



Catechist Resources

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Signs Charades Cards

Cut out the cards to use in the Signs Charades game.

Stop	Peace
Strength	Nervousness
Christian	Joy

All Saints Day Tea Party



The Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of angels and of the saints is in the center. Mary is the mother of God, who was free from sin from the moment of her conception, carried Jesus and gave birth to Him, raised Him, stayed with Him during His Passion, and at the end of her earthly life was assumed into heaven where she reigns as queen.



St. Peter is to Mary's right, holding keys. Peter was a fisherman, and one of the Twelve Apostles. The keys symbolize that Jesus gave St. Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and made him the first pope. Though Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus forgave Peter and called him to feed and care for His flock. Peter answered this call for many years before being put to death by crucifixion by the Roman emperor Nero.



St. Paul is to Mary's left, holding a sword. After first persecuting Christians, Jesus came to Paul in a vision, and Paul became the Church's greatest missionary. Paul wrote many letters that became part of the Bible, and the sword symbolizes how Paul was beheaded by the Roman Emperor Nero, for the crime of telling people about Jesus and calling them to follow Him.



St. Josephine Bakhita is standing just to Mary's right. Born in Sudan, St. Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders and spent many years being abused by different owners. After spending time in a convent when her mistress was traveling, she discerned God was calling her to religious life. When slavery was outlawed in Sudan, she was free and chose to follow God's call to join the Canossian Sisters. She remained with them for 42 years until she died.



St. Marcus Chong Ui-Bae, standing just to Mary's left, was a scholar of the Chinese language from Korea. He was 46 years old when he witnessed three men give their lives for Christ. He could not understand how they went to their deaths with such peace and joy, and so he began reading about Christianity. Once he did, he could not help but become a Christian himself. At age 72 he too became a martyr when he refused to deny his faith to the Korean authorities.



St. Catherine of Siena is in the middle to Mary's right. Born in 1347 in Siena, Italy, Catherine had 23 older siblings and 1 younger sister! From a very early age she had mystical conversations with Jesus and continued her powerful relationship with Him throughout her life. She desired to serve the poor and sick and to worship God in the Eucharist, and God often called her to counsel Popes and Kings. God used her – a simple woman from a poor family – to humble the wise and the powerful.



St. Patrick is holding a shamrock. The shamrock is a sign of how St. Patrick taught the Irish people about the Blessed Trinity. Patrick lived a long time ago, born around AD 386. When he was 16, pirates spotted him on the British coast and kidnapped him. They took him to Ireland and sold him as a slave, but he later escaped. God performed many miracles through Patrick to show the Irish people that He was the one, true God



St. Pancras is standing at the end of the row to Mary's right. He looks young, as legend tells us that St. Pancras was only 14 when he converted to Christianity along with his uncle, and he was martyred during the Roman persecutions. Though little is known about St. Pancras, he inspires us as a sign of the great faith and courage in Christ that young people are capable of.



St. Gianna Molla is standing all the way to Mary's left. She was a pediatrician (a doctor who cares for children.) Gianna and her husband had three children. When she was pregnant with her fourth child, she became very sick. The doctors advised her to end her baby's life, but Gianna opted for a treatment that would allow her baby to live. As a mother and a physician, she knew the baby could be saved, and she was determined to do it. Her baby was born healthy, but Gianna died a week later from complications from the birth.



St. Joan of Arc is kneeling on Mary's right, dressed in armor and holding a sword. These are a sign of how St. Joan led the French army in their battle against the British. She is famous for saying, "I am not afraid. For this I was born." Joan led the French army to victory on St. Michael's feast day. She soon stood with tears in her eyes in the cathedral of Reims as Charles VII was anointed King of France. But Joan was captured by the French allies of the British, and the King's enemies had her burned at the stake.



St. Agnes is kneeling, holding a lamb. Born in AD 291 to a wealthy family, Agnes turned down many suitors who wanted to marry her. She wanted to give herself only to Jesus. Eventually, one of the men she had turned down reported her as a Christian. She refused to deny Jesus even under torture, and eventually she was killed at age 12 or 13. She is often seen holding a lamb, a symbol of her innocence. Her name, Agnes, comes from the Latin word for "lamb."

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!



Christmas Play Roles and Props

Special Note: The activity for Session 9 in Grades 3-5 is a Christmas Pageant, which you may choose to have your students participate in. The script including stage direction is in 3rd - 5th grade students' workbooks.

About the Play

This play uses lines from the Gospel of Luke, and the narrator is St. Luke himself. This pageant can be expanded to include children from multiple grades. The non-speaking roles are better suited to the younger children, who should also be part of the choir.

The lyrics for the Christmas carols sung through the pageant can be found at [SophiaOnline.org/ChristmasPlay](https://www.sophiaonline.org/ChristmasPlay). The audience of parents, catechists, and guests can be encouraged to sing. In the final song, the kings can either have a solo verse of the song, or sing the line in bold.

Roles and Props

Speaking Roles and Props

- St. Luke: a large book (with script pasted in) and pen, (Grade 5)
- Angel Gabriel: a baby doll to use for Baby Jesus (Grade 4 or 5)
- Mary (Grade 3 or 4)
- Main Shepherd: a staff (Grade 4)
- King 1: A box with gold visible inside (Grade 5)
- King 2: A jar or, if you can use it, a boat of incense from the Church (Grade 5)
- King 3: An ornate jar or vase with a stopper (Grade 5)

Non-Speaking Roles and Props

- Joseph: A lantern or staff (Grade 3 or 4)
- Innkeeper: a manger, a large square bucket with straw, or blankets (Grade 3)
- Villagers (who could double as shepherds) (Grades 2-5)
- Shepherds: staffs (Grades 2-5)
- Sheep (Grades K-2)
- The Star (an angel who carries a big cardboard star on a pole) (Grade 2-5)

Choir

- Angels: white robes and halos (K-5)

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 also 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!