


Easter Retreat 2015
Feast of the Resurrection Flame

In this take-home resource, we offer activities that you might want to do with your family as follow up to some of the spiritual concepts presented at the Easter Retreat. You may find that these ideas will spark your own creative thoughts unique to your family or region and of course the ages of your children. Please feel free to email your ideas to us, so that we can share them with others.

We hope you enjoy doing these activities as much as we enjoyed bringing them to you. In the flame of the Holy Christ Child,

The Montessori International Family and Youth Team
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Family Activities:

-  In one of the lectures, Mother shared a Vietnamese folktale. We have provided the story for you below and a fun activity for your family. We recommend this story for children ages 9 and older. However, you know your children best, so please use as you see fit. If you share it with younger children, we recommend a simple teaching about what "hell" is.

The Difference Between Heaven and Hell
(Adapted from a Vietnamese folktale)

To tell the story dramatically, tape a spoon or chopsticks to a yardstick. (It would be ideal if you could make one for each member of the family.) Place some fun food that your family enjoys in the center of the table.

When reading the paragraph about people in hell, have each member of the family try to feed themselves. During the paragraph about heaven, invite them to feed each other to illustrate the way the people ate in heaven.

Long ago there lived an old woman who had a wish. She wished more than anything to see for herself the difference between heaven and hell. The monks in the temple agreed to grant her request. They put a blindfold around her eyes, and said, "First you shall see hell."

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When the blindfold was removed, the old woman was standing at the entrance to a great dining hall. The hall was full of round tables, each piled high with the most delicious foods.

The old woman noticed that there were people seated around those round tables. She saw that their bodies were thin, and their faces were gaunt, and creased with frustration. Each person held a chopstick (or spoon). The chopsticks must have been three feet long! They were so long that the people in hell could reach the food on those platters, but they could not get the food back to their mouths. As the old woman watched, she heard their hungry desperate cries. "I've seen enough," she cried. "Please let me see heaven."

And so again the blindfold was put around her eyes, and the old woman heard, "Now you shall see heaven." When the blindfold was removed, the old woman was confused. For there she stood again, at the entrance to a great dining hall, filled with round tables piled high with the same lavish feast. And again, she saw that there were people sitting just out of arm's reach of the food with those three-foot long chopsticks.

But as the old woman looked closer, she noticed that the people in heaven were plump and had rosy, happy faces. As she watched, a joyous sound of laughter filled the air.

And soon the old woman was laughing too, for now she understood the difference between heaven and hell for herself. For, the people in heaven were using those long chopsticks to feed each other.



2. We learn about Christ through many examples including studying the lives of the saints, the lives of the masters, and the lives of souls who have been a part of our community. In the lecture given by Mother shared this story about Saint Francis.

Saint Francis and the Leper

(Excerpt taken from St. Francis of Assisi at Catholic Online)

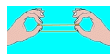
One day while riding through the countryside, Francis, the man who loved beauty, who was so picky about food, who hated deformity, came face to face with a leper. Repelled by the appearance and the smell of the leper, Francis nevertheless jumped down from his horse and kissed the hand of the leper. When his kiss of peace was returned, Francis was filled with joy. As he rode off, he turned around for a last wave, and saw that the leper had disappeared. He always looked upon it as a test from God...that he had passed.

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Mother stated in the lecture, *The Practical Art of Living a Spiritual Life II: Expanding the Power of the Heart*, given November 29, 1998, “The idea here can be summarized in one word: **Stretch!** Do something you don't want to do. This is exactly what Saint Francis did--and it changed his life.

Francis had always been terrified of leprosy. Did you know that? ... As he [Francis] reached out to give the leper alms, Francis kissed him. It was a turning point in Francis' life. From then on, he devoted himself to serving the sick. ...Think about your own path: Is there a “leper” in your life who needs your love?—something or someone who repulses you? Open your heart and embrace that person.”



Follow-up science experiment: Children love doing science experiments and it's effective whenever we can teach spiritual concepts using science. The following experiment conveys what it takes to “stretch” an object (like our heart). It takes heat, the fire of God. When we give the violet flame, serve others or do something kind that might be difficult for us, we are *stretching* our hearts, like Saint Francis did.

Objective:

This project determines how temperature affects the stretch of a rubber band.

Research Questions:

What happens to rubber when it is heated?

What happens when it is cooled?

Materials:

- Rubber band
- Scissors
- Weight set or washers (or something with weight like coins)
- Shoebox (about the length of a ruler)
- Ruler
- Pencil and paper
- Refrigerator
- Hair dryer
- Pen

Experiment:


- Cut your rubber band in half with the scissors.
- Tie a weight or washer to one end.

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- Sit the shoebox so that it stands tall and place the ruler inside. Poke a hole into the middle of the top of the box. Thread the rubber band through the hole.
- Tie the rubber band to a pencil. Be sure to make sure the weight tied to the other end can swing freely.
- Allow the rubber band to stretch for three minutes at room temperature. Then measure the length of the rubber band with the ruler. Record your data.
- Now put the shoebox into the refrigerator for 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, remove the shoebox, and measure the length of the rubber band again. How does the rubber band feel now? Record your data and observations.
- Now it's time to heat things up! Use a hair dryer to heat the rubber band for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, measure the rubber band again. How does the rubber band feel now? Record your information.
- Analyze your data. When did your rubber band have the most stretch? When did your rubber band have the least amount of stretch? Why do you think this happened? Were you surprised?


3. In the same lecture, Mother spoke of keys that can help us expand the heart. With younger children do a family project of making large keys out of tagboard or paper. Write each word on a separate key. Hang in a prominent place in your home for all to see.

 **one: Forgiveness** – “First, last and always, forgive, forgive and forgive. If you haven't forgiven someone, go and find him and implore his forgiveness.” Read Bible stories on forgiveness.


 **two: Violet Flame** – “Use the violet flame to transmute burdens of the heart.

 **three: Joy and gratitude** – “Increase the magnet of your heart by activating joy and gratitude. Joy goes hand in hand with love. Joy is contagious, and it is magnetic.”


 **four: Heart perspective** – “Heart perspective is consciously thinking, acting, and feeling through the heart.”


 **five: Inner person** – “Look beyond outer appearances to the inner essence.” What makes you and others special? Look for the good and the Christ in others.

 **six: Stretch** – “Stretch the muscles of the heart.”

 **seven: Healing the heart** – Establish vertical versus horizontal relationships. Move up into your Higher Self and relate to the other person at the level of their Higher Self.

 **eight: Guard the Heart**

 **nine: Nourish yourself** – “Be realistic about yourself--your negatives and your positives. And work hard on overcoming the negatives. But don't forget to play hard too! Learn to laugh at yourself and your foibles and enjoy life! Love yourself! And love yourself enough to say, to know when to say no.”

 **ten: Softness** – “Cultivate softness. Softness is a nurturing, giving attitude that does not take offense at anything.”

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Service Projects: One way to expand the heart is through service projects. Consider what service projects your family can do together.

4. **Sympathy vs. Compassion**

Discuss with your children, especially teens, the meaning of the difference between sympathy and compassion.

Mother said, "When we love another, we want him to realize his full potential. This takes compassion, not sympathy. Sympathy is allowing someone to feel sorry for himself, to indulge in his weaknesses. When we do that, we are not encouraging the other person to become the fullness of his being. Compassion, on the other hand, dips into the fires of the heart to uplift and ennoble others. Compassion won't leave someone where you find him, where you have found him.

Buddha describes compassion as: *"Compassion is that which makes the heart of the good move at the pain of others. It crushes and destroys the pain of others; thus, it is called compassion. It is called compassion because it shelters and embraces the distressed."*

5. **Meditation**

In the lecture *Christus*, Mother shared this meditation. "As you sound the AUM, visualize the sacred fire breath going forth from you in a golden ratio spiral. And returning to you from the heart of Christ is a spiral again and therefore you sense this wording, 'Drink me while I AM drinking thee.' You send forth intense white fire as the call--the call, the fulcrum of your individuality and your Christhood."

[chant] AUM Christus. AUM Christus. AUM Christus. AUM Christus.

If you would like to give an AUM mediation with our beloved messenger, you can link to the Become the Buddha youtube video by going to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOHmenh8DsU>

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