

Teacher's background notes:

Why the Jewish festivals?

Why do we spend the whole of primary three on the festivals that we find in the Old and New Testament? Some of you may be wondering why we dwell so deeply on Jewish culture and festivals. This study of the festivals and the current traditions attached to Jewish festivals are a window to our past. It is a bit like looking at a family album and seeing grandma as a baby. Suddenly you see that she looked like you when you were a baby. You see the resemblance and you feel like part of a family in a special way. That is what we are doing for the children when we help them discover that the Jewish festivals help us understand why in the catholic tradition we have certain practices, use certain words and celebrate feasts with names like 'Pentecost'.

One of the ways to understand the Eucharist and what Jesus Christ did for us is to also understand what God did for the people of Israel and how they remembered and celebrated that. The blessing prayers; the Old Testament readings; the concept of sacrifice and meal; these all have a fuller, deeper meaning for us if we appreciate the culture and religious traditions that gave birth to them. The same is true for our understanding of 'the Lord's Day' - Sunday, and so many of the important moments of celebration in our church's calendar.

Finally, a good understanding of the festivals and familiarity with the Jewish names for the festivals and their meaning for the Jewish people will help us understand the person of Jesus when we read the Bible. Jesus was a Jew and he prayed, celebrated and lived like a good Jew. A better understanding of the way Jews lived in those days and why they celebrated the different feasts will make it more interesting and meaningful to read the stories of Jesus in the Bible.

I hope the challenge to move into unfamiliar territory will not be too daunting for you and that you will enjoy these lessons and communicate your interest and faith to the children.

Lesson one
Festivals and celebrations

Worksheet 1.1
My family celebrates
Make your own calendar of festivals and celebrations.

Write in the correct month, the name of an event or celebration. Below the name of the festival, in the same space, write one reason why your family celebrates this feast.

Let's pray together:
Thank you God, our Father, for all the days we have, to remember you and praise you. Dear God we want to celebrate your love for us always. Thank you God for the Jewish people who gave us many festivals in our church. Thank you God for the things we have to eat and drink, and the family we have to celebrate with. Amen.

2
Celebrating with Jesus

Lesson one
Festivals and celebrations

Worksheet 1.2
The Jewish Calendar of Festivals

To hang up this calendar at home, take a piece of card. Cut out the calendar along the dotted lines and paste it onto the card. Put a string or rubber band through the hole on the top.

To make a hand for the calendar to show you which part of the year you are in you can cut out the shape of a hand given below and pierce it through the centre of the calendar using a clip which you can open out on the back.

3
Celebrating with Jesus

Teachers Resource 1.1

The Jewish calendar of festivals

Jewish month	Day	Festival or season	Our Year (Roman)	
7	Tishri	1	* Festival of Trumpets (Blowing of the ram's horn) New Year - Rosh Hashanah	September
		10	* Day of Atonement - Yom Kippur (Called the Sabbath of Sabbaths)	September - October
		15-21	* Feast of Tabernacles - Sukkot (also called Feast of booths)	October
8	Marchesvan		Ploughing the fields	October - November
9	Kislev	25	* Dedication of the temple also called festival of lights - Hanukkah	November - December
10	Tebeth		Rainy season	December - January
11	Shebat		Almond trees in flower	January - February
12	Adar	13-14	Festival of Purim Harvesting oranges and citrus	February - March
1	Nisan	14	* Passover - Pesach	March
		15-21	Feast of unleavened bread	March - April
		21	First fruits	March - April
2	Iyyar		Harvesting the barley crop	April - May
3	Sivan	6	* Feast of weeks/ Pentecost - Shavuot Harvesting the wheat crop and the receiving of the ten commandments	May - June
4	Tammuz		Taking care of the vines (grapes)	June - July
5	Ab		Taking care of the vines	July - August
6	Elul		Harvesting the grapes and olives	August - September

*Sabbath Saturday (every 7th day) - a day of the Lord.