

Prepare for Easter as a Family



Partners in Learning



In the weeks leading up to Easter, supermarket shelves are well stocked with chocolate eggs, fluffy white bunnies and a plethora of 'new' hot cross bun flavours. The commercial world would have us believe that Easter is a long weekend, but it isn't! Easter is a season that lasts 50 days, spanning from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday.

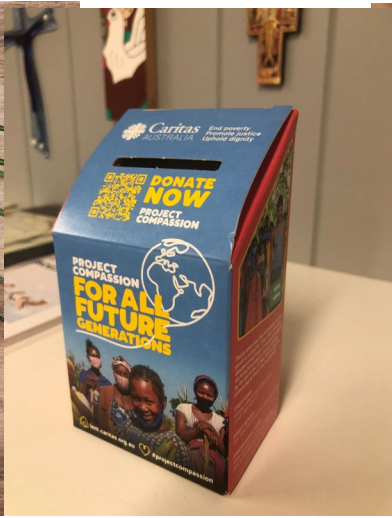
In cracking open the true meaning of Easter and the immense joy we celebrate during the most important season in the Catholic liturgical calendar, Alain Pitot, Head of Catholic Identity at Brisbane Catholic Education, says the period of Lent is a golden opportunity presented to families to reconnect and to grow in faith.

Here are 12 simple ways for families to celebrate the whole season of Easter together:

1. Embrace family and be present for one another. Disconnect from the Digital world and reconnect by sharing in a family meal together or have a similar meal of a family in an under-developed country. This will help your child appreciate the living conditions of the poor.
2. Use art and craft to make a Paschal (Easter) Candle that can be lit during family prayer and placed upon the Dining table during mealtimes.
3. Create a family Easter 'Spotify' playlist that everyone can add songs to. Encourage the family to choose songs that are about compassion, joy, sacrifice, mercy, forgiveness, staying true to who you are, prayer, your relationship with Jesus and saying Yes to God, etc. Encourage your family members to share why they chose certain songs and how they reflect their Lenten/Easter journey.
4. Ask your parish if there is anyone undertaking the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) and who will make their sacraments at the Easter Saturday Vigil. If your children are at College you could also ask the school if there are any students taking part. Include them in your prayers and add their names to your household sacred space.



Prepare for Easter as a Family



5. Take home a Project Compassion box from your parish or school and encourage each other to forgo a small indulgence and put money in the box instead! Project Compassion is Caritas Australia's annual fundraiser to help alleviate poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity among the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in the world.
6. Create a 'compassion box' for the family and place it on the kitchen bench with some small pieces of paper and pens beside it. Encourage the family to write small notes throughout Lent about what they love and/or appreciate about their family or each family member. Read the notes together on Easter Sunday morning.
7. Encourage your children to make Easter decorations. Symbols that represent the Easter season include eggs, lambs, bells, butterflies, even peacocks (these are an ancient Christian symbol of eternal life).
8. Display a palm branch prominently at home. It marks a sign of welcome to Jesus into your home, just as he was welcomed into Jerusalem.
9. Decorate hard-boiled eggs using bright colours and traditional religious symbols like the Fish {a symbol of Christ}, triangles (the Trinity} spots (tears of Mary} and red {the blood of Christ). Easter eggs have a legitimate place in traditional Easter celebrations. They represent new life - their hard shells hide the new life within and symbolise the hidden promise - Christ rising from the tomb.
10. In addition to celebrating Easter at Mass, make incidental visits to your local parish as a family to pray or to participate in 'Stations of the Cross'. The story of Jesus' Passion is told to us through this devotion. These sacred moments allow us to be in God's presence and remind us of the impact that prayer has on our relationship with Jesus and with each other.
11. Use Lent as a time of prayer, reflection and rededication to the Christian faith in preparation for the Resurrection of Jesus.
12. Instead of "giving up" up something for Lent try giving your time, talents and resources instead. Give of your time by connecting with people in your community who may be lonely or isolated. Give of your talents by volunteering to help someone with a project. Give of your resources by buying a coffee for the stranger behind you in the line.

