

Palm Sunday

Today is a very special day as we celebrate Palm Sunday!

Christians celebrate the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem the week the week before Easter. He rides in on a donkey and people praised him saying the word “Hosanna: and proclaim him as their new King. As with the tradition for the royalty and heroes, palm branches and clothing were laid on the road for him to walk on. Red the color for royalty is worn on vestments.

Introduction: The People were waiting for a King to lead them. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey he was welcomed as their king. But he came as a King of Peace not one to wage war.

Background on the Gospel Reading Gospel Reading

Mark 14:1—15:47 (shorter form: Mark 15:1-39)

Jesus is sentenced to death and crucified. The centurion who witnessed his death declared, “This man was the Son of God.”

Background on the Gospel Reading

This Sunday, called Palm or Passion Sunday, is the first day of Holy Week. Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday are called the *Triduum*—three days that are the highlight of the Church year. There are two Gospels proclaimed at today’s Mass. The first Gospel, proclaimed before the procession with palms, tells of Jesus’ triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Riding on a borrowed colt, Jesus was hailed by the crowds as they blessed God and shouted “Hosanna!” This event is reported in each of the four Gospels.

At the Liturgy of the Word on Palm Sunday, the events of Jesus’ passion are proclaimed in their entirety. In Lectionary Cycle B, we read the passion of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Mark. We will hear these events proclaimed again when we celebrate the Triduum later in the week. On Good Friday, we will read the passion of Jesus from the Gospel of John.

In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus’ passion and death are presented as the consequence of the tension between the Jewish authorities and Jesus that had been building throughout his public ministry. This tension reached its breaking point when Jesus drove the merchants and moneychangers from the Temple. After this event, the chief priests and scribes began seeking a way to put Jesus to death, and yet, this is only the surface explanation for his death.

When Jesus was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin—the council of Jewish priests, scribes, and elders—he was charged with blasphemy, citing his threat to the Temple. When he was brought before Pilate, however, the religious authorities presented his crime as a political one, charging that Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews. In continuity with a theme of Mark’s Gospel, the messianic claim of Jesus is widely misunderstood.

In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus’ disciples are rarely models of faith and do little to invoke confidence in their capacity to continue his ministry after his death. They fare no better in Mark’s narrative of Jesus’ passion and death. At the Last Supper, the disciples insisted that none among them would betray Jesus. When Jesus predicted that their faith would be shaken in the events ahead, Peter and the other disciples protested vehemently. Yet in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus returned

three times to find them sleeping. Jesus prayed in agony over his impending fate while his disciples slumbered through the night. Just as Jesus predicted, Peter denied Jesus, and the disciples were absent during Jesus' passion and death. Only the women who had been followers of Jesus in Galilee are said to have been present at the Crucifixion, but they remained at a distance.

Throughout this Gospel, Mark challenges the reader to consider the claim with which the Gospel begins: Jesus is the Son of God. When we read Mark's account of the passion, we begin to comprehend the deeper theological statement being made about Jesus' death. In Mark's telling of the passion narrative, Jesus understood his death to have been preordained, and he accepted this death in obedience to God's will. Jewish Scripture is quoted only once, but there are several references to the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Jesus understood his anointing in Bethany as an anticipation of his burial, and he announced that this story would be told together with the Gospel throughout the world. Jesus predicted his betrayal by Judas as well as Peter's denial. At his arrest, Jesus acknowledged that the preordained time had arrived. Jesus was both confident and silent before his accusers. After he was sentenced to death, Jesus did not speak again until his final cry from the cross. The bystanders misunderstood and believed that he was calling for Elijah. The Roman centurion, however, affirmed what Mark has presented throughout this Gospel: Jesus is the Son of God. Nowhere was this revealed more fully than in his death on the cross.

During Holy Week, we prayerfully remember the events of Jesus' passion and death. As we meditate on the cross, we ask again and anew what it means to make the statement of faith that Jesus, in his obedient suffering and dying, revealed himself to us as God's Son.

Gospel:

Invite the children to stand: (Sign of Cross on forehead, lips and hearts)

Response: Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ

Gospel Mark 11:1-10

Materials Needed

- Several illustrations of the events of Jesus' Passion, such as Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, Jesus at the Last Supper, Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus on the Cross

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. As you tell the children the Gospel for this Sunday, show the illustrations that you have brought.
2. Say: *For six weeks, we've been preparing ourselves for Easter. Who remembers the name of this season of the Church year? (Lent) This Sunday is the last Sunday of Lent. It has a special name. It's called Palm Sunday.*
3. Continue as you show the picture of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem: *First, we hear that when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he was greeted like a king. In Jesus' day, kings were greeted with great parades and traveled in chariots or on horses. People bowed before them to*

show respect. Something like that happened when Jesus came to Jerusalem, but Jesus was riding a humble donkey. People formed a parade, waved palm branches at him, and greeted him with names of great respect. Jesus knew their respect would not last, however, because he had not come as an earthly king.

4. Continue as you show the picture of Jesus at the Last Supper: *While in Jerusalem, Jesus celebrated a very special Jewish feast called Passover with his disciples. While at supper with the disciples, he told them that there would be difficult times ahead and that they would be very frightened by what would happen. But Jesus also told them that these things would be necessary so that sins would be forgiven.*
5. Continue as you show the picture of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: *After the Passover meal, Jesus and his disciples went to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, terrible things began to happen, just as Jesus had said. First, Jesus was arrested. The disciples were frightened, and they ran away. Then Jesus was placed on trial and sentenced to death on the cross.*
6. Continue as you show the picture of Jesus on the cross: *Jesus was crucified and died. But that is not the end of the story. Jesus died so that our sins would be forgiven, and then God raised him from the dead. We will celebrate that event next week at Easter. But this week, which is called Holy Week, we remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us.*

Reflection Questions:

- 1) **Why did Jesus choose a donkey to ride upon? What other story do we know of about a donkey? (Mary at Christmas time) Jesus wanted to show the people that he was riding on a meek and gentle donkey as the king of peace.**
- 2) **What word did the people shout when they saw Jesus? (Hosanna which is a word used to praise God)**
- 3) **What did the people do to praise Jesus? (waved palm branches)**
- 4) **Why should we praise Jesus and how can we show our praise to him?**

Prayers of the Faithful

We pray for peace throughout the world. We pray to the Lord.

Lord hear our prayer.

We pray for health and happiness for the children throughout the world. We pray to the Lord.

Lord hear our prayer.

We praise you for your love and friendship. We pray to the Lord.

Lord hear our prayer.

Ask: And for what else shall we pray?

Closing Payer:

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace we pray that your peace will spread throughout the world today and every day. We praise you for the many wonders you have done for us and for your continua love. We thank you for your friendship and for everything you provide for us. We sing out Hosanna to you!! Amen

