

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Introduction

Palm Sunday celebrates two seemingly different stories. We begin the liturgy by commemorating Jesus's triumphant journey to Jerusalem where he is greeted by shouts and songs of acclamation and joy. Everything seems to be going well. Jesus is hailed as a King and people wave palm branches to show their honor for him. By the time we reach the Gospel, however, we hear the Passion of Jesus Christ, recalling the events leading up to his crucifixion and death on the cross. It may seem strange that these two extremes are celebrated on Palm Sunday, but that is the reality of the Paschal Mystery. There is only one story. Jesus's life, death and resurrection are all connected; it is impossible to separate them as isolated events. The same is true for our lives. Everything we do is united with Christ, the good times and the difficult ones. Even when God seems distant and far away, we know that we are always connected to the story of Jesus's life, death and resurrection. We are always connected to Christ.

As we begin Holy Week, take a moment to recall this narrative of Christ with your family. What are some events from Jesus's life that stand out to you? Do you have a favorite parable or story of healing? It is important to remember that the Jesus who walked and taught and ate is the same Jesus who dies and rises again. Think too about your own life. What are some of the significant events you have experienced this past year? Recall some of these moments aloud as you continue to share the story of your family, which is also the story of Christ!

Ritual at Home

Perhaps the most memorable part of the Palm Sunday liturgy is the Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem. To help us celebrate, the church invites us to carry palm branches as we gather for prayer today. Even so, we remember that liturgy is not a recreation of past events. Rather, it is an *anamnesis*, an active remembering of the past so that we may live those realities today.

Opening Prayer: Loving God,
As we come to the beginning of Holy Week,
we remember your triumphant entry into Jerusalem.
We sing your praises, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David."
You alone are the true King, the leader greater than all others.
Even so, in your great mercy you chose to become like us,
taking on human form and living among us.
As we celebrate and shout "Hosanna" today,
may we remember what will soon follow.
Keep us faithful in word and deed,
and help us love you to the best of our ability.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 21:1-11 (*Celebrating the Eucharist*, page 141)

Procession: We, too, welcome Jesus, the Son of David,
the one who comes in the name of the Lord,
the King of Israel.
Holding our palm branches, let us acclaim Christ, the Lord.

If circumstances allow, a short procession around the house (inside or outside!) would be appropriate, with all responding, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Children may wish to make banners or streamers to wave in the procession and play tambourines or other percussion instruments. You can use palms from last year that you might still have, other tree leaves, or even homemade crafted leaves.

To Jesus, the True Light, who illumines the darkness and brings us hope during difficult times.

Hosanna to the Son of David!

To Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who models compassion and inclusion, sensitivity and goodwill.

Hosanna to the Son of David!

To Jesus, the Master Teacher, who shows by example how to accompany others, offering gentle guidance and direction.

Hosanna to the Son of David!

To Jesus, the Great Healer, who cares for the sick with tenderness and mercy, showing love to heal body, mind, and spirit.

Hosanna to the Son of David!

To Jesus, the Paschal Victim, who dies so that we might rise to new life.

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Intercessions: Confident that Jesus Christ hears our prayer,
let us offer our petitions with open hearts.

For the Pope, and all church leaders: May they continue to boldly lead, offering prophetic witness to the Gospel.

For all people in positions of leadership: May they work tirelessly for peace and justice to ensure the common good for all.

For all families and communities, especially those longing for intimacy and communion: May they know the tenderness of compassion and joy of inclusion.

For our own needs this day: *Prayers may be offered aloud.*

For all who have died: May they rest and rise in Christ.

The Lord's Prayer: Gathering these prayers together,
as well as those we hold in the silence of our hearts,
we pray in the words that Jesus taught us.

Our Father . . .

Prayer: Loving God,
We praise you in a special way today as we celebrate Palm Sunday.
Be with us as we begin our journey through Holy Week,
that we may more closely align our lives with yours,
knowing suffering and death,
yet remaining hopeful in the life you promise.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

All are invited to share a sign of Christ's peace.

Conversation Starters

1. What images, words, or phrases do you associate with Palm Sunday?
2. The Palm Sunday liturgy shows the fickleness of humanity. One minute we shout someone's praises, and soon after we yell, "Crucify him!" When in your own life have you been inconsistent in your actions or beliefs?
3. What is your prayer as you begin Holy Week?

Continuing the Conversation

The *Rule of Saint Benedict* encourages us to welcome all as Christ. With this, we are called to see and welcome Jesus in all whom we encounter. As we celebrate Jesus's entry into Jerusalem and hear of the people who welcomed him, think about the ways your own family welcomes Jesus through the people who visit your home. Work together to create a sign to hang near your door, reminding you to "Welcome all as Christ."