



# How can I help children understand Lent?

SUSAN KAY

**Q** *How can I help those I teach understand that Lent can be a season of joy?*

**A** During Lent, we, as Church, prepare for the most wonderful and important celebration of the year—the Easter season. Prayers at Ash Wednesday Mass call Lent “this joyful season.” We remember, celebrate, and believe in God’s saving power through Jesus Christ. The world has been redeemed! During Lent, we “do this in remembrance” of our best friend, Jesus Christ.

To prepare for any celebration is happy work, and anticipation is part

of the happiness. We work and do special things by ourselves and with each other to help us pay attention to the coming celebration. During Lent, we prepare our hearts, spirits, and minds through the Eucharist, personal and communal prayer, the sacrament of reconciliation, and through study—especially of Scripture. Our lives should show through acts of charity and justice that we are a happy people who believe in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, and that we want to share that happiness. During Lent, we help each other work to make the world a better place, act generously, and fast and abstain, not only from food, but also from actions. We try to live simply. We want the world to know that the good

news is meant for everyone, not only for us.

Lent should be a journey of J-O-Y: know Jesus in a deeper way, reach out to Others with compassion, and prepare Yourself prayerfully. Then, during the Easter season, we will sing with great rejoicing, “Alleluia, Christ is risen!”

**Q** *I have been thinking about re-enacting Christ’s Passion with my class. Any suggestions?*

**A** Thank you for asking this question. Drama is a powerful and wonderful way to learn. When we re-enact Christ’s passion, the Church cautions us against stereotyping Jewish people. So I suggest another great hands-on activity for Lent: a lesson about the Seder meal. Ask a member of the local Jewish temple to come to your class to teach about the Seder. The Seder is a Jewish liturgy, celebrated in Jewish homes to mark the beginning of Passover. Only Jews celebrate it, just as only Catholics celebrate the Roman Rite. Christians should never enact or pretend to celebrate the Seder; but Christians can and should learn about it. Maybe your class will be invited to attend a Seder meal with the Jewish community. That would be an authentic and memorable way to learn more about Jesus and our Jewish roots. Also, Liturgy Training Publications has an excellent Seder resource with music, text, and an explanation of the tradition. To learn more about Catholic-Jewish relations go to [tinyurl.com/rtjs-catholic-jewishrelations](http://tinyurl.com/rtjs-catholic-jewishrelations). ▼

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