will never see our worship - they will not hear the Word of
God - they will not share in our Eucharist. Even if they could see and hear
it, many would not understand it - and some would even be afraid to try.

But people see and hear us. We may not use the words of Scripture - but
our words of love, our comments on world-events as seen through
Catholic eyes - will be heard. People will see from our actions - even our
way of being - reflections of the worship we have shared - in gentleness -
in strength - in reverence for our world and its peoples - in the love we
bear one for another.

Perhaps St Patrick should have the last words as we close our reflection
on taking Christ into all aspects of our lives - and into the lives of others...

Christ be in all hearts thinking about me,

Christ be in all tongues telling of me.

Christ be the vision in eyes that see me,

in ears that hear me, Christ ever be...