

# Unit 4C Why is Easter important for Christians?

## ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit explores the events leading to the death and resurrection of Jesus and the meaning and significance of these events for Christians.

## WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit is about the significance of the Easter events for Christian belief, and especially beliefs about Jesus.

## PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- learnt about the concepts of new life and changing seasons
- learnt about the significance of the most well-known festival symbols, eg *the cross or the Paschal candle*, through seeing them on visits to churches
- learnt about the Christian concepts of God as Creator and as a loving parent
- learnt about the life and teaching of the historical Jesus

## VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- religion, eg *God*
- Christianity, eg *Easter day, Garden of Gethsemane, crucifixion, Jesus, Messiah, Orthodox, Catholic*
- feelings and emotions, eg *excitement, disappointment, betrayal, remembrance, elation, wonder, bewilderment*

## RESOURCES

- the Bible texts
- triumphal procession music
- pictures, videos, CD-ROMs, showing Christians celebrating Easter

## EXPECTATIONS

### At the end of this unit

*most children will:*

describe the story of Jesus from his entry into Jerusalem to the resurrection; name the symbols of bread and wine from the Last Supper; understand the basic beliefs about Jesus' death and resurrection; understand why the cross is a significant symbol for Christians

*some children will not have made so much progress and will:*

describe the story of the last week in the life of Jesus; recall the basic story of Jesus' death and resurrection; know that the cross is an important symbol for Christians

*some children will have progressed further and will:*

know in detail the story of Palm Sunday, the events of the Last Supper and the symbolism of bread and wine; know and begin to understand the significance to Christians of Jesus' death and resurrection; identify some experiences which cause people to wonder and question, including questions which are difficult to answer

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

## POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

### WHAT IS PALM SUNDAY?

- about the events of Palm Sunday
- about the atmosphere and feelings of the crowd on Palm Sunday
- that emotions and feelings are involved with decisions and faith

- Show palm crosses and see if the children recognise them. Tell the story of Palm Sunday, drawing out that the crowd were excited because they believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Children could be asked to talk about processions. *Have you ever seen or attended a procession (eg carnival)? Were you excited? Discuss the atmosphere and feelings surrounding the procession. When do large crowds gather (eg visits from special people such as sporting celebrities or film stars)?*
- Children could create a joyful procession using music and dance, or make a frieze of a procession around the classroom. Make palm crosses with the children, and talk about their symbolism.
- Then talk about the feelings of people in the crowd. *What did they expect of Jesus?*
- Draw out the contrast between the excitement of the crowd and how Jesus might have felt as he prepared to face death.
- Read the story of Palm Sunday as Christians would hear it in church and talk about why some churches give out palm crosses.
- Begin to keep a diary of a 'Holy Week' from the point of view of a disciple, an onlooker or a Roman soldier.

- talk about the fact that the crowd welcomed Jesus because they believed he was the Messiah
- recount the story of Palm Sunday
- talk about the feelings and expectations of people in the crowd
- explore the feelings of Jesus as he faced death

- The story is in the Bible in Mark 11<sup>1-11</sup>, Matthew 21<sup>1-11</sup>, Luke 19<sup>28-38</sup>.
- It is important to be aware of the contrasting emotions in this story. Jesus is preparing to face death while the crowd are excited at the possibility that he is the Messiah.
- There are opportunities for extension activities on how we express our emotions and feelings and on the concept of loyalty.

### SPECIAL MEALS WITH JESUS

- about the significance of the Last Supper
- that Jesus came as a servant king, not as a ruler

- Read/tell the story of the Last Supper, drawing out children's own experiences of sharing special meals together, *eg birthdays, weddings, school parties*. Explain that Jesus was going to die, and he showed the disciples a way of understanding what he was doing.
- Tell the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. *How would you show your friends that you wanted to serve them, not rule over them? A drama activity could be linked to Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Explain that this story is in John's Gospel instead of the story of the bread and wine. What did Jesus want his disciples to do after he was dead? Help the children to find out about churches that celebrate washing of the disciples' feet. Watch a video of a Eucharist.*
- Continue the diary entries.

- talk about the Last Supper and explain what Jesus was telling his disciples
- talk about the fact that Jesus came to be a servant, and that Christians believe they should follow his example

- The story is in Mark 14<sup>12-26</sup>.
- Reproductions of traditional and modern paintings from different cultures can be used to support the teaching about the Last Supper. The story is in John 13<sup>1-17</sup>.
- There are links to be made with PSHE and circle time, when the feelings and emotions could be explored in greater depth.

### WHY WAS JESUS DISAPPOINTED IN THE DISCIPLES?

- about the events which led to Jesus being arrested

- Tell the story of the events in the Garden of Gethsemane. *Why was Jesus disappointed in the disciples? Have you ever been very disappointed? Why do you think Jesus needed the disciples to stay awake? How do you think the disciples felt?*
- Give children sentences about the disciples' feelings at Gethsemane with different types of reactions, *eg fear, sleepiness etc*. Ask them to sort them into groups. Children can then add sentences of their own.
- Tell the story of Peter's denial and discuss how Peter felt.
- Develop a drama activity portraying the events.
- Add these events to the diary.

- retell the main events of the story and begin to understand the emotions involved in the events leading to Jesus' death

- The story is in Mark 14<sup>32-52</sup>.

### THE CRUCIFIXION

- about the events of the Crucifixion
- about the feelings of the disciples, friends, family of Jesus
- the reasons why Jesus was crucified

- Tell the story in a simplified version. Emphasise the way that the crowd that had welcomed Jesus had now turned against him. *How do you think the disciples felt and why? How do you think his family felt? How do you think Jesus felt?*
- Ask the children to write a poem about the feelings of one of the friends, family or followers of Jesus.
- Explore with the children the reasons why the Romans wanted to put Jesus to death. Draw up a charge sheet against Jesus as if you were a Roman or tell the events as if you were Barabbas.
- Continue the diary entries.

- describe the events of the Crucifixion
- talk about the feelings of the disciples, Jesus, his friends and family
- explain some of the reasons why Jesus was put to death

- The story follows on from the above references but it may be more appropriate to retell it in a simplified version, *eg from a children's Bible*.

### WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

- why Christians believe in life after death – resurrection
- that the cross and crucifix are symbolic for some Christians
- about the different ways in which people respond to the Resurrection

- Tell the story of Easter morning. Using music as a stimulus, children could act out the arrival of the women at the empty tomb, reflecting the contrast in emotions between distress and elation, confusion and wonderment. *How do you think you would have felt if you were a disciple? What do you think happens to us when we die?*
- Explain why Christians believe that life continues even after someone dies.
- Talk about why some Christians make Easter gardens, and the symbolism. Plan and make an Easter garden to show the symbolism of new life.
- Show the children a crucifix and an empty cross and talk about what they symbolise for Christians.
- Produce a newspaper report or role play radio interviews exploring different perceptions of the Resurrection.
- Complete the diary for 'Holy Week'.

- talk about the Resurrection and give reasons why Christians believe in life after death
- explain the symbolism of the cross and crucifix for some Christians
- interpret the different responses of people involved to the Resurrection of Jesus

- Be prepared for children to talk about their own experiences of someone dying. Be aware of any recent experiences of death in the class or school.
- A variety of expressive and creative arts can be used such as drama, dance, art and music to enable children to reflect and respond to this aspect of the story.
- The local church may have an Easter garden which the children could see.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

## POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

### FURTHER STUDY

- how Easter is celebrated in the Orthodox or Catholic traditions
- about the meaning of 'Messiah' for Jesus
- Watch a video of Orthodox or Catholic Easter and identify the ways in which they remind Christians of Holy Week. Identify the symbols and relate them to the events.
- Read/tell the story of the woman who anointed Jesus. *What did she understand about him? What did Jesus think was going to happen to him?*
- Talk about the meaning of the terms 'Messiah' and 'Christ'. Ask the children to tell the story from the point of view of the woman, perhaps in a letter to a friend.

- link the events of Holy Week to the symbols used by Orthodox and Catholic Christians
- interpret different understandings of the role of the Messiah

- The story is in Mark 14<sup>1-11</sup>.

## **FUTURE LEARNING**

Children could go on to:

- study in greater depth the story of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, including becoming aware of the different interpretations in the Gospels
- look at how Easter is celebrated differently across a number of Christian denominations
- look at how Easter is reflected on in art, music, drama, eg *Oberammergau Passion Plays*, *York Mystery Plays*, *Handel's Messiah*, *Dali's Last Supper*

## **OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING**

Children could:

- visit a church during Holy Week
- talk to Christians about why Jesus' death and resurrection are important to them