

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Passion (Palm) Sunday, Year B
24 March 2024
Mark 15:1-39

Setting the Scene

This week's suggestions assume that the children have been present with the rest of the assembly for the Procession with Palms. If that is not the case in your parish, add the reading of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to the Gospel and activity below.

For the activity, you will need a large crucifix, preferably one with the body of the crucified Christ (i.e. not a risen one) on it. The liturgical colour for today is red – this is the colour of suffering (connected with blood) but also the colour associated with the Holy Spirit.

There is no Penitential Rite today. After the Procession with Palms the Mass continues with the Collect, the Opening Prayer

Gospel Intro

Remind the children that this week, starting with today, Passion (Palm) Sunday, we celebrate the most important week that there ever was. We heard in the procession with palms the events at the beginning of that week, (see if anyone remembers what the crowds were shouting as Jesus entered into Jerusalem then). The Gospel reading we will hear now tells us that people didn't stay in their rejoicing mood for very long.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel Mark 15:1-39 (The resource book *'SUNDAY – Weekly Leader Guide – Year B'* has a dialogue version of this which might be helpful.)

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

Orchestrate a conversation similar to the following with the children. You may want to illustrate it with props or simple drawings.

'This is a very sad-sounding reading we have heard today. But let's think back even further in time to see how things got to be to that situation.

- Way back in the beginning, before there was anything else, what was there? [God.]
- And then God spoke, and what did God make? [The world, plants, animals, and PEOPLE!]
- God and people were good friends then, but the people messed up and broke their friendship with God because they thought they knew better than God about how to do things. But did they? Did they make themselves very happy? [No!]
- God wanted the people to be happy, though. Even though they had turned away, God didn't abandon them. God gave Moses some important rules for people to follow to help them be closer to God. Prophets were sent by God to tell people to turn their lives around when they forgot to follow God's ways. 2000 years ago or so, people who believed in God were living difficult lives, and they were expecting a Messiah, a king like King David, to come and make their lives easier. When Jesus came to Jerusalem, they thought he was the king they had been waiting for. Were they right? [Yes.. and no...]

- But Jesus wasn't going to kick out the Romans and the other people living in the area. This was because God loves ALL people and wants ALL people to be happy, not just those who believed in God already (even though the people who believed in God didn't know that!) So when Jesus didn't kick out the Romans and the other people living in the area, the people who started the week shouting 'Hosanna!' started shouting something else. What did they shout instead? [Crucify him!]
- It's a bit peculiar how the people with whom we can be happiest are also the people to whom we can be the most horrible. And when people were the most horrible to Jesus, when ordinary people like you and me crucified Jesus, it was Jesus' chance to show how much he loved the world, not just the important people or the in-charge people, but the ordinary people like you and me. Jesus' crucifixion shows that we are forgiven for anything we may do, even if it is really awful, and challenges us to be forgiving to other people as well. It WAS a really terrible thing to happen, but it was also a really awesome thing to happen, because the story does not end with Jesus' crucifixion. What will we celebrate when we gather next Sunday? [Easter, Jesus' Resurrection]

Response

Allow the children to come up close to the crucifix (if your group is very large, take it in turns of a few at a time) and think/pray in their hearts about someone they have been upset with that they need to forgive, and something they may need to say sorry for.

We Believe

Relating to the Creed what you have shared with the children, ask this series of questions and invite 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

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Jesus has opened the way for us to God, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for people in those parts of the world where it is still dangerous to be a Christian. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

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

All: Hear our prayer.

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

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: God, help us in this Holy Week to turn our attention in love to those around us. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.