



# Catechist Resources

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## Session 6

Advent Blessing and Prayer: First Sunday of Advent..... A2

## Session 7

Advent Blessing and Prayer: Second Sunday of Advent..... A3

## Session 8

Advent Blessing and Prayer: Third Sunday of Advent ..... A4

## Session 9

Advent Blessing and Prayer: Fourth Sunday of Advent..... A5

## Session 19

Palm Branches Craft..... A6

What Is the Triduum? ..... A8

## Advent Blessing and Prayer: First Sunday of Advent

**Leader:** “A voice proclaims: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! ... Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40: 3, 5). Lord God, we gather around this wreath and wait and prepare for Your coming once again into our lives. As we light this candle, send forth Your Holy Spirit, who alone can dispel the darkness of our sin and fill us with the light of Your Son, Jesus the Christ. Bless this wreath and our lives as we wait in joyful hope for Your coming.

**All respond:** Amen.

*Light one purple candle.*

*Then pray:*

**Leader:** Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Come, Lord Jesus!

**All respond:** Come, quickly!

## Advent Blessing and Prayer: Second Sunday of Advent

**Leader:** “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone ... For a Child is born to us, a Son is given to us; upon His shoulder dominion rests. They name Him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9: 1, 6). Father, you loved us so much that you sent light into our darkness – your only Son Jesus. As we light this second candle tonight, may it be a reminder for us of Your everlasting love and Your promise that You will always be with us. Help us to wait with expectant hearts for the fullness of Your kingdom.

**All respond:** Amen.

*Light two purple candles tonight and each night of this second week of Advent.*

*Then pray:*

**Leader:** Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Come, Lord Jesus!

**All respond:** Come, quickly!

## Advent Blessing and Prayer: Third Sunday of Advent

**Leader:** “Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them...” (Luke 2: 8, 9). Lord, as the days grow shorter and the darkness envelopes the earth, this night we light three candles as a sign of hope and joy that soon Christmas will once again be upon us. We are reminded that as You surprised the shepherds with Your glorious light, Your coming always surprises us with joy.

**All respond:** Amen.

*Light two purple candles and the pink candle tonight and each night of this third week of Advent.*

*Then pray:*

**Leader:** Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Come, Lord Jesus!

**All respond:** Come, quickly!

## Advent Blessing and Prayer: Fourth Sunday of Advent

**Leader:** “And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests’” (Luke 2: 13, 14). Father, as we light this fourth candle we join with the heavenly hosts giving praise to You for the gift of Your Son Jesus. He is Emmanuel – God with us! Help us in these final days of preparation to renew once again our desire to receive Jesus as the Lord and Savior of our lives. Fill us with praise as we draw near to the celebration of His birth.

**All respond:** Amen.

*Light three purple candles and the pink candle tonight and each night of this fourth week of Advent.*

*Then pray:*

**Leader:** Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Come, Lord Jesus!

**All respond:** Come, quickly!

# Palm Branches Craft

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

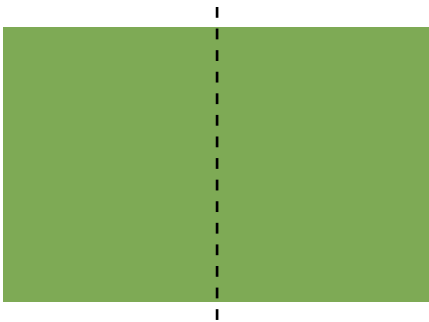
Makes 16 palms – increase quantity as needed

- 1 piece heavy green cardstock (8.5x11")
- 2 pieces green construction paper (9x12")

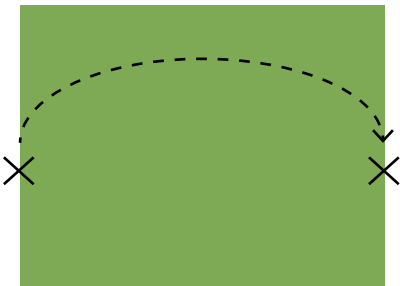
## Cutting Instructions

### STEMS

- 1 Cut cardstock in half to make two pieces measuring 8.5x5.5".



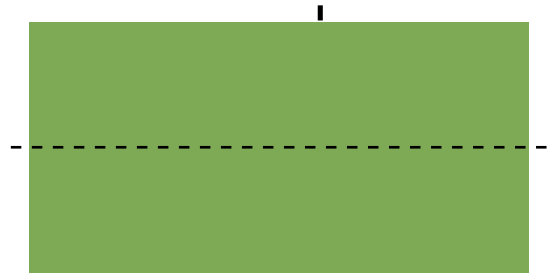
- 2 Fold each piece in half short edge to short edge. Repeat two more times – when unfolded your paper should have 8 sections that are slightly over an inch wide.



- 3 Unfold and cut along each fold line. You will end up with 16 stems.

### FRONDS

- 4 Fold each piece of construction paper in half long edge to long edge. Cut along fold to make two pieces measuring 12x4.5".



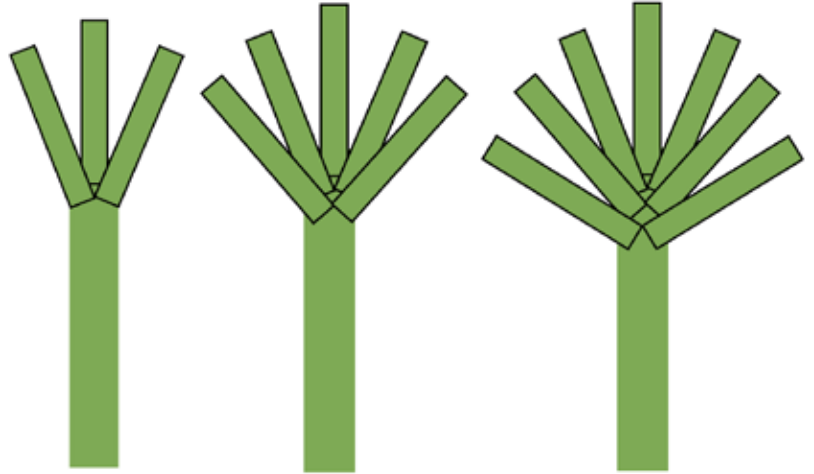
- 5 Fold each piece short edge to short edge. Repeat three more times – when unfolded your paper should have 16 sections that are a little over half an inch wide. Cut along each fold. You should end up with 32 fronds from one piece of paper, 64 fronds total.

## CONSTRUCTION

**6** Glue one frond to the top of the stem



**7** Glue the remaining six fronds to the stem as shown.



## What Is the Triduum?

*"We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you came again."*

The Paschal Triduum, taken from the Latin word meaning "three days," refers to the three days during which we celebrate the greatest mysteries of our Catholic Faith. It is the holiest season of the Church year. The Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, and ends with Evening Prayer (from the Liturgy of the Hours) on Easter Sunday, when we enter into the fifty days of Easter time. These three days are not days of Lent; the Lenten season ends with the beginning of the Paschal Triduum. Rather, these three days are set apart as a celebration of their own.

The Paschal Triduum consists of three major celebrations: the Mass of the Lord's Supper (Holy Thursday), the celebration of the Lord's Passion (Good Friday), and the Vigil of the Lord's Resurrection (Holy Saturday). We are invited during these holiest days to set this time apart in intense preparation for the celebration of the Easter Vigil, which is the climax

of the Paschal Triduum. These days should be, as far as possible, free of entertainment, and free of work. We should continue our Good Friday fast until the Easter Vigil. This should be a time in which we reflect, pray, and wait. We want to arrive hungry and eager to celebrate as we begin the Easter Vigil.

Attend as many of the services the Church celebrates during these three days as you can. If you are able to participate in each service, you will taste, see, and hear the magnificent unfolding of the story of our salvation. During these days, we remember the institution of the Holy Eucharist and of Holy Orders, the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, and His glorious Resurrection from the dead. We also are caught up in the joyful hope of the final coming of Christ at the end of time. This Paschal Triduum is the center of the prayer of the Church. Let us join with her in praying and celebrating the mystery of our salvation!

### Mass of the Lord's Supper

*"Do this in remembrance of me."*

The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper ushers in the Paschal Triduum. It begins after sundown, as did the Passover Meal celebrated by Jesus. This service is second only to the Easter Vigil in importance in the Church year. On this night, we celebrate the institution of the Eucharist, when Jesus gave His Apostles His Body and Blood in anticipation of His death on the Cross the next day. In this action, Jesus showed His friends how He would win salvation for the entire world, and how He would continue to offer the graces He won on the Cross to all people, for all generations. This celebration was the first Mass.

At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted not only the Holy Eucharist but also the Sacrament

of Holy Orders when He commanded His Apostles, "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). Jesus gave these men the power to continue to re-present this same sacrifice every time Mass is celebrated. The Apostles thus became the first priests.

During the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, we also see the worth that Jesus gave to humble service and the need to be washed with water, as we witness the Mandatum, or the washing of feet.

In the account of the Last Supper in John 13:5-15, we see how important it was for Jesus to communicate to His Apostles the need to serve one another in humility. "If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed



your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." This message was intended not only for the Apostles gathered in that room but to all who desire to follow Christ. Humble service is the hallmark of a Christian.

We see also in the washing with water great symbolism for the need of Baptism. Jesus said to Peter, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." We must be "born again" in Baptism if we want to share in Christ's salvation.

Washing with water implies cleansing, which is where the traditional name for this day, Maundy Thursday, comes from. We see this cleansing also symbolized during the liturgy in the stripping of the altar and its washing with water.

On Holy Thursday, the Church consecrates many hosts to meet the need of all present at the Mass of the Lord's Supper as well as to distribute to all those

who will attend services on Good Friday, when no Mass will be celebrated. This night, the Mass ends in silence and with the procession of the Blessed Sacrament to its place of repose. Everyone is invited to spend time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament after Mass and into the night. This reminds us of how the disciples stayed and prayed with Jesus during His agony in the garden. When adoration is over, the Blessed Sacrament is reposed in a place where it will stay until Communion is distributed on Good Friday. This night, we remember that Jesus submitted Himself entirely to His Father's plan as He prayed, "Not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). As one leaves the church, if the Blessed Sacrament is still exposed, it is proper to genuflect on both knees, with a bow, before the Blessed Sacrament.

### Activities for Holy Thursday

- In your home prayer space, read with your children the account of the Last Supper found in Luke 22:7-20 or any of the Gospel accounts of the events that happened on the first Holy Thursday. Then close with a prayer in thanksgiving for the Eucharist and the priesthood. Pray especially for your parish priest(s) and consider writing them a note or drawing them a picture, thanking them for being good servants.
- Explain to your children that the Jewish people would thoroughly clean their home according to Jewish law in order to be ready to celebrate the Passover. This ritual of washing, or cleansing, brought forth the idea of spring cleaning that we have today. Have everyone work together to "spring clean" the house or their rooms in anticipation of Easter.
- Read with your children the account of Jesus' agony in the garden from Luke 22:39-46. If possible, attend a holy hour as a family during the day, or attend adoration after the Holy Thursday celebration. If not, spend some time in prayer and "watching" with Jesus. Tell your children that when we stay with Jesus, we make reparation, or make up, for the time the Apostles fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- Observe the suggested fast with young children (who are not required to fast) by giving up dessert or eating only a simple meal. Explain to your children that fasting not only connects us more closely to God but makes us yearn for the things that we have fasted from. Easter candy always tastes better when we have gone without sweets for a while!

## Good Friday

*“Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and Resurrection you have set us free.”*

The focus on Good Friday is the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is the day when the altar is bare, the door to the empty tabernacle is left open, and the Mass is not celebrated. The holy water fonts are empty. There is no need to genuflect when you enter church on this day. A slight bow before the altar is all that is proper. The Church is solemn and quiet. It is a day to meditate on the humiliation, pain, and suffering that Christ endured in order to save us. It is a day of mourning in which every Christian is left to ponder the magnificent gift of love that Jesus has given us in His Passion and Death. Of all days, this should be one of prayer, fasting, and penance.

This is the only day of the year when Mass is not celebrated, leaving us with a great sense of loss. It is the day in which the sinless Savior of the world gave His life for all. It is the day when His friends laid Him in a tomb. Somber and sad, the organ and the bells in the church are not heard. They are silent now until the great Alleluia of the Easter Vigil. Christ has died, and we meditate on this mystery and seek to enter into its truth.

One of the ways we meditate on the Passion of Christ is by praying the Way, or Stations of the Cross. In it, we remember the betrayal and the Passion of Jesus as He made His way to Calvary. We also realize that it was our sins that nailed Him to the Cross. We pray to die to sin in our lives so that we may be united with Christ in His victory over sin.

The liturgy of Good Friday is the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion. It is not Mass, because the Consecration does not take place, but the format of

this liturgy does parallel that of Mass. It is divided into four sections:

- Liturgy of the Word – reading of the Passion
- Intercessory prayers for the Church and the world
- Veneration of the Cross of Jesus Christ
- Communion of the consecrated hosts

The Veneration of the Cross takes place after the Liturgy of the Word and the intercessions. A cross is placed in the front of the church, the priest or deacon chants, “This is the wood of the cross, on which hung the Savior of the world,” and the congregation answers, “Come let us worship.” Then everyone comes forward in a line to venerate (show great respect and honor to) the cross in turn. This can be done by genuflecting or kneeling before the cross and showing some form of respect and love, such as a touch or a kiss. The Cross of Jesus cannot be separated from His sacrifice, and thus in venerating the cross we are adoring the Savior.

After the Veneration of the Cross comes Communion. The priest brings out the ciborium (a large chalice used to store consecrated hosts) from the place of repose and places it on the altar while all stand in silence. The Our Father is prayed, and Communion is distributed. Final prayers are said, and all leave the church in silence, continuing to ponder the great mystery of Christ’s Death. The altar is then stripped. The Church remains now in silent prayer until the Easter Vigil.

## Activities for Good Friday

- Hold your own Veneration of the Cross at home. Light a candle in your home prayer space and bring out a cross or a crucifix. Have your family process to the cross and genuflect and kiss it. In a prayerful way, sign one another with the cross as a reminder of the price Jesus paid for your salvation. Then place the cross in a place where it will be seen by all, and leave it there until Holy Saturday evening.
- Together with your children, keep holy the three hours when Christ hung on the Cross, traditionally thought of as from noon until three o'clock. If your children are old enough, observe silence and spend the time in prayer and devotional reading. Turn off phones. Turn off the TV, the computer, and so forth. Have your younger children place a favorite toy that they will give up playing with for the day (or for the three hours) next to the cross in your prayer space or in another prominent place.
- Have every person in your family choose an unpleasant job or chore to do – a chore postponed or an activity usually avoided. Remind your children to unite the suffering or unpleasantness they feel with the suffering of Jesus on the Cross. When we unite our suffering with Jesus', we actually console Him. We are like Simon of Cyrene – we help Jesus carry His Cross!

## Holy Saturday

*"Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels! Exult, all creation around God's throne! Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!"*

Holy Saturday is the day of the Lord's rest, during which He lay in His tomb. For this reason, no Mass is said today until the evening Vigil. We wait quietly and prayerfully in the tension between darkness and light, between death and life. We ponder the mystery of salvation that is soon to be completed in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

At last, the long-awaited hour comes, and we are immersed in the mother of all holy vigils, the Great Service of Light, the Paschal Vigil. This celebration is the greatest in the entire Church year. This night we celebrate Christ's passage from death to life. The Easter Vigil begins in darkness to symbolize His Death. New fire is kindled and the Easter candle, which will be lit for all Baptisms throughout the year, is lit from this fire. The lit Paschal candle, symbolizing the Light of Christ, is brought by procession into the church, which

is in darkness. All present have individual candles that are lit from the Paschal candle until the church is filled with light. As the candle moves forward toward the altar the priest or deacon sings three times "Christ our light," to which we all respond, "Thanks be to God." Then all of the lights in the church are turned on, and all present are bathed in light – the Light of Christ. This is followed by the Easter proclamation, known as the *Exsultet*, which ends part one of the Vigil, the Service of Light.

Part two of the Paschal Vigil is the Liturgy of the Word, in which two to seven readings from the Old Testament are read. These specially chosen passages tell the story of salvation history and how God prepared a people to accept the coming Savior, Jesus Christ. We are reminded of the great saving deeds that God

performed for His people, from the creation of the world, to the Exodus from Egypt, and to the words of God spoken through the prophets. After each reading, we pause and respond to the Word of God in a psalm response. After the last reading, the altar candles are lit, and the Gloria is sung for the first time since the beginning of Lent. The bells are rung, and the organ is played. This is a time of great jubilation and praise to our God! A reading from Romans reminds us that we were baptized into Christ's Death so that we might rise to new life in Him. The Gospel, taken from Luke, recounts the women finding Christ's tomb empty on Easter morning. The angel says to them, "Why do you search for the Living One among the dead? He is not here; he has been raised up."

The third part of the Paschal Vigil is the celebration of Baptism and Confirmation, the renewal of baptismal promises, and the reception of those seeking full communion with the Church. It begins by asking all to pray for the candidates for Baptism (the elect), and it includes a sung Litany of the Saints in which the saints'

intercession is invoked. The water that will be used for the Baptisms is blessed. This water is a sign of the cleansing that takes place in the souls of those who will be baptized and is a reminder to all of their own baptismal cleansing. The elect are asked to renounce sin and profess their faith. They are then baptized and anointed with oil if they will not be confirmed. They are clothed with a baptismal garment and presented with a lit candle to symbolize the light of Christ that has come to them. Everyone, including the candidates for full reception into the Church, then renews their baptismal promises while holding a lit candle. This is followed by a profession of faith for all who will be received into the Church, and then all the candidates who are in need of the Sacrament of Confirmation are confirmed.

The Mass continues with the intercessions. The Church is now ablaze not only with Easter light, but with Easter joy. The music is rich and full; the responses should be loud and heartfelt, for Christ our Savior has passed over from death to life. "He is not here. He has been raised up."

### Activities for Holy Saturday

- Have your children color or decorate Easter eggs. Eggs have long been a symbol for the Resurrection. Like the chick that bursts forth from the egg, so too did Christ burst forth from the tomb of death to new life. Death had no hold on Him. Consider decorating your eggs with Christian symbols, such as a cross, or words, such as Alleluia.
- Read together with your children some of the great Scripture stories that will be read at the Vigil, or have your children tell you some of the ones that they know. Have your children act out the readings: assign parts and have your children read them dramatically, or act as you read.
- Have a Vigil celebration with your children at home. It is possible to buy Easter candles that are made for family use and can be reused year after year. These candles can be lit on baptismal days for your family and on Easter itself, as well as during the Easter season. Light the Easter candle as a symbol of darkness turned into light with the light of Christ.

*Note: However you choose to celebrate this great event, make rich use of the symbols of light and water. Recall Baptism and birth into new life. Rejoice in song and with Alleluias. Christ our Savior is risen indeed!*