

7 Ways to Explain Holy Week to Children

By Mark and Kathy Bozzuti-Jones from www.trinitywallstreet.org

Children always pay attention to things that cause pain, suffering, loss, hurt or death. Take cartoons, for instance. Children will watch Tom and Jerry non-stop if you let them, and if truth be told, many children's programs have a lot of violent scenes.

So children do need adults to help them interpret the pain, suffering, loss, hurt or death they watch, observe, or experience. Without a loving, healthy, and compassionate interpretation from a parent or trusted adult children will internalize, misunderstand, and try to imitate the very worst aspects of the violence they witness.

Holy Week provides a challenge for Christian parents, especially those who only come to church during this week. How do we explain the suffering of Jesus? Here are seven points that may be helpful in talking to your child about holy week.

1. Jesus suffered because there are times when we reject the truth, and choose to do the wrong rather than right thing.
2. Jesus' death shows that he was willing to die rather than deny the truth of his experience of God.
3. Death happens – everyone will die.
4. Ask your child to explain some of his or her understanding of the death of Jesus. You may learn something.
5. How we live is the most important thing. Jesus lived a life loving God, loving the poor, and telling others that it was more important to be honest, kind, true, good, and forgiving. Some people did not like that.
6. God did not wish the suffering of Jesus. God does not like to see anybody suffer. However, God does not interfere with our free will. Jesus freely gave his life and human beings freely punished him and killed him.
7. Life is stronger than death, love greater than hate, and hope more powerful than despair. This is what we believe and celebrate. All of Jesus' suffering, pain and death led to a more forgiving, compassionate, and life-giving world.

Hopefully, parents and children can live better and change their lives for the good as they observe and talk about the events of Holy Week.