By Tom East

Our family has been having family prayer and faith sharing, using the elements of the Triduum liturgy, since our kids were small. Because we have three children, each child focuses on one part of the Triduum each year, taking turns and switching each year. We work with each child to create a symbol for our family prayer which has a Scripture focus, using the Scriptures for the Triduum liturgies. While we are working on the project, we talk about the Bible passage and how they see this part of Jesus’s life as a part of our life today. Then, we gather for family prayer led by the child who created the prayer symbol.

Praying at Home Triduum Symbols

- **Holy Thursday – Prayer Towel**
  The prayer towel is placed in front of the Bible, a bowl, and pitcher of water for a family foot washing prayer.

- **Good Friday – Cross**
  We revere the cross and pass it around the family in silence as we pray on Good Friday.

- **Easter Vigil – Paschal Candle**
  We light this candle as we pray our Easter morning meal blessing. We also use this as our family prayer candle throughout the year.

Starting the Tradition – Growing with the Family
You can begin the tradition of creating these prayer symbols and having family prayer on these themes when your children are young. For preschool and early grade school age children, create the prayer symbols together as a family and lead the prayer, involving the children when possible. As the children are able to read, involve them in the readings, and let them begin to take the lead in creating the symbol. As they get older, they will be ready to create the prayer symbol,
lead the prayer and of course, the conversations could grow richer. When our children were teenagers, we especially valued this important conversation about the meaning of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection.

Creating an Echo between Parish and the Home
When the children are small, you may choose to have these celebrations at home as a primary way that you celebrate the Triduum liturgies. These home prayers can prepare your family to participate in liturgy on Easter Sunday. As your children get older, you can begin participating in the liturgies at the parish and pray together as a family. You might choose to have the Foot Washing Prayer and the Prayer with the Cross be a way that you talk about the Triduum and prepare your children for participation. The key is creating an echo between what the Church is celebrating in the parish and how you celebrate and honor the seasons in your home.

Leading Prayer in the Home
To pray together, you need to name a reason to pray, a place to pray, a time to pray and a way to pray. These prayers are designed to help us bring our daily life into contact with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Choose a place to pray and create a comfortable way for the family to gather for this special occasion. Choose a time to pray that is agreed upon in advance, is not rushed, and does not compete with other commitments. Each prayer focuses on a Scripture that is used in the readings for Triduum. You might consider gathering for prayer with a simple song appropriate to the season of Lent. We used “Hosea” by Gregory Norbet, OCP (http://www.ocp.org/compositions/218#tab:sheetmusic).
Holy Thursday Prayer Towel

Objective
Create a fabric image with symbols that show how Jesus shared his love with his disciples as he prepared them for the cross and the resurrection.

Gather Supplies
- White or bone colored dish cloth, muslin, or flat finished cotton works better than terry cloth.
- Felt squares of different colors (purple, brown, tan, yellow, blue, white, black, red, etc.)
- Scissors
- Fabric glue
- Fabric markers

Faith Conversation
Begin by reading together John 13:12-15. Introduce this passage by sharing that Jesus is trying to prepare his friends for his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection. He is trying to get them ready to share his love with the world. In this passage, he is trying to teach them about love and about what it means to be a leader. Listen and share about these questions:

- What do you notice in the story?
- What do you think Jesus is trying to teach his disciples?
- How would you have reacted if Jesus wanted to wash your feet?
- How do you think Jesus asks us to love others today?

After the faith sharing, put some music on in the background and take some time to help your child in creating the prayer towel.

Instructions to Create Prayer Towel
Choose the symbols and words that you would like on the towel and create these by cutting the felt and gluing it to the cloth and by using the fabric markers.

Family Prayer
Choose a time to gather as a family. Create a prayer focus with a small table (or TV tray). Hang the prayer towel from the table. Place a Bible on the table and put a large bowl (or tub), pitcher of warm water, and one or two bath towels in front of the table. Ask members of the family to come to a circle of chairs barefoot for prayer. Note: You can do this as a hand washing prayer if you feel that would be more comfortable for your family. You will have to change some of the words in the prayer, replacing hand washing with foot washing.
Holy Thursday Family Prayer

Prayer Leader

Begin by making a Sign of the Cross.

We gather as your family in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Loving God, your gift of water brings life and freshness to the earth. Renew the living spring of your life within us and protect us in spirit and body. May this water remind us of our baptism and of our call to use our gifts and talents to spread your love. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All Amen.

Reading

John 13:12-15

Prayer Leader

Today we are reminded of our call to follow Jesus’ example and love one another. As a sign of this call, we will prayerfully wash each other’s feet. As you wash each other’s feet, do so as if it were Jesus who was were washing their feet – since Jesus asks us to be his hands by serving others today.

Begin the foot washing by taking up the pitcher and washing and drying the feet of the person to your right. When you are finished, pass the pitcher and towel to the person whose feet you have just washed. That person will wash the feet of the person on their right. This will continue around the circle until the person on your left washes and dries your feet.

When everyone has finished washing feet, continue with the prayer.

Prayer Leader

Joining hands, let us conclude our prayer in the words that Jesus taught us.

All

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.
Good Friday Cross

Objective
Create a wooden cross that can be used as a prayer focus for family prayer on Good Friday.

Gather Supplies
- Balsa wood (or other wood that is easy to cut) – approximately 1” x ½” x 12”
- Sand paper
- Twine or leather laces
- Saw
- Old English Furniture Scratch Cover Oil
- Cotton balls
- Paper towels

Faith Conversation
Begin by reading together Hebrews 4:14-16. Introduce this passage by sharing that this passage comes from a letter from Saint Paul. Paul is reminding the community that Jesus can relate to all of the challenges and temptations that we face. Listen, and share about these questions:
- What do you notice in this part of Paul’s letter?
- What do you think Paul is telling the families?

Share with your child that Good Friday is the day that we remember Jesus’s death on the cross. At the Good Friday service at church, people will take turns kissing or touching the cross. We do this as a way to thank Jesus for loving us so much.
- What does Jesus’ sacrifice mean to you?
- What questions do you have about Jesus and the cross?
- What difference should Jesus’ love make in the way we live our life?

After the faith sharing, put some music on in the background and take some time to help your child in creating the cross.

Instructions to Create Cross
1. Cover the work area with newsprint. Put on old t-shirts or aprons to cover clothes.
2. Saw the wood to create two pieces, a vertical (7”) and a cross bar (5”).
3. Sand the rough edges on the ends of the wood. Round the edges at the top and sides.
4. Pour a small amount of scratch cover liquid onto a corner of your rag and “stain” the wood by rubbing in the direction of the grain. Apply scratch cover liquid to both ends; be sure to cover and fill in any holes or marks. Rub off excess scratch cover with a clean part of the rag. Note: Be careful with the scratch cover – it stains!
5. Place the crossbar two thirds up from the bottom of the vertical bar. The crossbar should be on top of the vertical bar. Center the cross bar from right to left. Place your thumb at the center point and hold tightly.

6. Draw out 6” of jute or twine and place under your thumb. (This will be used to tie a knot after your cross has been fully assembled.)

7. Going at a diagonal, wrap twine across bars tightly, keeping thumb in place. Wrap the twine four to five times around and then switch sides to wrap four to five times around on the opposite diagonal. Allow two inches of twine at the end. The bars will twist out of line during the winding process, but should move back into place after switching sides. Keep the twine as tight as possible. The twine should form something that looks like an “X” across the two bars of wood. Straighten the bars as needed to form a cross.

8. When you are satisfied with your “X” of twine and the shape of the cross, turn the cross over and knot the loose strings (one from the start and one from the end) into a double knot. Cut off the remaining ends of twine.

Family Prayer
Choose a time to gather as a family. Create a prayer focus with a small table (or TV tray). Place the cross and a Bible on the table.
Good Friday – Praying with the Cross

Prayer Leader

Begin by making a Sign of the Cross.

We gather as your family in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Let us pray.  (Pause for a moment of silent prayer.)
Loving God,
by Jesus’ suffering on the cross,
we know your love and your call to be faithful.
Help us to come to you bravely when we are in need,
and guide us to share your love generously.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All Amen.

Reading

Hebrews 4:14-16

Prayer Leader

Paul reminds us in this letter how much Jesus loves us. Through Jesus’ cross, word of God’s love was spread throughout the world and to all people. This word of love continues to be spread today. Today, as we remember Good Friday, let us pray with the whole Church that all people will come to know God’s love. Today, in Catholic churches around the world, we say this special prayer. This cross which we pray with tonight reminds us of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. We pray and remember Jesus sharing of love and his faithfulness which leads to new life!

Holding up the cross, say the following prayer.

This is the wood of the cross, on which hung the Savior of the world.
Our response is: Come, let us worship.

All Come, let us worship.

Prayer Leader

As we pass this cross around our circle, let us think of a person or a community of people who need to know the love of God. When you hold the cross, think of who you would like to pray for. We can pray together in silence or you can share your intention aloud.
The prayer leader begins by holding the cross and taking a moment to pray – the prayer can be shared aloud or in silence. The leader then passes the cross to the next person. After the cross has been passed around the circle, continue the prayer.

**Prayer Leader**

*Let us pray.*

*As we continue to prepare for Easter by remembering the love and friendship of Jesus,*

*May the Cross remind us to follow Jesus’ love.*

*Lord, open our hearts to share with others,*

*And lead us to your joy, love and compassion.*

**All**  
Amen.
Easter Vigil – Paschal Candle

Objective
Create a home Paschal Candle that has similar symbols as the Paschal Candle blessed and used at church beginning at the Easter Vigil.

Gather Supplies
- White 6 or 8’ wide pillar candle
- Mod Podge – Sealer, Glue and Finish – preferably matte finish
- Paint brushes
- Acrylic paints – green, red, and blue
- Nail (approximately 1/8th inch tip)
- Whole cloves (purchased in the spice section of the market)

Faith Conversation
Begin by reading together Matthew 28:1-10. Introduce this passage by asking your child to imagine that they are coming to Jesus’ tomb after he died. Have them imagine themselves in this story. Listen, and share about these questions:
- What do you notice in the story?
- What would you be feeling as one of Jesus’ friends?
  - When the tomb was empty?
  - When you saw Jesus?
- How do you feel about Jesus’ resurrection? What does it mean to you?

After the faith sharing, put some music on in the background and take some time to help your child in creating the home Paschal Candle.

Instructions to Create the Home Paschal Candle
1. Paint the sides of the candle with Mod Podge. Apply an even coat around all of the sides and allow to dry.

2. Using this image, explain the elements of the Paschal Candle design and share with your child that this is similar to the candle that will be blessed and used at your parish throughout the year.

   The cross is the sign of our faith and is a symbol of God’s love for us. It reminds us of Jesus’ death on the cross and his resurrection.
At the top and bottom of the cross there are two Greek letters. These are the **Alpha** (looks like an “A”) and the **Omega** (looks like an “O” with the bottom part curved open). Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last. These letters symbolize that Jesus is the beginning and the end; he was part of the beginning of all of creation, including us, and he promises to be with us until the end of time.

Each year we light a new Paschal candle that is used until the following Easter. The candle includes the numbers for our **current year** with one number in each of the four sections created by the cross.

The parish Paschal candle has **five grains of incense** which are sealed in a red wax nail. These are symbolic of Jesus suffering on the cross.

3. Lightly trace the design for the Paschal Candle using a pencil and the diagram above. Then paint your design for the cross, the Alpha and Omega and the current year.

4. After the paint is dry, use a nail to make a small hole about ¼ inch deep into the candle at the place where each of the incense nails are inserted (on the image, these are represented by the gold circles.) Insert the cloves into these holes.
Easter Morning Family Prayer

Gather with Song (optional) “Lord of the Dance” Shaker Melody arranged by Sydney Carter.

Prayer Leader

Begin by making a Sign of the Cross.
We gather as your family in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Jesus, our Savior, today, we celebrate that you are alive and that you are with us! You rose from the dead to share God’s love. Help us listen to your Word and learn to love the way you love.
We ask this in your holy name.
All Amen.

Reading
Matthew 28:1-10

Prayer Leader

Blessed are You, Lord our God who raised Jesus from the tomb. You gather us together around this table to remember your great love. On this Easter morning, we bring our prayers of thanks and our petitions before you.
Our response will be: Loving God, Hear our Prayer

Invite family members to share prayers aloud and to join in the response, then conclude.

Loving God, you give us everything we need. We thank you loving God for the food that is before us, for the hands that prepared it, and for everyone that made it possible.

As we eat this food, let us recall ways that we can share from our abundance with those in need. We ask all of this in Jesus name.

All Amen.