

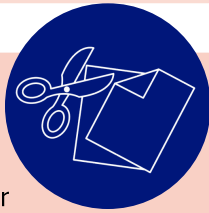
Holy Cross Day 14 September

Prepare



Unlike Good Friday where the focus is on Jesus himself and the sacrifice, this Feast focuses on the glory of the cross as a symbol of salvation. The origin of this Feast is the discovery of the true cross by St Helena around 326AD and the church on the site of the crucifixion being dedicated on 14 September 335AD. Hold in mind the different connotations which may be associated with crosses, e.g. St George's cross can be used in controversial ways but also positively in sporting events etc. Also recognise the start of the new school year for many.

Craft ideas



- Find twigs (ideally do this together outdoors) and join them together with string to make a simple cross.
- Use scratch art crosses, e.g. <https://www.bakerross.co.uk/scratch-art-crosses>, as a symbol of the dark and sad shape representing that element of the story of the cross, but the bright colours underneath showing the next part - the symbol of hope and salvation.

Liturgy



- At one point during the time together, remind people of the holy water stoop on the way into church. Encourage them to go and use it, making the sign of the cross and discuss with their neighbour why we do this (a reminder of our baptism and Jesus' saving action on the cross).
- Display a cross in a *Christus Rex* style, covered with a cloth. Reveal it bit by bit (to mirror what happens on Good Friday) but talk about Jesus as resurrected king. You could also include veneration of this cross after this.

Bible passage



John 3.13-17 (NIRV) *use a translation of your choice, this one works well for young people to read*

No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven. He is the Son of Man. Moses lifted up the snake in the desert. In the same way, the Son of Man must also be lifted up. Then everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him.

Introduce the theme



Wrap a cross in bright wrapping paper and pass it around for the group to feel and try to identify before opening. Use this symbolism to talk about the cross as the best present we can receive.

Questions to explore

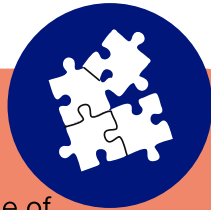
What is the first thing you think of when you see a cross?
Who inspires you? Who do we lift up?
What does it mean if we say that Jesus saves us?
Explore together what the word eternal means.

Spiritual development



- Through these activities we hope you can explore the cross as the means of salvation.
- It is important to use this Feast in contrast with more of a focus on suffering on Good Friday, with the focus here on victory and glory.
- As the cross is so widely used in various ways, it's important children and young people understand it as more than a sacred symbol and as a living thing, fundamental to their everyday faith.
- Particularly in times of transition, such as a new school year, the cross can be a tangible sign of hope and reassurance.

Games



- Work in pairs to play a simple game of noughts and crosses. However, ask people to draw a Christian cross rather than an 'X' and explore the idea of the nought as a circle and a symbol of eternal life. Explore the idea of the two things going together.
- Go on a cross hunt around the church. You could introduce the terms, 'cross' and 'crucifix' before you do and help everyone distinguish between the two. See how many of each you can find.
- Write one word of a key section of the Bible passage, e.g. John 3.16, on blocks and encourage everyone to work together to build a cross out of the blocks, trying to memorise the verse as they do. You could also do this as a race, working in teams.

Pray

Prayer

Display an image of the cross as the tree of life
This is the wood of the cross, on which hung the saviour of the world.

Come let us worship.

These are the branches of the cross, where new life grew to save us all.

Come let us worship.

These are the roots of the cross, showing us stability in a changing world.

Come let us worship.

These are the leaves of the cross, spreading life and love to all people.

Come let us worship.

Prayer activity

Give two lolly sticks to each person and help them join them to make a cross. Encourage them to write or draw something on it which they might ask God for help with, perhaps linked to the new school year, then to place their cross in a tray of sand. Find a time to come back to these, e.g. October half term.



Hymns/Songs



In the cross of Christ I glory

O come to the altar, Elevation Worship

For God so loved the world, John Hardwick

Thank you for the cross, Tauren Wells

How great thou art

Intergenerational activities



- Hide small crosses around the space where you are having refreshments after/during your time together and encourage people of all ages to work together to find them all.
- Display a large cross in your space and encourage all ages to work together to 'fill in' the cross, discussing as they do their own journeys of faith and what the cross means to them. You could do this with footprints, small crosses or just bits of paper/card to make a mosaic.
- Give out different types of crosses, e.g. a palm cross, a holding cross, a rosary and encourage people to hold them and talk about them in pairs or small groups.

What next? At home ideas



Look for crosses as you are going about your everyday things this week. Discuss with the people you live with what some of them mean or are associated with. Come back ready to share and discuss next week.

Put the cross you made somewhere at home as a reminder of this symbol of hope, reassurance and salvation.