

FAMILY REFLECTION GUIDES

Families in Mission

EASTER TO PENTECOST



 **Fathers and Brothers**
MARYKNOLLTM

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Families in Mission:

Be a family of hope

Easter Sunday

1.-Introduction:

The Gospel tells us that the first Easter was not really joyful. Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the other disciple, John arrive to find an empty tomb and burial cloths strewn around, but no Jesus. They did not understand what had happened or where Jesus' body was. They did not know yet that Jesus was risen and would be with them forever. We know differently. We know that although our Easter celebration may be different; although there is still confusion and uncertainty about when we will be able to go back to school and church and meet freely with our friends and relatives, Jesus is with us. He has risen. He will walk with us. There is hope!



2.-Opening Prayer:

Dear Jesus, after 40 days of Lent, we are now at Easter. It is usually a joyful time with special foods, Chocolate eggs, Easter baskets, and much more, but this year again, we may have to celebrate differently. Still, we rejoice for you have risen and are with us. Help us to reflect that hope and joy to others. Alleluia!

3.-Sharing the Good News:



Read the Gospel
John 20:1-9

5.-Take action as a family:

- Who do you know that needs some "good news?" Plan a way that you can give it to him or her. Here are two suggestions, but you may come up with better ideas:
 - Think of a family or senior citizen who may be struggling and deliver an Easter basket of treats and necessities for them. Add a homemade card and a message of hope and joy.
- Help a senior citizen with their yard spring clean-up
- The Gospel tells us that although John reached the tomb first, he respectfully waited for Peter to arrive and go in first. Discuss as a family how you can be respectful to others this week both as a family and as an individual.

4.-Reflect Together:

- Discuss some or all of these questions as a family
- Imagine you are Mary, Peter, or John. What would you have thought and felt on seeing the empty tomb?
 - What does it mean to say that "Jesus rose from the dead?" Why is that good news?
 - Share about a time when what was at first scary, turned out to be a joyful event after all.



6.- Closing Prayer: Good and gracious God, As we begin this Easter Season we ask for the grace of patience, change, and renewal. Change our hearts so that we can bring Easter joy and hope to those we meet. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord forever. Amen

Families in Mission:

Be a Family that Grows in Faith


Second Sunday of Easter - Divine Mercy Sunday



1.-Introduction:

This Sunday we celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, a feast that invites us to reflect on the merciful love of God given to us through Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. That merciful love is seen in today's Gospel when Jesus does not criticize Thomas for doubting but instead invites him to draw in for a closer look and even touch his wounds. It leads to Thomas' faith filled declaration, "My Lord and my God." Jesus does not ask us to not have doubts or questions but to bring them to him and accept the gift of faith from him.

2.-Opening Prayer:



Dear Jesus, like Thomas we too have so many questions, doubts, and fears. Give us the courage of St. Thomas to voice those questions and seek out answers. Help us to bring those doubts to you and bless us with a listening heart of faith that believes even without all the answers. Amen.

3.-Sharing the Good News:



Read the Gospel
John 20: 19-31


5.-Take action as a family:

- Pray the "I Believe" this week as a family to understand what we believe as a faith community.
- One of the spiritual acts of mercy is "to counsel the doubtful." Think of a way that you might share your faith with someone who isn't sure whether or not they believe in God. How could you share why you believe in Jesus?
- Read how others have grown in faith by conquering their doubts and fears in Discover Your Neighbor's upcoming 2021 Go Forth Edition.

4.-Reflect Together:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family

- Share about a time when you had a doubt or a question about your faith or about God.
 - How did you deal with it?
 - Who did you go to with the question or doubt? Why did you choose him/her?
 - How did you feel after talking to that person? Did you get all the answers?
- In our own lives, how has God shown us that He is real?
- We are called to live as Jesus did. How will other people recognize Jesus in us and what we do?



6.- Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, Like St. Thomas we pray "My Lord and my God." Help us to take advantage of all the opportunities we have to strengthen our faith and the faith of others and so draw closer to you. Send us people we can turn to in times of doubt. Help us to encourage others to draw closer to you by how we speak and act. Amen.



Families in Mission:

Giving witness to Jesus

Third Sunday of Easter

1.-Introduction:

In today's Gospel, Jesus appears to his disciples again. He looks familiar in some ways. They see his hands, feet and wounds. He seems normal. He even asks for something to eat. Yet - they do not understand and are afraid. Didn't he suffer and die? Jesus calms their fears. He reminds them of what is written in the scriptures - that Christ would suffer and rise from the dead. Jesus tells them that they are his witnesses and are called to spread his love.



2.-Opening Prayer:

Dear Jesus, there is much that we too don't understand about your life, death, and resurrection. We bring our fears and our doubts to you. Calm our fears just as you did for the disciples. May we desire to know you better and although we can't see you in person like the disciples did, help us to recognize you in the joy we see around us and when we witness people help, support, and love each other.

3.-Sharing the Good News:



Read the Gospel
LK 24:35-48

5.-Take action as a family:

- Look at what Jesus did to help his apostles overcome their fears: he listens and talks with them, he eats with them, and helps them understand what is in the scriptures (bible). Who do you know in your school, neighborhood, or workplace who eats alone? Make a plan to invite him or her to eat with you and then just start by listening and asking how they are.
- When you gather as a family, share what you did, how you feel and what you learned after reaching out to the person you had lunch with.
- Be a witness. Catch somebody in your family doing good e.g. helping or being kind to someone. Write them a note to tell them what you witnessed and how proud you are of them. When the family is gathered for dinner, make it a point to tell everyone about the good thing you caught the person doing.

4.-Reflect Together:

- Discuss some or all of these questions as a family
- What are you afraid of or troubled about? Listen carefully without judging anyone's answers.
 - What might help you get over your fears? What helped you in the past to get over your fears?
 - Who is a faith-filled person you know and how do they inspire you to grow in faith?
 - What could you do as a family to give witness to Jesus?
 - Where in my life do I need greater faith and how can we grow in faith as a family?



6.- Closing Prayer:

Prayer of St. Francis:
Lord make Me an instrument of your peace this week
Where there is hatred let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy. Amen

Families in Mission:

Be a Good Shepherd to others

Fourth Sunday of Easter



1.-Introduction:

Shepherds are mentioned quite a few times in the scriptures. King David was a shepherd as a boy. The angels announced Jesus' birth to shepherds. Psalm 23 is about the Lord caring for us as a shepherd does. In today's Gospel Jesus gives us a powerful image of who he is to us - a Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep, loves them, and will even lay down his life for them. All he asks is that we get to know his voice and listen to him.

2.-Opening Prayer:



Dear Jesus, Thank you for being a Good Shepherd who loves us and watches over us. Help us to remain close to you. Teach us to learn to recognize and follow your voice always. Amen

3.-Sharing the Good News:

Read the Gospel
Jn 10:11-18



5.-Take action as a family:

- Research how to make sheep out of things you may find around the house like marshmallows, an old sock, crushed paper. Get together as a family to make a sheep to represent each family member. Gather around your sacred space and reverently place your homemade sheep in it to symbolize being close to Christ the Good Shepherd.
- Think of someone who strikes you as being close to God. Ask them how they listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd in their lives. Have them share about when the voice of God was clearest to them.
- Pick a quality you think that a good shepherd should have and work to develop it this week.
- Be a good shepherd to someone this week e.g. help a sibling with their homework, do a chore someone else usually does without being asked, at lunch sit with someone you don't usually sit with.
- Pray Psalm 23 during the week.

4.-Reflect Together:

- Discuss some or all of these questions as a family
- What is the job of a shepherd? How does he do it?
 - In what ways is Jesus a good shepherd to you and your family?
 - What qualities do you think a good shepherd should have?
 - Jesus doesn't talk out loud to us like other people do so how do we know what Jesus is saying to us? Where do you hear Jesus' voice? When is it clearest to you?
 - What can you do to better recognize Jesus' voice?

6.- Closing Prayer: Dear Jesus, Thank you for being our Shepherd and guiding us along the right path. Thank you for comforting and walking with us when we are afraid. Thank you for calling out to us when we are losing our way and leading us back to you. Help us to be your voice to others so that they too may find their way back to you. Amen



Families in Mission:

Stay connected to Jesus

Fifth Sunday of Easter



1.-Introduction:

As the weather gets warmer we notice people spending more and more time outside enjoying their gardens. But gardens don't take care of themselves. In order to enjoy their gardens, gardeners must first spend time taking care of them. In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that our lives as Christians and as his followers, also require work. We need to work at staying connected to Jesus and his words just as branches are connected to the tree. If we do this, we too will bear fruit.

2.-Opening Prayer:



Dear Jesus,
Thank you for inviting me to be a branch on your tree. Teach me to live my life so that I may grow as your disciple and produce good fruit. Help me to be an example to others about what it means to be connected to you and remain with you. Amen.

3.-Sharing the Good News:

Read the Gospel
John 15: 1-8



5.-Take action as a family:

- Take a walk around the neighborhood as a family. Make note of how people use their gardens and take care of them. When you get home talk about how you can use what you learned to remain in Jesus and be better disciples.
- Talk to someone you see as being connected to Jesus. Ask them what they do to grow in their faith. At dinner, tell your family what you learned.
- Decide on one thing you will work on a family to grow in Christ.
- If you have your own garden, decide as a family what you might grow this year that you could also share with someone else who might not have access to homegrown vegetables.
- If you live in an apartment in the city, research container gardening to see if it is something your family could do or find out if there is a community garden project that you could participate in.

4.-Reflect Together:

- Discuss some or all of these questions as a family
- What does Jesus mean when he says "Remain in me as I remain in you?"
 - What does a garden need if it is going to produce good fruit and vegetables?
 - What is going to help us to be good people and do the kinds of things that Jesus wants us to do?
 - What do we need to do to remain in Jesus?
 - What are some fruit we will bear if we remain in Jesus?

6.- Closing Prayer:

Dear God,
Help us to be attentive to how you are calling us to remain with you. Give us the grace to hear your voice in our lives. Help us to be your voice to others. Teach us to learn how to love and serve you in everyone we meet. This we ask in Jesus name. Amen.





Families in Mission:

Spread Christ's love

Sixth Sunday of Easter

1.-Introduction:

This past year, many of us have not been able to meet up or hang out with our friends like we used to. Instead, we've had to find new ways to remain in touch and keep our friendship going. Despite the challenges, we've found joy in making new friends, seeing old friends in a different light, virtual celebrations, zoom dance gatherings etc. In today's Gospel, Jesus calls us his friends — friends he loves so dearly, he was willing to lay down his life for them. He also tells us what we are called to do as his friends. "Love one another as I love you." Jesus assures us that if we do that, our own lives will be filled with joy.



2.-Opening Prayer:

Dear Jesus, It is not easy to love others the way you love us. We know we cannot do it by ourselves. So we give ourselves to you and ask that you teach and guide us so that we become bearers of your love to everyone we meet. In doing so, we know that our lives will be filled with the joy that comes from you. On this Mothers' Day, we offer up to you our mothers and those who play the role of mothers in our lives. Bless them for their unselfish love and help us to learn how to love from them. Amen.

3.-Sharing the Good News:

Read the Gospel
John 15: 9-17

5.-Take action as a family:

This week pay special attention to those around you, those you hear of, read about or see on the news who may feel unloved.

- Talk as a family about what you observed, read about, or heard.
- Decide as a family how you will respond in love.
- Think of something special to do this week to honor, show love, and bring joy to a mother or mothers who may be struggling during the pandemic.

4.-Reflect Together: Discuss some or all of these questions as a family

- What is love?
 - How do you know when someone loves you? How do you feel when you are loved?
 - What can you do to show love? What kind of actions show love?
 - What are some things that could happen when someone is not loved?
- Share with your family about a new friend you have made this past year or someone you learned something new about. What about your friendship with this person brings you joy?



6.- Closing Prayer: (Psalm 98)

Sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands;
break into song; sing praise.



Families in Mission:

Be a sign for Jesus

Feast of Jesus' Ascension

1.-Introduction:

Have you noticed how there are signs everywhere? They tell us how fast to drive, where to walk, where not to walk, warn us about dangers, and help us line up in the correct place, among other things. Since the pandemic, signs also remind us to wash our hands, stand 6 feet apart from each other, and wear our masks. In the Gospel for the feast of the Ascension, Jesus reminds us that since his life on earth is over, we have to be his signs in the world. We have to put into practice what he taught us.



2.-Opening Prayer:

Dear Jesus,
We rejoice in your ascension into heaven. Before you ascended, you asked us to be your signs on earth. Help us to learn from your life here on earth, from the scriptures you left us, and from others, how to live and love like you did. Amen.

3.-Sharing the Good News:

Read the Gospel
Mark 16:15-20

5.-Take action as a family:

- Create your own picture/painting about the Ascension and share it with the family.
- Decide as a family how you will put Jesus' teachings into practice. Make signs as reminders to be a sign for Christ. Here are some examples - Be polite, Tidy up after yourself, Offer to help someone else.
- Decide as a family one thing you will do to share the gospel this week. Discuss afterwards how it went.
- Read a gospel story to a younger sibling or an older person who has difficulty reading because of failing eyesight or some other reason.

4.-Reflect Together:

- Discuss some or all of these questions as a family
- Many artists have painted scenes of the Ascension of Jesus. Find some of these paintings on the internet or in books and talk as a family about what you observe in them
 - How do you think the apostles reacted when they saw Jesus ascend into heaven?
 - Jesus said, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature." How might you help do that?
 - How do you feel when you're asked to do something new or difficult? How do you prepare yourself to take on something new? Who do you go to get help?



6.- Closing Prayer:

Dear God,
Help us to remember to live as Jesus did and to always treat others with kindness, respect, and love. Give us the courage to go into the world to share the good news of the gospel. Let us not forget that Jesus is with us always and will help us from heaven to be his sign in the world. Amen



Families in Mission:

Living in the Spirit

Pentecost Sunday

1.-Introduction:

Do you like birthdays when you get to celebrate someone's special day with family and friends? The celebrations often involve gifts given and received. Well, this Sunday we celebrate the feast of Pentecost, which is the birthday of the church. It is the day that reminds us that the church is not a building but that we, as believers are the church. It is the day when God gave the church a birthday gift by sending us the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is to help us spread the Good News to others by how we live our lives. To remind yourself of this, put a red tablecloth and/or a red candle in your sacred space and gather around it for the opening prayer.



2.-Opening Prayer:

Dear Jesus, before you left this earth, you told your disciples that you would not leave them (or us) alone. You gave them and us the gift of your Holy Spirit, which means that your energy and ideas will continue to guide us when we ask for your help in prayer. Show us the way that you want us to go. May we live out the fruits and goodness of your Spirit each day and everywhere we go. Amen.

3.-Sharing the Good News:

Read the Gospel
John 20:19-23

5.-Take action as a family:

- Share with your family which fruit of the Holy Spirit you picked to live out more fully in your life this week. Think about what you can do inside and outside the family to show more kindness, patience, generosity etc.
- Write the fruit that you want to work on this week on a small piece of paper and when you gather for the closing prayer walk up to the sacred space and place it there. Silently ask the Holy Spirit to help you work on that fruit this week.

4.-Reflect Together:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family.

- The fruits of the Holy Spirit are: joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, goodness, self-control. Talk about what these mean, pick one that you would like to work on and explain why you picked that particular one.
 - What would that fruit help you do?
 - Who would it allow you to help or reach out to?



6.- Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.