

Palm (Passion) Sunday

(Two alternative liturgies are given, one for Palm Sunday and a longer version which includes the story of Christ's Passion. The reading of the Passion for the adult congregation takes some considerable time, therefore you must check in advance with your priest and then choose the version appropriate for your age group and the time available to you.)

INTRODUCTION

The Jews were waiting for a king to lead them against the Romans and make them free again. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he was welcomed as this king, but he came as a king of peace and not to bring war.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

The words of the prophet Isaiah remind us that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, shared the light of his love with us all. (cf Isaiah 9:2-3, 6-7)

The world was full of darkness and shadows, but now it is filled with light so everyone can see. God sent his only son, Jesus, to fill our world with peace and love.

SORRY

In this reading from St. Luke, Jesus reminds us that God will forgive us as easily as we forgive others. (cf Luke 6:37-38)

Do not always believe that you are right and others are wrong, but treat people the way you would want to be treated. If you are full of forgiveness for others, then God will be full of forgiveness for you.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 1:
Share your word with us.

GOSPEL (cf Matthew 21:1-11)

Jesus and his disciples arrived at the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem. He sent two of the disciples to the next village to collect a donkey and her foal. 'If anyone stops you, tell them that they are for me,' he said. They brought the animals to Jesus, and put cloaks on their backs so that Jesus could ride on them. When the people heard that Jesus was coming they laid their cloaks on the road before him, and pulled branches off the palm trees to wave in the air. The crowds grew more and more excited and shouted at the top of their voices, 'Hosanna, Hosanna! Blessed is the

one sent by the Lord.' Excitement filled the whole city, and some people asked, 'Who is this man?' The people answered them, 'It is Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

DISCUSSION

What did Jesus ask his friends to fetch from the village?

Would you expect a king to ride on a little donkey or a grand horse?

Why did Jesus choose a donkey? – By his actions Jesus was showing the crowds that he was no soldier, but instead he came as a king of peace, riding on a meek and gentle donkey.

What did the crowds wave in their hands and what words did they use to cheer as he passed? – They waved branches from the palm trees they found along the roadside to welcome this king, just as we might wave flags in a procession today. They shouted 'Hosanna, Hosanna!' – which is a word used to praise God.

Do you know why Jerusalem was so crowded at this time? – Many people had come to celebrate the Passover. This was a feast the Jews shared together each year to remember how God had saved them from slavery in Egypt.

ACTIVITY

Because of the length of the adults' Liturgy of the Word today, there is often sufficient time to complete several activities. The suggestions made should be adapted to suit the age group and numbers of children in your particular group.

1. If you are able, enlarge the figure of Jesus on a donkey and photocopy onto thin card. The children can then make the decoration of the figure and donkey colourful and imaginative! Then fix another piece of card to make the figures free-standing. Other children can be involved in making newspaper 'palms' to lay before the finished figure.

2. Make a large frieze of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Make the picture detailed and interesting and using it, allow the children to retell the story in their own words.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
Prince of Peace and King of the World,
we pray that
and that your peace will spread
throughout our world today
and touch the lives of everyone.

The Passion of Christ

(Alternative version)

INTRODUCTION

On Palm Sunday Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was welcomed as a king by the crowds. Yet only days later, their cries of 'Hosanna!' would change to 'Crucify him!', and Jesus would be put to death. Using today's readings we will follow his journey to the cross, so that we will be ready to share in the glory of his resurrection on Easter Sunday.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and read Candle Prayer 1:
Flicker, flicker little candle.

SORRY

Encourage the children to close their eyes and to listen carefully to the words of this prayer:
Father, we must be ready to forgive others,
just as you forgave us.

Even as Jesus was hanging on the cross,
he forgave the soldiers that crucified him.
Help us to forgive anyone who has hurt us,
and never to harm anyone by our words or actions.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 1:
Share your word with us.

THE PASSION

The activity and the readings are closely interlinked for the telling of the Passion. Using a large copy of a map of Jerusalem and surroundings briefly outline the events of Holy Week, encouraging the children to give as many details as they can. Place numbers on the map to correspond to a reading and to the illustrated scenes. As a suggestion, complete the first three readings and then distribute the pictures for colouring. When complete, assemble the pictures in order and read the final three readings. With the pictures and the map displayed, encourage the children to recount the events leading up to Easter Sunday themselves.

1. The Passover. (cf 26:19-30)

The disciples went to a house in Jerusalem and prepared a room to celebrate the Passover meal. As Jesus shared the meal with his twelve closest friends he said to them, 'One of you will make me very sad tonight.' The disciples were dismayed at his words, 'Surely you are mistaken Lord,' but he answered: 'No. One of you sharing this very meal will hand me over to my enemies.'

As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and said a prayer of blessing. He broke the bread into pieces and shared it with them saying, 'Take this and eat it, this is my body.' Then he took a cup of wine and said a prayer of thanks. He passed the cup to each of them and said, 'Take this and drink it, for this is my blood. Just as my Father promised, it will be poured out to save you from your sins.'

Then they sang some hymns together before setting off for the Mount of Olives.

DISCUSSION

What was the Passover meal?

It was a meal celebrated every year by the Jews to remind them of how God had saved his people from slavery in Egypt.

What was the name of the disciple who would let Jesus down?

What did Jesus share with his friends at this last supper together?

What was so special about this bread and wine?

When and where do we share a meal and use the same words that Jesus used?

2. The Agony in the Garden. (cf Matthew 26:36-50)
After the Last Supper Jesus took Peter, James and John and went to a garden called Gethsemane. It was quiet and peaceful there and Jesus wanted to pray, for he was filled with great sadness and fear. He said to his disciples: 'Stay awake because I need you with me tonight.' Then he began to pray, 'Father, I am afraid of what lies ahead but I will always do whatever you ask.'

When he returned to the three disciples he found them asleep. 'Wake up!' he said. 'Could you not stay awake with me for such a short time.' Then Jesus went away and prayed as before but returned to find them all asleep again. 'Get up, the time has come.' Judas, one of the twelve disciples, appeared with a crowd of people and walked up to Jesus and kissed him. Then they arrested him and led him away.

DISCUSSION

Where did Jesus go to pray?

Which disciple did he take with him?

Why was Jesus so sad and afraid?

How did Judas betray Jesus?

3. Jesus is condemned to death (cf *Matthew 26:57, 65; 27:1-2, 23-24, 27-29*)

Jesus was taken before Caiaphas the High Priest and the elders. They decided that Jesus should be put to death, and they sent him to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, to be sentenced. Pilate was frightened that the crowds would cause trouble, so he agreed to crucify Jesus even though he knew that he had done nothing wrong. The Roman soldiers made fun of Jesus and made a crown of thorns for the 'King of the Jews'.

DISCUSSION

Why did Caiaphas and the other Jews hate Jesus?

He did not fit in with their ideas because he followed his father's plan. He stood up for truth and what was right and would often disobey or ignore the Jewish priests. They were jealous of his popularity and wanted the people to do what they said, instead of following Jesus.

Pontius Pilate knew that Jesus had done nothing wrong so why did he agree to condemn him to death?

He was afraid that the crowds would riot and cause a great deal of trouble so he gave in to the demands of the Jewish elders.

The soldiers teased Jesus about being 'King of the Jews'. What did they make to put on his head?

4. Jesus carries the Cross. (cf *Matthew 27:31-32*)

The soldiers beat Jesus and then made him carry his own cross. After stumbling and falling several times, the soldiers told a man called Simon to help Jesus.

DISCUSSION

Why did the soldiers make a man in the crowd help Jesus to carry his cross?

What was his name?

5. Jesus is crucified. (cf *Matthew 27:33, 35-38*)

When they got to Golgotha, a name which means 'The Place of the Skull', they put Jesus on the cross. Above him they wrote, 'This is Jesus, King of the Jews'. They crucified a thief on either side of Jesus. One of them said to him, 'Jesus, remember me in your kingdom,' and Jesus answered, 'Today you will be with me in Heaven'. After hanging on the cross for many hours, Jesus called out loudly, 'Father do not forget me,' and then he died.

DISCUSSION

Where was Jesus crucified?

Who else was crucified that day and what had they done wrong?

In Roman times, people were often crucified if they had broken the law.

6. Jesus is placed in the tomb. (cf *Matthew 27:57-60*)
Later on that day, a man called Joseph, who had been a follower of Jesus, went to Pontius Pilate and asked if he could bury Jesus. Pontius Pilate agreed and so Jesus was taken away and laid in the tomb.

DISCUSSION

What was the name of the man who asked to take Jesus' body away for burial?

Where did they put Jesus?

They laid Jesus in the tomb and rolled a large stone across the entrance. This was late on Friday evening and Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath when no-one was allowed to do any work. When a person died the Jews used spices and ointments such as myrrh to prepare the body for burial. They could not do this on the Sabbath, so at first light on the Sunday morning the women would return to the tomb to prepare the Lord's body.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
this week as we remember
your suffering and death,
help us to remember those in our world
who are suffering and dying every day.
Your death on the cross has allowed each one of us
to share in the glory of your resurrection
and life everlasting.