

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Palm Sunday
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Matthew (26:36-75) 27:1-54 (55-66)

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

As we hear the story of Christ's passion today, how do we hear it anew? Where is this story hitting us differently this year? I wonder what questions you bring to the story and how it relates to your life today.

Theme: The Palm Sunday entry, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus

Ways to Begin: Today is a different sort of day. The Palm Sunday Liturgy reenacts the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the Gospel Lesson is a reading, usually read as a drama of the crucifixion. The very best way to observe this day with children is liturgical...giving them the opportunity to use all their senses in experiencing the central act of our redemption. We are dealing with powerful symbols in these stories and often words fail to tell the full meaning. Gather your class and explain that you all will be walking around and hearing the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, his death and his resurrection. Ask them to imagine that they are there.

Gretchen Pritchard in her book OFFERING THE GOSPEL TO CHILDREN describes a reenactment of the Palm Sunday/Easter story. (p. 94 ff.) If you can obtain a copy of this, read it through carefully. If you cannot find Pritchard's book, other suggestions for helping tell the story are: Children of God Storybook Bible by Desmond Tutu OR Book of Bible Stories by Tomie dePaola.

Regardless of which book you use to help you tell the story, have props for the children to interact with the story.

Suggested Supplies to help you tell the story:

- Palm branches for your class to wave
- candles to be blown out at the appropriate moment
- a basin of water and a towel for Pilate (or the children) to wash their hands in
- the sound of a hammer striking a nail...or even letting each child take turns hammering in 4 nails, moving from darkness to light as an experience of Resurrection.

Use your imagination. You need not do all that is in Pritchard's account or even in the same way. But to move about and to hear different pieces of the story with props, sounds, etc. can help each child to experience and to make the story a part of their soul. Whatever you do, make sure the children understand that it is serious business...create the atmosphere that will help them

participate as fully as possible. And with this age child, be sure to include the resurrection in whatever you do.

The Stories: Matthew 26:36-75, 27:1-54 (These are the Propers for today and do not include the resurrection. It might be a good idea to add Matthew 28:1-10 to finish the lesson.

Activity: If you find you have extra time, provide creative activities such as paint, markers, collage material, crayons, clay etc. and let the children express whatever occurs to them as a way of reflecting on the story.

Closing Prayer: Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer)

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