

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Passion (Palm) Sunday, Year C
29 March 2026
Matthew 27: 11-54 (shortened version)

Catechist Background

Palm (Passion) Sunday is the first of the two times in the liturgical year when the Passion is read (Good Friday is the other). Jesus' Passion and death is central to the Christian faith: he could only rise again once he had died. It is significant that Jesus suffered and died in such a humiliating, painful way: he could have avoided it, but he did not. He chose to suffer and die for us, partly so that we can find him when we experience humiliation or pain, as we will at some point. His death is not the end, but a new beginning for us, without which the Resurrection could not happen.

Setting the Scene

The liturgical colour today is red. Today is not the end of Lent and so during the week until Holy Thursday when Lent ends, the colour is purple. For the activity, you will need a large crucifix, which is not precious nor fragile, ideally one with the crucified Christ on it (i.e. not a risen Christ).

Today's activities assume the children have been with the congregation for the first Gospel reading today (Matthew 21:1-11 - this Mass has two Gospel readings) and for the blessing of palms and procession. There is no Penitential Act at Mass: the procession is followed by the Opening Prayer and Liturgy of the Word, and so we do not have our usual "We Say Sorry" section either. The activity, reflection and response below focus on today's second, longer Gospel reading: the Passion. *[Sunday Book of Readings Year A gives the short version of the Passion and a dialogue version of it. See below for a script of a Gospel drama.]*

We Pray (1)

Almighty God, you gave us Jesus to bring us back to you. He did what you asked of him, even when it was extremely difficult. Help us to always follow Jesus' example. Amen.

Gospel Introduction

Remind the children that:

- Today is Palm Sunday. It is the first day of Holy Week, the most important week of all time;
- earlier we had the procession with palms and we heard about the first Palm Sunday;
- now we will hear another Gospel reading which is very long about what happened next;
- this very long Gospel reading is packed with important things, and so we will hear it in parts.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel Matthew 27:11-54

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

Have a conversation (like below) with the children. If you can, use props/drawings as visual aids.

This is a very sad-sounding reading we have today, where Jesus suffered and died to make things right between God and us. We're going to talk about why that was so and why Jesus did this.

- Way back in the beginning, before the earth was made, who was there? [God.]
- We hear in the Bible that God spoke and made things? What did God make? [Everything]
- God and people were friends then, but the people soon messed up and broke their friendship with God because they thought they knew better than God about how to do things.
 - Did they make themselves happy by breaking away from God? [No!]
- However, God wanted the people to be happy and he didn't leave them. God kept speaking to them through prophets and he promised he would send his chosen one to be with them.
- 2000 years ago, those who followed God (the Jews) were ruled by the Romans and were unhappy. They prayed for a Messiah/king to kick out the Romans and make their lives easier

- When Jesus came to Jerusalem, they thought he was the one they had been waiting for and so they shouted out a special word.
 - What was that special word they shouted? ['Hosanna']. [*invite them to shout it too!*]
 - Were they right to think that Jesus was the king they had prayed for? [Yes and no]
- But Jesus didn't kick out the Romans. He instead said that God loves ALL people and wants ALL people to be happy, not just the Jews.
- The Jewish leaders at that time didn't like this, and they were also afraid that Jesus was too popular, and so they were cross with him.
- So, they persuaded the Jews who had shouted 'Hosanna' to start shouting something else.
 - What did they shout instead? [Crucify him! ('Crucify' means 'kill')]
- When they shouted that Jesus be killed, what did Jesus do? Was he angry with them? [No]
- Instead Jesus' showed everyone how much he loved the world. He forgave them all for the terrible things they did, not just the important people, but ordinary people like you and me.
- Jesus' Crucifixion shows that God wants to forgive us for anything we do, even if it is really awful. Jesus' death reminds us to be forgiving to other people as well.
- Jesus' death WAS a terrible thing to happen, but it was also a terrific thing, because the story did not end with Jesus dying.
- What happened next? What will we celebrate next Sunday? [Easter, Jesus' Resurrection]

Response

- Encourage the children to have some quiet time in which to think about three things:
 - what they have just heard;
 - to pray in their hearts about someone they are upset with who they need to forgive;
 - something they may need to say sorry for.
 - [*You might play quiet music in the background.*]
- Invite them to come and touch the crucifix (if your group is large, take it to a few at a time); [*Touching the crucifix (carefully) is important as it will help them feel that it is real.*]

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting the children to reply, 'I do'.

- Do you believe in God, the Father, who created the world to be a good place?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross to save the world?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who inspires people today?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Jesus opened the way for us to God, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for Christians who live where it is hard to follow Jesus. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for good weather for growing crops all over the world. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for those who live in and near Jerusalem, that there may be an end to fighting and fear there. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people preparing to be baptised, especially in our Church. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: God, help us in this Holy Week to love those around us. We pray through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Year A: Gospel Drama for Palm (Passion) Sunday (Matthew 27: 11-54)

Children will be required for the roles of:

| | | | |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Narrator 1; | Pilate; | Crowd (2 or 3); | Robbers (2); |
| Narrator 2; | Jesus; | Soldier; | Chief priests (3 or 4). |
| Narrator 3; | Pilate's Wife; | Simon of Cyrene; | |

Props needed: Purple robe, crown of thorns, stick, large cross, sign reading 'This is Jesus, King of the Jews.'

Narrator 1: The story of the suffering and death of Jesus, from the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus stood in front of Pilate, the governor of Jerusalem. Pilate asked Jesus:

Pilate: Are you the King of the Jews?

Jesus: You have said so.

Narrator 1: The chief priests and leaders started accusing Jesus, but he did not answer them. So, Pilate said:

Pilate: You hear these things they are saying against you. Don't you have anything to say?

Narrator 1: Still Jesus did not say anything, and Pilate wondered why.

Now every year at the feast of Passover, the governor would free one person from prison, anyone the people wanted. At that time, there was a man in prison named Barabbas, and everyone knew who he was. So, Pilate asked the people:

Pilate: Who do you want me to set free, Barabbas or Jesus?

Narrator 1: Pilate did this because his wife sent a message to him saying:

Pilate's Wife: Do not do anything to hurt Jesus. He is a good man. I had a dream about him today and it worries me.

Narrator 1: But the chief priests and leaders told the people to ask for Barabbas and have Jesus killed. So, when Pilate asked them again, they said:

Crowd: Free Barabbas!

Pilate: Then what should I do with Jesus, who is called 'the Christ'?

Crowd: Kill him! Crucify him!

Pilate: Why? What has he done wrong?

Crowd: Crucify him! Crucify him!

Narrator 2: So Pilate set Barabbas free.

Narrator 2: He told the soldiers to whip Jesus, and then gave him to the people so they could crucify him. The soldiers put a purple robe on Jesus and made a crown of thorns and put it on his head. And they put a stick in his hand. They knelt in front of Jesus and made fun of him saying:

Soldiers: Hail, King of the Jews!

Narrator 2: They took the stick away from Jesus and started hitting him on the head with it and spitting at him. After they had made fun of him and laughed at him, they took the purple robe off and led Jesus away to crucify him. As they were taking him away, they saw a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they made him carry Jesus' cross.

Narrator 3: When they came to a place called Golgotha, which means 'the skull' they crucified Jesus. They put a sign over his head which said: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

Narrator 2: Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. And while they were hanging there, they made fun of Jesus. And the people who were going by laughed at Jesus and said:

Crowd: If you are the Son of God, come down off that cross!

Narrator 2: And the chief priests and leaders also made fun of him, saying:

Chief priests: He saved other people, but he can't save himself. If he is the King of the Jews, let's see him come down from that cross. They we will believe in him" He trusts in God and even said: "I am the Son of God." Well, let's see if God wants to save him now!

Narrator 3: About noon, everything became dark and stayed dark until about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Jesus cried out in a loud voice:

Jesus: My God, my God, why have you left me alone?

Crowd: He is calling for help. Let's see if God comes to help him.

Narrator 3: Then Jesus cried out again, and he died.

PAUSE

Narrator 3: The people who were there were terrified. One of the Roman soldiers said:

Soldier: This man really was the Son of God.

Narrator 1: The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

