

This Easter Vigil is designed for children and youth. It takes kids through the major events of Holy Week and helps them understand the reason for our Easter celebration. You can make it as complex or simple as you want. We use this vigil to introduce our annual Easter Egg Hunt.

Parts: Narrator (or 2), Jesus, at least 2 disciples, at least 1 soldier, Mary Magdalene (speaking part, she can also play a disciple)

Sets: Garden, Upper Room (preferably on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor), and one other gathering place (we use our sanctuary).

Props: Palms for all the children (real or paper), Communion elements, 5'-6' wooden cross, hammer and at least 1 nail, costumes and donkey optional

### **Scene 1 – Palm Sunday**

*Everyone gathers outside main gather place and palms are handed out.*

Narrator: Tomorrow we're celebrating Palm Sunday! On that day Jesus and his friends came into the big city, Jerusalem so they could celebrate Passover. They came to Jerusalem because that's where the temple was. It was the only Jewish temple so all the Jewish people came to the city for their special holidays. Passover is a holiday where Jewish people celebrate and remember how God saved them when their ancestors were slaves in Egypt. Have you seen the movie, *The Prince of Egypt* about Moses? That's what they were celebrating and their tradition is to gather with family and have a big dinner with special food, kind of like Thanksgiving.

So, Jesus and his friends came into Jerusalem and Jesus rode on a donkey. They were surprised that everyone in the town was excited to see them. All the people started shouting "Hosanna!" and waving palm branches and laying down their coats.

Palm Sunday is the beginning of what we call Holy Week because it was the last week Jesus spent with his friends before he was crucified. Today we are going to act out all the things that happened during Holy Week! So now you all are going to be the crowd in Jerusalem and you're super excited to see Jesus because you've heard about all the miracles he's performed! Let's follow Jesus!

*'Jesus' (rides on a donkey) while the children shout and wave branches. Everyone follows him into the main gathering place (sanctuary) and parade around in a circle then sit. Once all the children sit 'Jesus & disciples' go upstairs.*

## **Scene 2 – The Last Supper**

*While still in the main gather space..*

Narrator: After all the excitement of Palm Sunday, Jesus and his friends hung out in Jerusalem for three days and Jesus went to the temple and taught people the Truth about God. On Thursday, it was finally time for the Passover dinner. Jesus wanted to celebrate with his disciples and so they found a big room where they could all have dinner. The room was on the second floor of a house so we're now going to go upstairs and join Jesus and his friends for the Last Supper they had together.

*Everyone will go upstairs and a pastor will lead Communion. Have children gather around the pastor while s/he explains Communion and offers the bread and juice to any of kids who want it. As Communion is serve 'Jesus and disciples' go down to 'the Garden'*

## **Scene 3 – Praying in the Garden**

*After Communion we will come down to find Jesus in the garden and the disciples asleep.*

Narrator: After they finished eating the Passover dinner Jesus told his friends he was going to be leaving them soon. They were all upset and didn't want him to go. Jesus knew what was going to happen but the disciples had no idea. Jesus was scared about what he had to do so he asked his friends to come with him to the Gethsemane garden while he prayed. Jesus prayed for a long time and asked God for help. He said, *(Jesus or narrator can say this:)* **“God whatever you want to happen, let it happen.. Let your will be done.”** Jesus prayed for SO long that the disciples fell asleep! Jesus wished they would pray too but he understood that they didn't know what was about to happen.

After waking them up *(disciples and Jesus stand up)*, Judas one of the disciples brought soldiers to the garden and they arrested Jesus. All his disciples ran away because they were

scared. A 'soldier' takes Jesus away, disciples run away, everyone else goes to the gathering space and sit.

#### **Scene 4 – Good Friday**

Narrator: The soldiers beat Jesus up and took him to the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders put him on trial but it wasn't fair. Jesus didn't try to defend himself, he knew he was going to die. The Jewish leaders said that Jesus should be killed for saying he was the son of God. In the morning the soldiers took Jesus to the Roman governor, Pilate. The Jewish leaders told Pilate that they wanted Jesus to be killed. Pilate asked to talk to Jesus.

*Soldiers bring Jesus out to the narrator.*

Pilate asked Jesus if he was the son of God and Jesus said he was, he said *(Jesus or narrator can say this:)* **"I have come to show everyone the Truth about God. Everyone who knows the Truth, knows I am the son of God."** Pilate didn't think Jesus should be killed so he let the people decide. He brought Jesus out and asked everyone if they wanted Jesus to go free or a criminal named Barabbas. Everyone shouted, "We want Barabbas!" *Have children shout.* Then Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus and all the people said, "Crucify him!" So the soldiers took Jesus away to crucify him.

*Have children shout 'Crucify him' as Jesus carries the cross to the front and stands behind it.*

The soldiers nailed Jesus' hands and feet to the cross. *Soldier hammers nails into cross.* Jesus hung on the cross for three hours until he died. *Jesus walks away out.*

All of his friends were so upset and scared. *Disciples run away (go wait outside the door).*

Let's pray. *Pray and thank God for Jesus' sacrifice.*

#### **Scene 5 – Easter!**

*'Mary Magdalene' comes in excited*

Oh children, I know you're sad. I was sad too! Jesus was my friend.

I loved him so much. He did so much for so many people! I cried so hard when they killed him.

I was still crying this morning when I went to get his body ready for his funeral.

But, oh children, I have the best news! When I went to the tomb where they had put him, it was open. I thought the mean people who killed him had taken his body away but then I turned around and there he was!

Jesus, our teacher and friend, was standing there in front of me!

He told me not to cry, that he had risen from the dead just like he'd promised. He said to go tell his disciples that he was alive!

Can you believe it?! Jesus is alive! They tried to kill him but he came back, he resurrected! This is the most amazing thing that's ever happened! Jesus is alive!! THANK YOU GOD!

Now we don't have to be afraid of dying! Everything Jesus promised is true! Jesus said he would come back and he did! So when we die our spirits will join him in heaven and we'll live with God forever!

Thank you God for bringing Jesus back and for giving us all eternal life!

I'm so happy I could shout it from the roof tops! Jesus is alive!

Let's sing to God!

*Start singing 'This Little Light of Mine' and get kids to follow out of the gathering space. As you exit the 'disciples' will stop them and ask why we are so happy and singing. This will give the kids an opportunity to share the good news! Encourage them to respond that 'Jesus is alive!'*

We then gather the children in our social hall and have them decorate paper bags to collect eggs in. We have snacks and explain the symbol of the Easter egg while others hide the eggs in the sanctuary.

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