

# Read

Matthew 21:1-11

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



## REFLECTION

There is an extra Gospel reading in today's liturgy that is read at the beginning of Mass, commemorating Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Coupled with the Gospel reading later in Mass, we experience many emotions. First, the crowds joyfully welcome Jesus into Jerusalem (during the procession with the palm branches). Later in the liturgy, we experience the anger of the crowds who cry out for his crucifixion. The Gospel reading concludes with the sorrow of Jesus' death and burial. This whirlwind of emotions is an uncomfortable reminder of our own fickleness. All too often, we praise goodness and virtue with our words only to turn around and destroy it with our sins. We then feel sorrow when we realize the consequences of our sin.

## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What image from today's readings stands out to you the most? How can you use this image in your prayer this week as you journey with Jesus to the cross and resurrection?
- ❖ Is it really possible to avoid responsibility for our actions or inaction by passing the responsibility off to someone else? Where does our responsibility begin and end?

# LIVING THE WORD

## Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

April 2, 2023

## ACTION

We are fortunate that the blood of Christ, for us and for every generation, is by God's grace a blessing rather than a curse. Instead of paying the price for our part in Christ's crucifixion—for all the ways we break the world a little through our actions and our inaction—Christ's sacrifice atones for our sins and brings about healing. This week, prepare yourself to rise with Christ at Easter by bringing your sins to the foot of the cross in the sacrament of reconciliation.



**"Beautiful Scandalous Night"  
—Six Pence None the Richer  
and Bebo Norman [https://  
www.youtube.com/watch  
?v=JmhCnn6xcVY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmhCnn6xcVY)**



April 2, 2023

# 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

We hear the story of Jesus' passion in today's Gospel. Of course, we begin our liturgical celebration with the reading of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on a donkey. However, during Mass, we hear Matthew's account of Jesus' passion. Jesus is humiliated, tortured, mocked and hung on a cross. Many people question why he does not save himself, just as they questioned why he did not heal Lazarus. Also, it is reminiscent of the temptation in the desert, when Satan wonders why Jesus will not save himself. This is a difficult passage to read. It is important to help the teens enter into the story so that they can contemplate the true meaning of Holy Week and Easter Sunday.

**Q FOCUS:** We prepare our hearts for Holy Week.

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Palm Sunday begins the holiest week of our liturgical year. This Thursday, we celebrate Holy Thursday, where we hear of the Lord's Supper and Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet. These actions we recall highlight that we are called to be servants of one another. Jesus leads by example. On Good Friday, we will hear the proclamation of Jesus' passion again. We reflect and meditate on Jesus' final moments and on his death on the cross.

## Church Teaching Connection

"With every good reason his passion and death, sacramentally renewed in the eucharist, are called by the liturgy the 'sacrifice of reconciliation': reconciliation with God and with the brethren. . . . Thus there must be proclaimed once more the church's belief in Christ's redeeming act, in the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection, as the cause of man's reconciliation in its twofold aspect of liberation from sin and communion of grace with God" (*Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, 7).

## 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:*

Today, we celebrate Palm Sunday. Jesus has entered into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey, and his followers and disciples celebrate his return to Jerusalem. The Gospel passage of that event is read at the beginning of Mass today. In contrast, during the Liturgy of the Word, we hear the story of Jesus' crucifixion. With these readings, we prepare ourselves for the holiest week of our liturgical year. We hear that Jesus is mocked, tortured, and crucified. The people walking by and witnessing this horrific event wonder why he does not save himself. This question recalls Jesus' temptation in the desert by Satan, from the beginning of Lent. Jesus refuses to save himself, refuses the power offered to him during his time in the desert. And he refuses to do so again.

► **How might you have reacted if you witnessed these events? What might you have thought about what was going on?**

Listening to this Gospel passage focuses us on the week ahead but also prepares us for the upcoming experience of Easter Sunday. We know that the story does not end with his crucifixion. But this week, we sit with this story. The man who came to save us is humiliated, tortured, mocked, and hung on a cross to die. He dies for those who punished him, for those who mocked him, and for all of us. The death of Jesus is not fair, and it is not right, but it is necessary to forgive the sins of God's people and heal the world broken by sin.

► **What image stands out to you the most in this passage? What are some ways you can pray with it this week?**

The magnitude of Jesus' death is evidenced by the darkness that comes over the earth. An earthquake rips through the earth as well. Even though Jesus knew that his death was inevitable, as he was predicting it throughout the Gospel, his humanity is clearly evident in this passage as he cries out in pain to God. We can focus on his divinity, which those witnessing the event do by demanding that he save himself; instead, Matthew, the Gospel writer, shows us the human side of Jesus in his suffering and death. This can be a difficult passage to hear and a difficult passage to meditate on but it prepares us for the week ahead as we enter into this journey to the cross.

## 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 154.

**Palm Sunday Mass begins with joy, but shifts to a reflection on Jesus' suffering and death on the cross.**

**What kinds of feelings does this story bring up for you?**

**Jesus is fully human and fully divine; as such, his death and resurrection are our salvation.**

## Act on the Word

### Stations of the Cross

For this activity, you will need copies of a Stations of the Cross resource. Your parish might already have prayer resources for this, or you can find them online (for example, <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/stations-of-the-cross/scriptural-stations-of-the-cross>).

The Stations of the Cross are an important ritual that many people participate in during Lent, and especially during Holy Week. The Stations of the Cross highlight the final hours of Jesus' life. It is a way to journey alongside Jesus to the cross.

Many parish churches have images depicting the stations inside the nave of the church; some may also have access to outdoor stations of the cross, which can be a nice change in scenery. Assign each teen with a reading assignment from the prayer resource you are using. You should begin by giving

some basic instructions: remain silent at the station, listen to the reading, spend a few moments in silence, pray the closing prayer, and then you will lead them to the next station. It might be helpful to briefly outline the format with the first station before beginning the prayer.

After the prayer invite the teens to sit down in the church or together outdoors, if outdoors. Ask them to reflect quietly on the journey of Jesus to his crucifixion. Give them a few minutes of quiet to reflect and meditate on the experience. Ask them to share the experience of the prayer: Have they participated in the Stations of the Cross before? What struck them during this experience? Which station really impacted them?

### Closing Prayer

Loving and merciful God,  
as we walk with Jesus in these days  
of grace,  
grant that we be firm in our commitment  
to follow him through his suffering  
and death  
and come at last to share in the eternal  
life he has won for us.  
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.litwp.org](http://www.litwp.org). Encourage teens to attend the Triduum liturgies and Easter Sunday Mass with family or friends.