

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Passion (Palm) Sunday, Year C
13 April 2025
Luke 23:1-47

Catechist Background

Palm (or Passion) Sunday is the first of the two occasions in the liturgical year that 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. Moreover, it is important 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 in this way, partly so that we can then find him in any time of humiliation or pain that we meet, as we will do now when we die. Moreover, Jesus' humiliating Crucifixion is not the end, but the beginning of a new beginning for humanity, without which the Resurrection cannot happen.

Setting the Scene

The liturgical colour today is red. This is not the end of Lent, however, so during the week until Holy Thursday when Lent ends, the colour is still purple. Today's activities assume the children have been with the congregation for the first Gospel reading today (Luke 19:28-40: this Mass has two Gospels) 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.

We Pray (1)

Almighty God, you gave us Jesus to save us from all our wrongs. 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's main Gospel reading is a very important one, but it is also long. Explain that because it is packed so full of really important things, we will be reading it in sections.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel, Reflection, and Response: Luke 23:1-47

The Gospel reading has been broken up into various suggested sections below.

- After each stage, invite the children to form a tableau, (frozen picture) of the characters present at that section of the Passion. Use simple props if you have them.
- Ask the characters what they are feeling in the situation.

The following script has been provided as one option of breaking up the Passion; the numbers of children and/or other constraints may mean you adapt the suggestion here.

(Section 1)

After Jesus had been on trial before the leaders of his people, the chief priests and the scribes took him to Pilate. They accused Jesus of doing wrong and they said to Pilate, 'This man has been trying to confuse our people and change the way they think. And he told us not to pay taxes to Caesar. He also says that he is the Christ, a king.'

So Pilate asked Jesus, 'Are you the King of the Jews?'

Jesus answered, 'You have said so.'

Then Pilate said to the leaders and to all the people, 'I do not find this man guilty of doing anything wrong.'

But the people said over and over again, 'He has been teaching and making trouble all over in Judea. He started in Galilee and now he is even teaching here in Jerusalem!'

Characters for tableau: Jesus, Pilate, accusers

(Section 2)

When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to Herod because Herod was the ruler of Galilee. Herod asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus did not answer any of them.

The soldiers put a beautiful purple robe on Jesus like a king would wear and made fun of him because they thought he was pretending to be a king.

Characters for tableau: Jesus, Herod, soldiers

(Section 3)

Herod sent him back to Pilate. Pilate called all the people and their leaders together and said to them, 'You brought this man to me and told me that he has been making trouble among the people. He has not done anything wrong and does not deserve to be put to death. I will have him whipped and then I will let him go.'

But the people shouted, 'Kill him! Let Barabbas go free!'

Now, Barabbas was a man who was in prison because he had started a riot in the city and was also a murderer.

Pilate told them that he wanted to let Jesus go.

But they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'

For the third time, Pilate said to the people, 'Why? What has he done wrong? He does not deserve to die.'

But the people would not stop shouting that Jesus should be killed. They wouldn't stop shouting, so Pilate finally gave in to them. He let Barabbas, a murderer go free. And he let them have their way with Jesus.

Characters for tableau: Jesus, Pilate, accusers, (and Barabbas, if a child is willing to be him)

(Section 4)

As they were taking Jesus away to crucify him, they saw a man from Cyrene, named Simon, coming into the city. They made him carry the cross on his shoulder and walk behind Jesus.

Many people were following Jesus and there were some women in the crowd who were crying. Jesus said to them, 'Women of Jerusalem, don't cry for me. Cry for yourselves and for your children.'

Characters for tableau: Jesus, Simon of Cyrene, Women of Jerusalem

(Section 5)

Two criminals were also led away with Jesus to be killed. And when they came to the place which is called 'the Skull,' they crucified Jesus.

And Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them! They do not know what they are doing!'

And they crucified two criminals beside him, one on his left and one on his right.

The people who were there watching made fun of Jesus, saying, 'He saved other people. If he truly is the Christ, God's chosen one, let him save himself.'

The soldiers also made fun of him, and said, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.'

One of the criminals yelled at him, 'Aren't you the Christ? Then save yourself and save us.'

But the other criminal scolded him and then said to Jesus, 'Jesus, when you come into your kingdom, remember me.'

Jesus said to him, 'I promise you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

Characters for tableau: Jesus, two criminals, soldiers, people making fun of Jesus

(Section 6)

It was now about noon, and the sun stopped shining and it was dark until about three o'clock in the afternoon. Then Jesus called out loud, 'Father, take my life. I give you my spirit.'

And he died.

One of the soldiers in the Roman army who saw all of this began to praise God and he said, 'Surely this was a great and good man!'

Characters for tableau: Jesus, soldier, crowd

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 sent his Son to us?
- Do you believe in Jesus, the Son who died on a Cross and came back to life to save us?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who remains with us to help us through our difficulties?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'We know that Jesus understands sadness, because he experienced it in his life, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for all people who, like Jesus, suffer innocently. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all prisoners. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all who are dying. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anyone whose friends have left them. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, we know that you are especially close to anybody who is sad. Help us to know that through your crucifixion and rising from the dead, sadness is not the end; your glory has won. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

