Seder Celebration

Before the Seder celebration prepare/gather:

- 1 bottle of grape juice
- cups - 1 for each family member
- small plates - 1 for each family member
- 1 large plate or platter
- Seder plate picture printed out (2nd to last page)
- 1 shank bone (or chicken leg bone) - boil so that it is clean
- 1 hard-boiled egg
- horseradish sauce (enough for each family member to receive a small spread)
- lettuce (usually Romaine - enough for each family member to have a small piece)
- applesauce (enough for each family member to receive a spoonful)
- parsley (enough for each family member to receive a sprig)
- 1 bowl of salt water
- matza (enough for each family member to receive 4 small pieces - about the size of a Triscuit)
- Question Sheet (last page - 1 per family member)

Place the Seder plate picture on the large plate or platter. Then place the food on top of the corresponding picture. For example, the applesauce will go on the charoset. Place the bowl of salt water and plate of matza next to the platter. Keep all of these items in front of the leader.

Seder

Leader:

Let us begin our Seder. The actions of our Seder today will honor the Hebrew customs of Passover and connect them to Jesus’ celebration of the Last Supper, which was a Passover meal. The story of Passover begins more than 3,000 years ago:

The Chosen People, the Israelites, were slaves in Egypt. God called Moses to lead His people from their captivity, but in spite of nine terrible plagues, the Pharaoh would not set the people free. Then an angel of the Lord was sent to strike down the first born son of every Egyptian family. The Jewish people had, at God’s command, sacrificed a lamb and sprinkled its blood on the doorposts so that the angel would see it and “pass over” their homes. The Israelites also prepared to leave their homes. God told Moses that each year the Israelites should observe a day of remembrance, a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from slavery. Thus Passover became a great feast which centers around the retelling (called the Haggadah) of this saving act of God.

Each year, we Catholic Christians celebrate Holy Thursday. It was on this day that Jesus celebrated the Passover for the last time. In that meal, Jesus gave his body and blood as food for our journey and as the sign of our deliverance from the slavery of sin. Keep in mind that Jesus was Jewish; he faithfully observed his religion and kept its laws. What we do today in our Seder, Jesus did as well.
Leader:
Praise to you, O Lord our God, for choosing us as your people. Because you love us, you have given us feasts for our happiness and holidays for our joy and holiness. You gave us this special feast of Passover to remember the freedom from slavery you gave our ancestors and the freedom from sin you give us in Christ.

Everyone takes 1 sip of juice.

Leader:
Now we will learn about the meaning of the Seder foods. After I name each of the foods, you ask the questions labeled Questions for the Seder Food on your sheet of paper.

Here is a shank bone of a lamb called zeroa in Hebrew.

Family:
What is the meaning of the shank bone?

Leader:
The shank bone of a lamb is used as a reminder of the lamb offered on Passover at the Temple in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. It also recalls that God passed over the houses of the Hebrew people in Egypt. It is now a reminder for us that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

Here is an egg. In Hebrew it is called beytza.

Family:
What is the meaning of the egg?

Leader:
The egg is a reminder of the roasted egg offered at the Temple of Jerusalem during the Passover festival. It is also a symbol of hope and new life. We remember that this celebration happens in the springtime when all the earth is coming to life again.

Here are horseradish and lettuce, which are bitter herbs called maror and chazeret in Hebrew.

Family:
What is the meaning of the bitter herbs?

Leader:
The bitter herbs remind us of the bitterness and hardship of slavery.
Here is some applesauce. Usually it is charoset, which is a mixture of apples, cinnamon, nuts, and wine.

**Family:**
What is the meaning of the applesauce?

**Leader:**
The applesauce or charoset is a reminder of the mortar used by the Hebrews who were forced to do labor and build monuments in Egypt.

Here is a sprig of parsley called karpas in Hebrew.

**Family:**
What is the meaning of the parsley?

**Leader:**
The karpas is a reminder of springtime, the season of Passover. We use it as a sign of gratitude to God for the goodness of the earth, for our bread, and for our food.

{Pass out a small piece of parsley to each family member. THEY DO NOT EAT IT YET!}

Here is a bowl of salt water.

**Family:**
What is the meaning of the salt water?

**Leader:**
The salt water is a symbol of the bitterness the Hebrew people suffered during their years of slavery and the many tears they cried. As the bowl is passed around, dip your parsley in the salt water and take a bite. Let the taste of it remind you of how bitter life can be when it is not lived close to God, when we are slaves to our weaknesses and failings. Say a quiet prayer as you taste it and ask God to help you stay close to him and resist giving in to your weaker self.

{Pass the bowl of salt water and let each have time to dip and taste their sprig of parsley.}

Here are three matza.

**Family:**
What is the meaning of this special bread called matza?

**Leader:**
Matza means unleavened bread, that is, bread without yeast. Yeast is put into dough to make bread rise, but that takes time. When our ancestors in Egypt had to flee quickly, they had no time to wait
for the bread to rise. This is the bread of suffering that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Once we were slaves, but now we are free, redeemed by a God who loves us.

Now comes the maggid (mah-geed.) These are the four traditional questions asked by the youngest child at every Passover meal.

**Have youngest child (or all your children together) read:**
Why is this night different from all other nights?

**Leader:**
On this night we celebrate the going forth of Israel from slavery into freedom and redemption, from a time of hardship to a time of blessing. God led the Hebrews through the desert to safety. God made a covenant with them and through them, with us: that He would be our God and we would be His people.

For Christians, this is the night of the Last Supper. Jesus gathered with his followers as we do now. And we remember how Jesus became the Paschal Lamb, offered for us...how His death brought us life and freedom from fear of sin and death. Jesus passed over from death to life, a life He shares with us right now.

**Have youngest child (or all your children together) read:**
Why do we eat only matza tonight?

**Leader:**
When Pharoah let our ancestors go from Egypt, they were forced to flee in great haste. They had no time to bake their bread. They could not wait for the yeast to rise, so the sun beating down on the dough as they hurried along baked it into flat unleavened bread called matza.

For Christians, this is the night that Jesus said of the bread, “This is my body, which is given for you.” We eat one bread as a sign of our unity. We belong to each other, and to God. All life is God’s gift, and we share it together as we now share this bread.

{Break one of the matza into small pieces and pass the plate around. When everyone has some, say:}

May we eat our bread in gladness, and drink our wine in joy, because our works and our lives please God.

{Everyone eats their piece of matza.}

**Have youngest child (or all your children together) read:**
Why do we drink tonight from the fruit of the vine?

**Leader:**
Wine is a symbol of joy, and joy is what the Hebrews felt when they were led out of slavery to freedom.

As Christians, we remember that Jesus said on this Passover night that he would not drink the fruit of the vine again until the Kingdom of God comes. The kingdom comes whenever each of us tries to be just and merciful. The kingdom comes when we try to live in peace as brothers and sisters. We drink the cup as a promise to try and build the kingdom of God right now, right here on earth.

Our bread and wine are holy because all food is a gift of life and because on the altar they become the body and blood of Jesus.

{Invite the family to lift their cups of juice while you say:}

May we eat our bread in gladness, and drink our wine in joy, because our works and our lives please God.

{Everyone takes a sip of juice.}

**Have youngest child (or all your children together) read:**

Why should all of us be here together?

**Leader:**

The Hebrew people knew they were God’s Chosen Ones. They knew God would always lead them as He had when they fled Egypt, when they wandered through the desert, when they arrived in the Promised Land. Their strength was as a people. Passover is the great feast that remembers and celebrates this story of their unity and God’s faithfulness.

As Christians, the same is true for us. We are God’s people, we belong to God and each other. We are a community, one body, in Christ. As Jesus said during the Last Supper at Passover, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you love one another, than everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

{Lift up your cup and say:}

Praise to you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who redeemed us, who gave us this special day when we eat unleavened bread. We are glad, and we praise you.

{Invite all to take a sip of juice. Then break another matza into pieces, enough for everyone to have 2 pieces and say:}

Praise to you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who by your commandments make us holy, who commanded us to eat this bread.
Pass the plate around and ask everyone to take two pieces. Then pass the horseradish, lettuce, and applesauce. Instruct everyone to put a small amount of each between the two pieces of matza.

This is to remind us of the bitterness of suffering in slavery and in sin.

Allow everyone time to eat the matza, horseradish, and applesauce. Then break another matza into pieces and have everyone take one piece. Ask everyone to hold this last piece of matza as you say:

We praise you, O Lord our God, King of the universe. You feed us on your love and your kindness. The bread we eat reminds us that you give us life because you love us.

This may have been the moment when Jesus broke the bread and said, “This is my body.”

Refill the cups with juice if necessary and continue with this final prayer:

What return can I make to God for all his goodness to me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I will walk in God’s presence in the land of the living.

All take a sip of juice.

This may have been the moment when Jesus lifted his cup, gave thanks, and said, “Drink all of you for this is my blood, the blood of the new covenant which is to be shed for all.”

When Jesus finished the Last Supper, He said, “I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me, and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me.” Amen.

At this point, the Seder would continue with a festive meal and close with a special prayer.

Videos that explain a Seder/Passover further:
Judaism 101: The Passover Seder: What to Expect https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzsuL9U1a_k
Passover with Mayim Bialik https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4ofR0Fn7s
The Seder Plate

Beitzah - hardboiled egg symbolises the festival offerings brought to the Holy Temple.

Zeroa - shank bone symbolises the lamb sacrificed at the Holy Temple in ancient times.

Karpas - vegetable such as parsley, onion or potato is dipped in salt water and symbolises tears.

Charoset - mix of apple, nuts, spices and wine symbolises bricks and mortar to show the hard work of a slave.

Maror - bitter herbs (horseradish) symbolises the bitterness of slavery in Egypt.

Chazeret - bitter vegetable (celery or lettuce) symbolises the bitterness of slavery in Egypt.
Questions for the Seder Foods

What is the meaning of the shank bone?
What is the meaning of the egg?
What is the meaning of the bitter herbs?
What is the meaning of the applesauce?
What is the meaning of the parsley?
What is the meaning of the salt water?
What is the meaning of the matza?

Maggid Questions

1. Why is this night different from all other nights?
2. Why do we eat only matza tonight?
3. Why do we drink tonight from the fruit of the vine?
4. Why should all of us be here together?

Questions for the Seder Foods

What is the meaning of the shank bone?
What is the meaning of the egg?
What is the meaning of the bitter herbs?
What is the meaning of the applesauce?
What is the meaning of the parsley?
What is the meaning of the salt water?
What is the meaning of the matza?

Maggid Questions

5. Why is this night different from all other nights?
6. Why do we eat only matza tonight?
7. Why do we drink tonight from the fruit of the vine?
8. Why should all of us be here together?