

Children and Holy Week

You're the best judge of what your children are really asking and what level of engagement they need with difficult topics, but here are some guidelines:

Don't be afraid of questions you can't answer. This is faith formation, not math homework! Your child(ren) will be most impressed by your willingness to tackle the tough questions. A response of, "I'm still working on that myself, but I know it's important" or "That's a question we will have to pray about together" is solid, faithful parenting.

Even if children know the Easter story, they might not always remember that it follows Holy Week. Always say "but that's not the end of the story," or "God had a wonderful surprise waiting." You might whisper an "Alleluia" together, as conspirators who know a secret whose time hasn't come yet.

Children know that there is evil and death in the world. Naming it with them (vs. avoiding it) sets you up as their go-to counsellor. The Easter story is your chance to say that good (and God) is always stronger than evil.

Jesus' death is necessary for God to raise him from the dead. Our story makes no sense without it!

If you are grieving a death in your own family, try to use Holy Week as an opportunity to "check in" with family members. You may identify more strongly with Jesus' friends and family this year.

Your children know Jesus as a kind, loving healer. They may wonder why the people hated him enough to put him to death. This question is profound. You might say that Jesus called people to share, to forgive each other, and to take care of each other. This is hard. Because people did not want to do these hard things, they wanted Jesus to stop saying them, or go away. He wouldn't stop saying them, so they got rid of him (so they thought). Older children might play with the idea that they hated Jesus because they knew he was right, but they didn't want to do what he asked.

If your children are curious about how he actually died, you may answer their questions without dwelling on the gore. Yes, it hurt. The weight of his body suffocated him slowly. Then move on to "That's not the end of the story," above.

If your children are worried that Jesus was alone, remind them that his mother and friends were there. And, of course, God never left him alone.