

NEW! WEEKLY GOSPEL
REFLECTION VIDEOS

LITURGY OF THE WORD WITH CHILDREN

Children Celebrate!



Spring 2024 (Year B)

FEBRUARY 25, 2024 | SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

through **MAY 19, 2024** | PENTECOST

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

LEADER'S GUIDE

Spring 2024
YEAR B

February 25, 2024

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

through

May 19, 2024

PENTECOST

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Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

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Additional Resources at Pflaum.com

Sunday Readings

For your convenience, each Sunday's Lectionary readings for the Liturgy of the Word with Children can be downloaded from pflaum.com. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Go to pflaum.com/readings for a list of Sunday readings (updated at the end of each month).
2. Click on the date you want. That Sunday's readings will open in a PDF.
3. Print or download the file.

For more about the Sunday Readings, see the Introduction to this Leader's Guide.

Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos!

Available to subscribers of *Children Celebrate!*

Visit <http://bit.ly/3lafw8E> for weekly Gospel Reflection videos. These videos can be used within your Children's Liturgy of the Word program, or shared with parents and families to view at home.

Children Celebrate! Director's Manual

For an easy-to-follow Director's Manual, go to pflaum.com/liturgy-of-the-word and click on "Bonus Resources" and then "Program Directors." There you will find a manual that outlines practical steps for establishing a program, recruiting and training volunteers, and creating the proper environment and liturgical flow.

In addition, you will learn how to most effectively incorporate *Children Celebrate!* materials into your program. Additional resources are also suggested.

Children Celebrate! Children's Liturgy of the Word – MP3 Album

With joyful melodies, call-and-response segments, and child-friendly lyrics, John Burland's inviting liturgical pieces are perfect for Children's Liturgy of the Word programs. For example, "Go Now and Listen to God's Word" can be sung as children are dismissed from the assembly, and "Yes, Lord, I Believe" is a jubilant option for singing the Creed, helping little ones to profess their faith.

Visit giamusic.com and search "Children Celebrate" to order.

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This Issue's Themes

DATE	SUNDAY	THEME
February 25, 2024	2ND SUNDAY OF LENT	Pay Attention to Jesus
March 3, 2024	3RD SUNDAY OF LENT	Jesus Says Respect God's House
March 10, 2024	4ND SUNDAY OF LENT LAETARE SUNDAY	Jesus Saves Us
March 17, 2024	5TH SUNDAY OF LENT	Jesus Asks Us to Help Him
March 24, 2024	PALM SUNDAY	Jesus Really Is the Son of God
March 31, 2024	EASTER SUNDAY	Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen!
April 7, 2024	SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY	Jesus Has Risen and Is Here
April 14, 2024	3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER	The Risen Jesus Appears to the Disciples
April 21, 2024	4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER	Jesus Takes Care of Us
April 28, 2024	5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER	We Stay Close to Jesus
May 5, 2024	6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER	Jesus Tells Us to Love One Another
May 12, 2024	ASCENSION OF THE LORD OR 7TH SUNDAY OF EASTER	Jesus Ascends to Heaven Jesus Prays for His Followers
May 19, 2024	PENTECOST	Jesus Gives Us the Holy Spirit

Using *Children Celebrate!*

Children Celebrate! is a complete step-by-step resource for celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with Children. The two components of *Children Celebrate!* are this Leader's Guide and the Children's Leaflets, a book of tear-out, take-home sheets.

LEADER'S GUIDE (each week has two parts)

I. Preparation provides the leader with information about the week's Scripture readings and how they relate to children today. Its elements are the following:

- **Today's Readings** cites the exact Scripture readings you will be using that day. (Remember, these readings do not always match the readings chosen for the adults. See more about the

readings on page 6.) A theme sets the tone of that day's liturgy.

- **Prepare with Prayer** helps center you on the task at hand, which is not only helping children hear and understand God's Word but also hearing and understanding God's Word **through** the children.
- **Scripture Background** helps you understand the readings and prepare to break open the Word.
- **Prepare the Meeting Space** gives you suggestions for enhancing the environment for that day's celebration. Review this section a few days before the liturgy.

- **Suggested Music** provides suggestions for appropriate songs during the liturgy. Information on where to find each piece of suggested music is on page 62.
- **Children's Connections** explains each week's theme and Scripture message as it applies to children today.
- **More About...** provides additional background about a topic that is related to this week's liturgy.
- **Using the Children's Leaflet** provides brief background information about the take-home sheet.
- **Activity** provides a reproduction of the take-home sheet. Solutions to puzzles are shown as needed.

II. The Liturgy of the Word is a ready-made liturgy specifically written for that week's readings and theme. Its elements are the following:

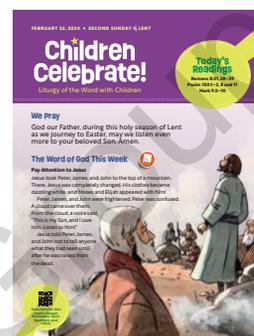
- **Gathering** helps the children settle into their places. Playing appropriate background music or singing a song provides a transition into an attitude of prayer.
- **Collect** sets the tone for the worship experience.
- **Focus Statements** for each of the readings help you give the children a key idea to listen for and to help them better understand the theme of the readings.
- **Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation** provide liturgically appropriate responses for the children to use.
- **Homily** gives you starter ideas for interesting, creative, and relevant reflections on the Gospel.
- **Profession of Faith** is a simple and interactive declaration of what we believe as Catholics.
- **Prayer of the Faithful** are the prayers for the needs of the world, the Church, and the community. These are often a common first step for children into spontaneous prayer and can be powerful moments for children.

- **Return to Assembly** provides the leader with a cue to prepare the children to rejoin the main assembly and to remind them to take home a Children's Leaflet.

CHILDREN'S LEAFLETS (each leaflet is two-sided)

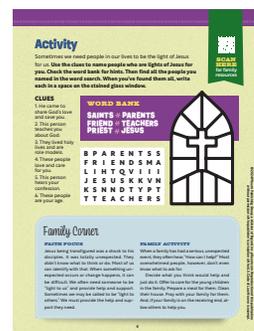
Front Side

- **Today's Readings** gives the Scripture citations for that Sunday's liturgy.
- **We Pray** is a short prayer for children based on the week's theme.
- **The Word of God This Week** is a summary of the day's Gospel story.



Back Side

- **Activity** provides an entertaining way to reinforce the Gospel message.
- **Faith Focus** highlights how the Gospel message can pertain to the family.
- **Family Activity** provides practical suggestions to families on how to put the Gospel into action at home.



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION VIDEOS

- **How to access the videos:** Visit <http://bit.ly/3x37mJb> to view the videos for this quarter.
- **What's included?** Each weekly video includes a Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, Closing Prayer, and Reflection Question.
- **Promote:** Share these videos with those assisting with Children's Liturgy of the Word for use during your program, as well as with parents and families.

Introduction

What Is Liturgy of the Word with Children?

Liturgy of the Word with Children is a worship experience geared especially for children. It mirrors the worship experience of the larger community, with a style that is engaging and interactive. Jesus himself recognized that children have a pure spirituality, and he made them the primary spiritual model for all believers.

Liturgy of the Word with Children is not formal religious education, nor is it intended to be a substitute for attendance at religious education sessions. Rather, it should be considered a partner to religious education programs. Both are important for a child's spiritual development, just as continuing faith formation and growth in spirituality are important for adults.

The Word of God has a message that is as relevant and fitting for children as it is for adults. The children, however, often fail to hear the message simply because the adult vocabulary is beyond their comprehension. Liturgy of the Word with Children offers an experience for the children to hear Scripture in words they understand and to share their own understanding of God's Word.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word in this way is an empowering experience, giving children a foundation for understanding and appreciating Scripture. Over several years, the children not only become comfortable with hearing and discussing God's Word but also gain an understanding of and appreciation for their liturgical heritage as Catholics.

When and How Do the Children Leave the Assembly?

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with Children follows the same structure as the Liturgy of the Word for the entire assembly. In fact, it begins with the Introductory Rites, which are celebrated in the large assembly, where the children are seated with their families.

After the Introductory Rites, the presider invites any children wishing to participate to join the leader and proceed to the worship space set aside for them. They return after the Prayer of the Faithful to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist with the entire community.

What About the Readings?

The readings in the children's Lectionary sometimes differ from those used in the adult Lectionary. When planning liturgies to be used with children, the Church allows some flexibility in the number and choice of readings on Sundays and feast days.

According to the *Directory for Masses with Children*, "If three or even two readings appointed on Sundays or weekdays can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the reading of the Gospel should never be omitted" (Chapter III, No. 42). In addition, because of the difficulty some children may have in understanding certain verses, it is sometimes possible to omit one or another verse from the reading. (For a complete reading of the directives regarding selection of readings, see the *Directory for Masses with Children*, Chapter III, Nos. 41-47.)

In *Children Celebrate!* we follow the readings from the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*, which is approved for use in all dioceses of the United States by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We determine themes and make suggestions for each Sunday's liturgy based on these readings. For this reason, it is important that you check each week's citations as listed in this Leader's Guide before finalizing your plans for that Sunday's celebration.

Preview the Readings

If you do not have access to a children's Lectionary while you prepare your liturgy, you have three other options for previewing the readings for each Sunday.

- 1 Go to our website (pflaum.com/readings), click on the date you need, and print or download the readings.
- 2 The *Lectionary for Masses with Children* uses readings from the Old Testament and Book of Psalms. A select number of the refrains for the Responsorial Psalms are taken from the *Contemporary English Version* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. Readings from the New Testament are taken from the *Contemporary English Version, Bible for Today's Family: New Testament* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. The CEV can be purchased at stores and at americanbible.org.
- 3 Go to americanbible.org. Scroll over BIBLE RESOURCES. Scroll down and click on BIBLE SEARCH. Under the search box, click on Search Options. Select CEV Contemporary English Version (US Version). Enter the book, chapter, and verses that you need, such as Luke 15:11–32.

Where Do I Begin?

Your first step to prepare a Sunday session should be to pray for guidance. "Prepare with Prayer" opens each week's background material. It will help you begin to focus your mind and open your heart to God's message. Remain in prayer as long as you like.

Read the Scripture and background material in their entirety. Although the story may be familiar, you may see it with new eyes when challenged to lead a reflection on it. The background material will give you an idea of the social and historical context behind the Scripture.

Gather and write down your thoughts for the reflection. Look at them and meditate on them for a while. Certain themes or ideas will come through. Create an outline for your reflection based on these ideas.

Be sure to read through the Prepare the Meeting Space and The Liturgy of the Word sections well in advance so that you are not taken by surprise by any preparations you should have made or items you will need on hand. Allow plenty of time to set up and prepare before the session.

What Else Should I Know?

LITURGICAL COLORS

This edition of *Children Celebrate!* covers Our Lord, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe through the First Sunday of Lent. For Christ the King, the liturgical color is white or gold. To represent the penitential season of Lent, the color used is purple/violet. Use the liturgical colors on the table where you place the Lectionary or in other elements you use in your worship area.

MOVEMENT

Introduce movement wherever you feel it could be appropriate in the liturgy. Young muscles cry out to be used often, and this physical need causes the restlessness that some adults find irritating. Even the simple act of lifting their arms in prayer or carrying some small object to the front of the room can give children a refreshing but orderly break from being in one position for too long.

Trust Yourself

Finally, remember that *Children Celebrate!* is a complete resource that you can trust to be liturgically sound while also being creative. Nevertheless, you are the leader and you must be comfortable with what you want to do each week. Feel free to use (and trust) your own ideas as well.

There is no limit to what God can work through each of us. Your time with these children will have God's blessing and will be immeasurably fruitful. Enjoy!

Today's Readings

Mark 11:1–10

Isaiah 50:6–7

Psalm 22:7–8, 16c–17a
& 18, 19 & 22

Mark 15:1–39

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a red cloth, place:

- a Lectionary
- a battery-operated candle
- a crucifix
- a pitcher partially filled with water
- a pile of small pebbles or gravel
- a copy of Aesop's fable, "The Crow and the Pitcher." (Borrow from the library or go to AesopFables.com.)

Suggested Music

See page 64 for more information.

GATHERING:

"Gather Together" (*Seeds CD-2, Track #1*) or **"Hosanna! Shout Hosanna!"** (*Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #18*)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"Glory and Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ" (*Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #23*)

Jesus Really Is the Son of God

PREPARATION

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.

PREPARE WITH PRAYER

My God, my God, why have you deserted me? (PSALM 22:1)

Scripture Background

According to Father Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP, today's First Reading comes from a part of Isaiah describing the perfect Israelite as someone who works for justice tirelessly and trusts in God totally, even in the face of dangerous opposition.

Of all the great figures in Jewish history, none lived these ideals better than Christ Jesus.

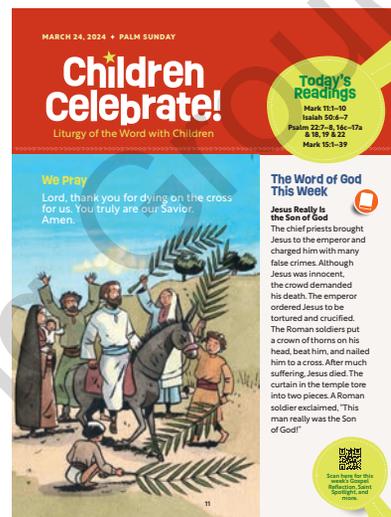
Today's Gospel shows in vivid, horrific detail Jesus' unflinching fidelity to his mission. Consider just one of the details Mark offers — that in the last moment of Jesus' life, he shouted, then died. It must have been a bone-chilling sound.

Early Fathers of the Church interpreted it as a cry of freedom, an expression of Jesus' complete abandonment to his Father's will. Humanly speaking, Jesus' whole world had come crashing down on him — with all the authority of Jerusalem, all the force of Rome — yet not once had he back-pedaled on what he stood for, what he came into the world to do.

When his work of salvation finally was accomplished, is it too much to imagine that he shouted with joy, not pain?

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

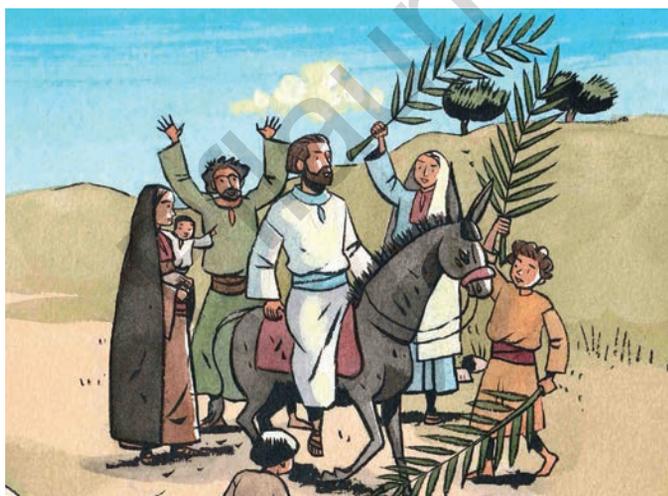
Often at Masses on Palm Sunday, no Homily is given. This will also be true of today's Liturgy of the Word with the children. The Gospel is so powerful that it needs no additional comment. Nevertheless, make sure that today's reading of the Gospel is special. One way to accomplish this is to ask



two teens or adults to help you present it. One helper plays Jesus and the other fills various roles. Props are optional, but do consider playing solemn background music during the presentation. (Recorded cello music would work well.) While reading, pause every so often for a pantomime, as follows:

1. Read Mark 15:1: [Helper ties up Jesus, who stands before group with head bowed.]
2. Read Mark 15:2-15: [Helper takes Jesus away and beats him; Jesus cringes in pain.]
3. Read Mark 15:16-19: [Helper robes Jesus and crowns him, mockingly genuflects before him, hits him, and spits on him.]
4. Read Mark 15:20-21: [Helper takes away robe, unties Jesus, gives him wooden beam, pushes him down street.]
5. Read Mark 15:22-23: [Helper offers Jesus drink but Jesus refuses.]
6. Read Mark 15:24-28: [Jesus stands tall, spreads out arms; helper nails hands and feet.]
7. Read Mark 15:29-36: [Helper holds sponge to Jesus' mouth; Jesus turns face away.]
8. Read Mark 15:37-39: [Jesus gazes upward, cries out, drops head, closes eyes in Death.]

Another alternative is to show the children illustrations from the Stations of the Cross while reading the



Gospel. Look in the parish or school library for a book of stations with large, vivid illustrations or search on-line.

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps them learn about Jesus' Passion through a summary of the Scripture story, prayer, and a creative activity.

If you haven't already done so, distribute copies of the leaflet. If time permits, read with the children the summary of this week's Gospel. Point out the artwork about Jesus, and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

More About ...

The Last Words of Christ

Jesus' cry in Mark 15:34, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" is actually the first line of Psalm 22. Verse 34 of today's Gospel might be Mark's shorthand way of saying that the entire Psalm was literally the last prayer on Jesus' lips before he died. In any case, it most certainly sums up the way he experienced the culminating events of his earthly life.

Psalm 22 has four parts.

- In the first part, the psalmist contrasts present feelings of isolation from God with memories of God's saving deeds in the past.
- In the second part, he describes the ill treatment he is receiving at the hands of his enemies.
- In the third part, the psalmist expresses his joy at being reunited with God and his loved ones.
- In the final part, the psalmist envisions a future time when all people will join together in offering God prayers of thanks and praise.

Leaflet Activity

This week's leaflet offers ideas for how families can celebrate the Triduum at home. In the children's activity, children draw pictures for the days of the Triduum.

Holy Thursday

Jesus, you gave us the gift of the Eucharist.

Good Friday

Jesus, you died on the Cross because you love us.

Holy Saturday

Jesus, we celebrate your Resurrection.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

When you take the children into the worship area, ask each one to take a pebble from the pile, drop it into the pitcher, and go sit down. When all are seated, proceed.

LEADER: Would it be a very interesting job to keep putting pebbles into the pitcher, one at a time, until the pitcher is nearly full? What would happen to the water in the pitcher? How long do you think the job would take? How much money would you want for doing it? There is a story about a crow who did this job, not for money, but to save his own life. Listen. (*Read aloud "The Crow and the Pitcher."*)

Opening Prayer

LEADER: Please bow your heads for prayer. Almighty God, Jesus walked the Way of the Cross—a long and difficult walk—not to save his own life but to save ours. Today we gather to remember all that he did for us on the last day of his earthly life. May our remembering increase our loving. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

LEADER: Whenever someone hits you, you feel like hitting them back, right? In today's First Reading, the prophet Isaiah predicts how Jesus, the Messiah, will act when the day comes when someone hits him.

Read Isaiah 50:6-7. Then say, "The Word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The Psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning, sing or announce the response.

LEADER: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

CHILDREN: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

LEADER: *Read Psalm 22:7-8, 16c-17a and 18, 19 and 22.*

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

LEADER: In the First Reading, we learned that Jesus would remain calm when people hit him. Today's

Gospel tells the story of the day Jesus died. Although he was mocked and tortured, you will see that not once did he lose his cool—and not once did he think of quitting his work of salvation before it was finished.

Explain how the reading of the Gospel will be special today, and proceed with the dramatic proclamation.

The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your Spirit.

LEADER: The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: Read Mark 15:1–39. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Invite the children to spend a moment in silence, or, if you prefer, invite them to join in singing an appropriate hymn, such as one of today’s Gathering songs.

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the Profession of Faith and answer each question with, “Yes, I do believe.” Do you believe in God the Creator, almighty and all-merciful?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe in Jesus, God’s only Son, faithful to his mission to the bitter end?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.



LEADER: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, source of love amidst hate?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: Let us remember in prayer all the people in the world who suffer today as Jesus once suffered. To each petition, please respond, “Lord, have mercy on them.” For all who are in jail for crimes they did not commit, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy on them.

LEADER: For all who are mocked and persecuted just for being themselves, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy on them.

LEADER: For all who are in great physical pain because of illness or injury, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy on them.

LEADER: For all who are without enough clothes, food, water, and medicine, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy on them.

LEADER: For all who have been mistreated even as they suffered, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: Lord, have mercy on them.

LEADER: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Let us pray. Loving God, we know that the story of Jesus your Son does not end with his suffering and Death. It continues with his Resurrection and his ongoing life in Heaven and in the Church on earth. In our darkest moments, help us remember how our story will end if we follow in his footsteps. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

CHILDREN: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven’t already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to watch this week’s Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Leader's Checklist

FEBRUARY							MARCH							APRIL							MAY								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
			1	2	3					1	2			1	2	3	4	5	6							1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
25	26	27	28	29			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30					26	27	28	29	30	31			
							31																						

SUNDAY	PREPARATIONS /PROPS	MUSIC	LECTOR	SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND	HOMILY PREP	CHILDREN'S LEAFLETS	OTHER
2/25/24 2nd Lent							
3/3/24 3rd Lent							
3/10/24 4th Lent							
3/17/24 5th Lent							
3/24/24 Palm Sunday							
3/31/24 Easter Sunday							
4/7/24 2nd Easter or Divine Mercy							
4/14/24 3rd Easter							
4/21/24 4th Easter							
4/28/24 5th Easter							
5/5/24 6th Easter							
5/12/24 Ascension or 7th Easter							
5/19/24 Pentecost							