

# Read

Matthew 21:1-11  
Isaiah 50:4-7  
Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18,  
19-20, 23-24  
Philippians 2:6-11  
Matthew 26:14-27:66 or  
27:11-54

## LIVING THE WORD

# Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

March 29, 2026



## REFLECTION

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus grapples with the weight of the impending crucifixion. His prayer—“[N]ot as I will, but as you will” (Mt 26:39)—is an expression of profound trust in the divine plan despite personal agony.

Judas’ betrayal, the disciples’ desertion, and Peter’s denial pile abandonment on abandonment. Yet, within this apparent loss, we find the profound trust of Jesus in his Father’s plan. Even as the events of the passion unfold, leading to the crucifixion, Jesus’ perseverance in obeying God’s will to the end bears witness to the depth of love God has for his creation and all of humanity: Jesus redeems us by his blood.

Palm Sunday challenges us to reflect on our own journey of trust when everything seems lost. In moments of betrayal, uncertainty, or loss, can we echo Jesus’ prayer, submitting our will to the divine plan? Can we find solace in the trust Jesus placed in his Father, even when faced with the most profound loss?



## ACTION

During his agony in the garden, Jesus expressed his fear but also affirmed his trust in God’s plan. Create a personal statement of trust that you can recite during difficult moments. You can pick a verse from Scripture to memorize or craft your own short affirmation of trust in God’s purposes. To remind you to turn to God in times of trial or loss, write your affirmation on a small card and place it in your prayer space at home.

“Trust the past to the  
mercy of God, the present  
to his love, and the future to  
his providence.”

—St. Augustine



## ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Think of a time when you felt betrayed. How did you handle it, and did it affect your trust in others or in God?
- ❖ How can trust in God’s plan bring comfort in difficult times?



March 29, 2026

# PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

## LECTIONARY #37A AND 38A

Matthew 21:1-11 (at the Blessing of the Palms)

Isaiah 50:4-7

Psalms 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Philippians 2:6-11

Matthew 26:14-27:66 or 27:11-54

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

The Mass for Palm Sunday takes us through a wide range of emotions: joy and exultation at the beginning of the Mass with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to a sober and solemn Gospel proclamation of the passion during the Liturgy of the Word. This is just a small foretaste of what will come as we journey with Jesus during this Holy Week. This is a time of deep spiritual reflection as we prepare to celebrate Easter. All of Lent has led us to this point and even though we know how the story ends, we often become emotional during this time. Give the teens a safe space to express their emotions and spiritual reflections about the events in Jesus' life we commemorate this week. Encourage them to attend the Triduum liturgies (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil).

**Q FOCUS:** *God's love for us is on display in the crucifixion.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Palm Sunday begins Holy Week, the most sacred week of the Christian year. Each day invites us to enter more deeply into Jesus' journey to the cross. Spend time this week reading the daily readings for each day. (These can be found at <https://bible.usccb>

[.org/readings/calendar](https://bible.usccb.org/readings/calendar).) Make an effort to attend as many liturgies as you are able to this week.

### Church Teaching Connection

"On the cross, even as he felt utter abandonment—this is the ultimate end—Jesus refused to yield to despair; instead, he prayed and trusted. . . . At the hour of abandonment, he continued to love his disciples who had fled, leaving him alone. In his abandonment he forgave those who crucified him (v. 34). Here we see the abyss of our many evils immersed in a greater love, with the result that our isolation becomes fellowship. . . . [A] love like this, embracing us totally and to the very end, the love of Jesus, can turn our stony hearts into hearts of flesh. His is a love of mercy, tenderness and compassion" (Pope Francis, Homily, April 2, 2023).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory.**

### Gospel

*Matthew 27:33-54*

**Reader:** The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

And when they came to a place called Golgotha—which means Place of the Skull—they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink. After they had

crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, and come down from the cross!" Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way.

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "This one is calling for Elijah." Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him." But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.

*[Here all kneel and pause for a short time.]*

And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many. The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, "Truly, this was the Son of God!"

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

On Palm Sunday, there are two different Gospels proclaimed at Mass. The liturgy begins with the triumphant entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey and lauded as the Son of David. It was a kingly entrance and one filled with joy. However, during the Liturgy of the Word, an account of Jesus' passion and death is read. The quick turn of events can be hard to take in all at one liturgy.

► **How are you feeling as we enter Holy Week and prepare to celebrate with Jesus his Last Supper (Holy Thursday), his death (Good Friday), his time in the tomb (Holy Saturday), and his resurrection (Easter Vigil / Easter Sunday)?**

► **What are some things you can do this week to honor this most holy time of our liturgical year?**

The account we just heard of Jesus' passion and death described a terrible scene. Not only is Jesus being crucified, but he is also being humiliated, mocked, and mistreated. During his ministry, crowds had sought him out, praised him for his miracles, and hailed him as a great prophet or something more. Now, his words are being taken out of context and used to mock him. They call into question his identity. How can a king lose power like that? How can the Son of God be forsaken by God? Their view of Jesus' identity did not match how Jesus understood his identity.

► **What kind of king was Jesus? How did he lead others and show his power?**

► **In what ways did Jesus' actions show that he was the Son of God?**

Jesus' kingdom was not of this earth. It was not political. It was the kingdom of God that will only reach its fullness at the end of time. All of Jesus' actions glorified God, demonstrating his identity as the Son of God. God's power does not conform to

worldly understandings of power. Rather, it is the expression of God's divine love, mercy, and justice. It is expressed most succinctly in Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus suffered and died, so that we could be saved through his resurrection and triumph over sin and death. This is true power and the truth of who God is.

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 162.*

**This week we celebrate Holy Week.**

**We may experience many emotions as we walk with Jesus along his journey to the cross.**

**Jesus suffers and dies for us; this is God's power demonstrated in love to save us from our sins.**

## Act on the Word

### Holy Land Virtual Pilgrimage

*For this activity, you will need laptops, tablets, or smartphones and Bibles.*

Taking a virtual tour of important sites in the Holy Land and the sacred places where Jesus walked can help make the events of Holy Week come to life. Divide the teens into small groups of two to four people and make sure each group can access the internet. Assign the following locations, dividing them evenly among the groups:

- \* Bethany (the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus)
- \* Cenacle (the upper room where the Last Supper was held)
- \* Chapel of the Condemnation (in Jerusalem)
- \* Garden of Gethsemane (and the Church of All Nations)
- \* Golden Gate (in Jerusalem)
- \* Golgotha/Calvary (and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre)

\* The House of Caiaphas (at the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu)

\* Mount of Olives

\* Via Dolorosa

Each group will research their locations and put together a short presentation on them. (You can have them use a program that creates a slide show, or you can simply have them create a document.) Have the teens find information and pictures about these holy sites. Ask them to also try to connect these locations to the Gospel accounts of the days surrounding Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection (see Matthew 26:1—28:20; Mark 14:1—16:20; Luke 22:1—24:53; and John 12:1—13:38, 18:1—21:25). If in their research they discover other locations that were significant, they can add those to their presentation. Once the groups have had time to research and create a short presentation, have them share that information with the larger group. After all groups have shared, invite the teens to share any thoughts they have about how this exercise can help them during Holy Week.

### Closing Prayer

*Almighty God,*

*that we should know anything of your  
love and mercy is gift enough.*

*That we should be a recipient of your  
grace is more than enough.*

*That we are offered eternal life in you  
is immeasurable.*

*With tremendous gratitude,*

*we come before you and offer you our  
praise and adoration.*

*Through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

### For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend the Triduum liturgies and Easter Sunday Mass with family or friends.*