Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, Cycle C

Sunday, April 13, 2025

**Gospel at the Procession with Palms**  
*Luke 19:28-40*  
Jesus sends his disciples for a colt and then rides into Jerusalem.

**First Reading**  
*Isaiah 50:4-7*  
The Lord's Servant will stand firm, even when persecuted.

**Responsorial Psalm**  
*Psalm 22:8-9,17-20,23-24*  
A cry for help to the Lord in the face of evildoers.

**Second Reading**  
*Philippians 2:6-11*  
Christ was obedient even to death, but God has exalted him.

**Gospel Reading**  
*Luke 22:14—23:56* (shorter form: *Luke 23:1-49*)  
From the cross, Jesus speaks words of forgiveness and promises that the good thief will be with him in paradise.

**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 shouted blessings and praise to God. This event is reported in each of the four Gospels.

Luke's Gospel is the only one to report the exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees as Jesus enters Jerusalem. Jesus' response shows that this event, and those yet to come, are part of a divine plan. We hear this echoed again in Luke's description of the Last Supper when Jesus speaks of Judas' betrayal, saying that the Son of Man “goes as has been determined.”

At the Liturgy of the Word on this Sunday, the events of Jesus' passion are proclaimed in their entirety. In Lectionary Cycle C, we read the passion of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Luke. We will hear these events proclaimed again during the Triduum when we read the passion of Jesus from the Gospel of John.

Throughout Luke's Gospel we see that Jesus' words and actions proclaim the Kingdom of God. This motif continues throughout Luke's passion narrative. Jesus appears to be in total command of events at the Passover meal as he hands over the kingdom to his disciples. He welcomes them to the Passover meal announcing that this will be his last until the Kingdom of God is fulfilled.

As throughout Luke's Gospel, however, the disciples show little understanding of this kingdom that Jesus often announces. Following the meal, the disciples argue about who is the greatest. Jesus takes the opportunity to distinguish the meaning of leadership in the Kingdom of God from the forms of leadership seen in the world.

Jesus initiates a conversation with Simon and predicts his denial. Jesus then instructs his disciples to prepare themselves for the events that will follow. His words reveal an awareness of the challenges that all of them will face in the days ahead. As the disciples and Jesus enter the Mount of Olives, Jesus indicates the importance of the disciples' time in prayer, telling them that through prayer they will be able to face the challenges ahead.

As he prays, Jesus is tested. In the garden, an angel is sent to strengthen him and to prepare him for the events ahead. After this moment, Jesus is again in charge of the events and circumstances.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as active and vocal throughout his passion. When one of the disciples strikes the high priest's servant, Jesus heals the man, an event reported only in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus stops the disciples' protest against his arrest by noting that this is the “time for the power of darkness.” Jesus engages and responds when brought before the Sanhedrin; his words speak about the “power of God” that will bring about the reign of the Son of Man. When questioned by Pilate, Jesus responds with just one phrase; yet before Herod, Jesus refuses to speak.

When Luke describes the Way of the Cross and Jesus' crucifixion, he calls to our attention many events that are not reported in the other Gospels. Throughout his Gospel, Luke has paid heed to the women who accompanied Jesus. Now, on the road to Calvary, Jesus speaks to the women who walk with him. Only Luke reports Jesus' words of forgiveness spoken from the cross. And only Luke reports the dialogue between Jesus and the good thief. Finally, in contrast with the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, Luke reports no words of abandonment spoken by Jesus on the cross. Instead, Jesus, in full command until his death, commends his spirit to his Father and takes his final breath.

Throughout Holy Week, we will continue to reflect on 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 and brought to fulfillment the Kingdom of God.

**Gospel Reading**[Luke 22:14—23:56](http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/22/) (shorter form: Luke 23:1-49)  
From the cross, Jesus speaks words of forgiveness and promises that the good thief will be with him in paradise.

**Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)**

Lead younger children to understand that Jesus’ Death on the Cross for our salvation was the greatest act of love for us. Even in his suffering and Death, Jesus shows us his way of love.

**Materials Needed**

* None

**Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings**

1. Say: **This is Holy Week. It is the holiest week in the Church year. We remember that Jesus died to save us.**
2. Ask: **What are some words that describe Jesus?**(Accept all reasonable answers, including our Savior, loving, forgiving, trusting, merciful, truthful, Son of God.) Say: **In today’s Gospel, we hear about Jesus’ Passion and Death on the Cross. As you listen, notice how Jesus shows us his way of love and forgiveness.**
3. Read today’s Gospel in its shorter form, Luke 23:1–49.
4. Say: **Even as he is suffering, Jesus remains loving and forgiving. He asks God to forgive the people who crucify him. When the criminal asks Jesus to remember him, Jesus tells the criminal that he will be with him in heaven.**
5. Say: **If we have faith in Jesus and follow his way of love, we too will be with him in heaven one day. We might feel sad hearing about Jesus’ death, but we can celebrate because Jesus died for our sins. He prepared the way for us to share eternal life with God in heaven.**
6. Conclude by praying: **Jesus, we thank and praise you for saving us from our sins. We will follow your way of love and forgiveness, today and every day. Amen.**

**Gospel Reading**[Luke 22:14—23:56](http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/22/" \t "_blank) (shorter form: Luke 23:1-49)  
From the cross, Jesus speaks words of forgiveness and promises that the good thief will be with him in paradise.

**Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)**

Before Jesus died on the cross, he promised the good thief that he would be with him in paradise. Through his death on the cross, Jesus prepares a place in paradise for all of us.

**Materials Needed**

* None

**Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings**

1. Say: ***This week we celebrate Holy Week. This is the holiest week in the Church year because during this week we remember Jesus' death on the cross for our salvation. On Palm Sunday we hear two Gospel readings. The first Gospel tells us how Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was greeted by the crowds who shouted praise to God because they thought Jesus was coming to save them from their political oppressors.***
2. Invite one or more volunteers to read this Gospel, Luke 19:28-40.
3. Say: ***In the second Gospel reading for this Sunday, which is also called Passion Sunday, we hear the details about Jesus' passion and death on the cross. This year, we read the passion from Luke's Gospel. Unique to Luke's Gospel is the detail about the words spoken by Jesus and the two criminals who were crucified with him. Let's prayerfully listen to a portion of this Gospel.***
4. Invite a volunteer to read today's Gospel in its shorter form, Luke 23:1-49.
5. Ask: ***What did the first man say to Jesus?*** (He taunted Jesus along with the crowd.) ***What did the second man do?*** (He defended Jesus against the first thief, and then he asked Jesus to remember him.) ***What did Jesus say in response?*** (“Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”)
6. Say: ***Jesus' words were addressed to the second criminal. But these words are also spoken to us. If we have faith in Jesus and follow his way of love, we will also be with him in paradise. Jesus died for our sins and prepared the way for us to share eternal life with God in heaven.***
7. Conclude in prayer together by singing “Jesus Remember Me” or another appropriate hymn.

**Gospel Reading**[Luke 22:14—23:56](http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/22/" \t "_blank)(shorter form: Luke 23:1-49)  
From the cross, Jesus speaks words of forgiveness and promises that the good thief will be with him in paradise.

**Making the Connection (Grades 7,8,9)**

Many people are intrigued by the meaning that can be gleaned from the last words people speak before they die. In Jesus' final words spoken from the cross, we hear his life's work summed up and completed.

**Materials Needed**

* Examples of famous last words

**Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings**

1. Say: ***Many people find the last words spoken by a person before death to be worth noting. Does anyone know any examples of famous last words?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.) ***Why do you think some people find these last words interesting?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)
2. Say: ***We find Jesus' last words recorded in today's Gospel. As we proclaim today's Gospel of the Lord's Passion, pay attention to these final words. There are three sentences recorded in today's Gospel.***
3. Invite one or more volunteers to read today's Gospel in its shorter form, Luke 23:1-49.
4. Ask the young people to identify the three sentences that are reported in this Gospel as Jesus' last words: (1) “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” (2) “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (3) “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”
5. Say: ***The words Jesus spoke from the cross are consistent with his entire life, all the work he did and all the words he taught. In these last words of Jesus, we hear echoes of the words of the prayer Jesus taught us to pray, the Lord's Prayer.***
6. Discuss similarities between the words of the Lord's Prayer and the words Jesus spoke from the cross. For example, when we pray “Thy will be done” we are giving our lives into God's hands which is what Jesus did when he commended his spirit to God. We pray to be able to forgive those who do us harm just as Jesus forgave those who harmed him.
7. Conclude by praying that we will follow Jesus more completely by praying together the Lord's Prayer.
8. **Gospel Reading**[Luke 22:14—23:56](http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/22/" \t "_blank) (shorter form: Luke 23:1-49)  
   From the cross, Jesus speaks words of forgiveness and promises that the good thief will be with him in paradise.
9. **Family Connection**
10. Palm Sunday, also called Passion Sunday, marks the beginning of Holy Week. During this week, we prepare ourselves for Easter by prayerful reflection upon the events of Jesus' passion and death. During this week, your family might display a crucifix in a prominent place as reminder of salvation Christ won for us. This can also serve as the focal point for family prayer during Holy Week.
11. Because of the length and complexity of the passion narrative, it is difficult for children to remain attentive when it is proclaimed in its entirety. Families can make it a tradition to read a portion of this Sunday's Gospel each day of Holy Week, providing ample opportunity for children to ask questions and respond to the events described there. In this way, the entire week can become a “way of the cross.”
12. Each day during Holy Week, the family can gather in a prayerful space with a crucifix as its focal point. The passion as found in Luke's Gospel might be read as follows throughout the week:

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| Sunday: | [Luke 19:28-40](http://old.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke19.htm/" \t "_blank) (Gospel at the Procession with Palms) |
| Monday: | [Luke 22:14-23](http://old.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke22.htm/" \t "_blank) |
| Tuesday: | [Luke 22:24-38](http://old.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke22.htm/" \t "_blank) |
| Wednesday: | [Luke 22:39-71](http://old.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke22.htm/" \t "_blank) |
| Thursday: | [Luke 23:1-25](http://old.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke23.htm/" \t "_blank) |
| Friday: | [Luke 23:26-49](http://old.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke23.htm/" \t "_blank) |
| Saturday: | [Luke 23:50-56](http://old.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke23.htm" \t "_blank) |

1. After reading from the Gospel each day, the family might reflect on the reading together. Conclude your prayer time together by praying the Lord's Prayer and/or singing an appropriate hymn, e.g., “Jesus, Jesus,” “Were You There?” or “What Wondrous Love is This.”