

Passion (Palm) Sunday

Readings: Procession Gospel [Mt 21:1-11](#)

[Isaiah 50:4-7](#)

[Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24](#)

[Philippians 2:6-11](#)

[Matthew 26:14–27:66 OR 27:11-54](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/040223.cfm>



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The Sixth Sunday of Lent brings a central focus to Jesus' saving passion and death.

The liturgical celebration for the Sixth Sunday in Lent, also known as Passion Sunday because of the reading of the narrative of the Passion and Death of Jesus, or also known as Palm Sunday because of the distribution of palms at the beginning of mass, starts with a blessing of palms, a gospel reading, and procession.

The first gospel reading presents Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with the acclamation of the crowd. It was common for people to excitedly welcome important people arriving in Jerusalem in the days preceding the celebration of Passover. Jesus is acclaimed as he enters the city and the early Christian community recognized the truth that was expressed even though the crowd did not fully understand what they were proclaiming. The prophet Zechariah is quoted: "Say to daughter Zion, 'Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" (Zech 9:9) The early Christians recognized a great truth being expressed as these verses were applied to Jesus.

It serves as a reminder for Christians today that words and excitement about Jesus are not enough. Each follower of Jesus is to understand the words that are expressed and commit to implementing them in one's life.

The use of the Hosanna and the Benedictus makes a declaration of who Jesus is. As Son of David, he is the Messiah, the long-awaited descendant of David. He is the one sent by God.

The first reading is the third suffering servant song in Isaiah. He speaks of how he suffers because he has been faithful to what God has asked of him. Jesus experiences the same suffering for his faithfulness. Discipleship does not free us of problems. Rather, it opens us to the pain and suffering of the whole human family, just as Jesus bore the suffering of all. In drawing close to Jesus, we share the same ministry as Jesus did. As followers of Jesus, there are challenges and opposition in our time and place, including discrimination, neglect, poverty, and many of the "isms" that will cause us to suffer.

The Gospel brings into focus the suffering of Jesus in the rejection he experiences. It follows the outline of Mark's passion narrative and holds many connections to the spiritual life. There is a strong contrast between the words of honor during the entrance into Jerusalem and those in the trial before Pilate and the mocking of Jesus by the soldiers and the people at the crucifixion.

Service, humility, and trust are exemplified by Jesus as he experiences rejection, suffering, and death. Jesus quotes Psalm 22 in his final moments. While it expresses deep pain, The psalm ends with an affirmation of trust, "I will live for the Lord."

The reading from Philippians quotes an ancient Christian hymn. Jesus empties himself of the divine attributes to fully live as a human and accepts all that being human means, even death and even one of the most torturous forms of death, death on a cross. Jesus' prayer in the garden, "Father, not my will but yours be done" is reflected in the passage. Jesus sets the example for all of us on how to be a true child of God.

Themes:

Christology

Salvation

Obedience

Trust and Hope

Reflection questions:

How do people speak of God or Jesus without fully understanding the Gospel message?

How do living Gospel values involve suffering?

In difficult times, where do you find strength?

How is trust manifest in your life in difficult times?

How are you experiencing laying down your life for others?

Which words or phrases of scripture stand out for you?

Prayer:

For the Church: that we may strive to have the same mind as Christ as we offer our lives in loving service to others

For courage: that God's love will sustain us in times of suffering and rejection, and help us to trust in God's providence each day

For all who are suffering because of the Gospel: that God will sustain them, help them to give faithful witness to the Gospel, and make fruitful their witness in the hearts of others

For all who have experienced abandonment, betrayal, or rejection: that God's Spirit will comfort them, help them to hold fast to the truth, and guide them to new communities