

Praying at Home during Holy Week

Introduction

Holy Week will not be the same this year as we spend these holiest days of the Christian year at home. The liturgies celebrated in our churches will not be the same, either: all around the world, many elements will be dropped or altered, for the safety of all involved and in acknowledgment of the absence of the congregation. The prayers in this resource guide encourage people at home—whether you live alone or with your family—to enter into Holy Week as intensely as possible under these extraordinary circumstances. The texts are primarily drawn from the liturgy, and at the end of the prayer for each day are some ideas for celebrating with kids. If you do not already have a place of prayer in your home, this would be a good time to designate a special place—a mantelpiece, a corner of the living room or dining room—where you can place a crucifix, a candle, your Bible, and other items that have special spiritual meaning for you and your family. This space could become a special focal point for your prayer during Holy Week and beyond.

Palm Sunday

This year, with the limitations on public gatherings, it will not be possible to celebrate the procession of palms or distribute blessed palms in our churches. So our home liturgy today is based on the Church's liturgy for the entrance into Jerusalem with texts from the Roman Missal. You are encouraged to use this prayer, or to adapt it as you need to for your family.

You will need:

- This guide
- Branches for each participant to carry (any kind will do)
- A Bible

Gather

If you have a garden or outdoor space, begin the prayer outside. Otherwise, begin at your front door.

Song

Sing a favorite hymn for Palm Sunday. Many songs are available on YouTube and other services, making it easy to sing along.

Make the sign of the cross as you say:

Leader	In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. <i>Amen.</i>
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Leader Since the beginning of Lent until now
 we have been preparing to celebrate Holy Week.
 We have done penance, we have shared what we have with the poor,
 we have prayed together.
 Though we cannot gather with our parish family this year,
 we can still mark the beginning of Holy Week
 and call to mind the Paschal Mystery of Christ--
 his Passion, Death, and Resurrection.
 This was why Jesus entered his own city of Jerusalem.
 So, with faith and devotion,
 let us commemorate the Lord's entry into the city for our salvation.
 Following in his footsteps,
 may we be made, by his grace, partakers of the Cross,
 so that we may have a share also in his Resurrection and his life.

Blessing Prayer

Leader Let us pray.

 Increase the faith of those who place their hope in you, O God,
 and graciously hear the prayers of those who call on you,
 that we, who today hold high these branches
 to hail Christ in his triumph,
 may bear fruit for you by good works accomplished in him.
 Through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading

Find the Gospel in your Bible, **Matthew 21:1-11**, and have a member of the family read it aloud.
You can also find the Gospel reading here: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/040520.cfm>

Leader Like the crowds who acclaimed Jesus in Jerusalem,
 let us go forth in peace.

Procession with Branches

Process into and through your home, carrying branches. Pause in each room. Sing along with a favorite hymn from Palm Sunday or a favorite setting of "Hosanna in excelsis." End your procession at your home altar.

Concluding Prayer

Leader Let us pray.

Almighty, ever-living God,
who as an example of humility for the human race to follow
caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross,
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Make the sign of the cross as you say:

Leader May the Lord bless us,
 protect us from all evil,
 and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Place one of the branches you carried at your family place of prayer.

A Family Holy Week Tradition

On Palm Sunday, we begin our "Holy Week garden." We take a square shallow tin (the lid of a tin, actually, turned upside down), fill it with sand and then create a "tomb" or cave with rocks at one corner. We stand twigs up to look like bare trees, both around the cave and in other spots in the garden. To create a path to the tomb, we place seven small stones (one for each day of the week) in the sand, starting at one corner and ending at the tomb. I take birthday cake candles and cut them in half to have short little candles, and I place one next to each stone (on some of them, I have to carefully scrape away wax at the end to reveal the wick). Then we place patches of moss around the garden. It is barren, but peaceful. Each day we light a candle as we progress toward Easter. On Good Friday, we roll a stone front of the cave. On Easter morning, I get up before anyone else and go outside to pick any flowers that are blooming and gather a few green things as well. Then I place them all over the Holy Week garden so it looks like it suddenly burst into bloom. The last touch is taking some thin strips of white sheet (or one could use toilet paper or tissue) to hang in the branches of the trees by the cave, showing that Christ is arisen and his wrappings lay empty.

--Michelle Bruno, Holy Spirit Parish, Kent