

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Proclaim with authority and purpose. Use good volume. Pause before Jesus' words.

Bethphage = BETH-fuh-jee

Jesus calmly gives them a specific task.

Zion = Zī-uhn or Zīahn

Read in an informative tone. Pause before you begin reading the quote. Articulate.

foal = fohl

strewed = strood (scattered or spread)

LECTIONARY #37

GOSPEL AT THE PROCESSION Matthew 21:1-11

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

When **Jesus** and the disciples drew near **Jerusalem** and came to **Bethphage** on the Mount of **Olives**, **Jesus** sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an **ass** tethered, and a **colt** with her.

Untie them and bring them **here** to me.

And if **anyone** should say **anything** to you, reply,

'The **master** has **need** of them.'

Then he will **send** them at **once**."

This **happened** so that what had been **spoken** through the **prophet** might be fulfilled:

*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."*

The disciples went and did as **Jesus** had **ordered** them.

They **brought** the ass and the colt and **laid** their **cloaks** over them, and **he** sat upon them.

The very large **crowd** spread their **cloaks** on the road, while others **cut branches** from the trees and strewed them on the road.

PROCESSION GOSPEL

When **Jesus** arrives at the Mount of Olives, he is on the verge of fulfilling his long-planned determination to go to Jerusalem. Up to this time, his ministry had centered in Galilee, where he was "teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people" (4:23). Now, from the Mount of Olives, he would at last be able to see Jerusalem, to observe the palace of Herod with its gardens and wealth from one direction, and

from another direction to see neighborhoods steeped in poverty. Most significantly would be the view of the temple, believed to be the dwelling place of God. In the first century, the Jewish author Josephus maintained that the temple shone at sunrise with such brilliance that no one could look at it directly. Having viewed the city and the glorious temple from the Mount, **Jesus** and his disciples make their way into the city.

According to the synoptic Gospels, this was **Jesus**' first visit to Jerusalem. Just

after Peter proclaimed **Jesus** as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, **Jesus** had told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, where he would suffer, be killed, and be raised on the third day (16:21). Although Peter tried to prevent **Jesus**' journey, **Jesus** himself is determined, ultimately leaving Galilee to make his way to the holy city (19:1). All four of the Gospels recount **Jesus**' entrance into Jerusalem, with each evangelist developing the scene in distinctive ways. Matthew, writing for a primarily Jewish Christian audience, had a particular

Read these lines with more intensity.

blessed = BLES-uhd

The crowds **preceding** him and those **following**
 kept crying out and **saying**:
 "Hosanna to the **Son of David**;
 blessed is **he** who comes in the **name** of the Lord;
 hosanna in the highest."
 And **when** he **entered** Jerusalem
 the **whole** city was shaken and asked, "**Who** is this?"
 And the crowds replied,
 "This is **Jesus** the prophet, from **Nazareth in Galilee**."

READING I Isaiah 50:4–7

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The **Lord** God has **given** me
 a well-trained tongue,
 that I might know how to **speak** to the weary
 a word that will rouse them.

Morning after morning

he **opens** my ear that I may hear;
 and I have **not** rebelled,
 have **not** turned back.

I **gave** my back to those who beat me,
 my cheeks to those who **plucked** my beard;
 my face I did **not** shield
 from buffets and spitting.

The **Lord** GOD is my help,
 therefore I am **not** disgraced;
 I have set my face like flint,
 knowing that I shall **not** be put to shame.

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

Take your time in proclaiming this reading.
 Smile throughout. God has blessed Isaiah
 with many gifts. Let the assembly see and
 hear that Isaiah has a special relationship
 with God.

buffets = BUF-its (slaps)

interest in portraying Jesus in continuity
 with and fulfillment of Jewish tradition.

Along with thousands of other pilgrims, Jesus and his disciples had come to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. He would be well aware that the enthusiasm of the crowds had the potential for violence, and knew of the looming presence of Rome's military might. Jesus could have come into the city quietly, but instead chose an entrance that is paradoxically both humble and majestic. His procession was not like that of the Romans on war-

horses, whose entry into conquered cities was a symbol of oppression and imperial power. In addition to the contrast between Jesus' humility and the arrogance of Rome, his meekness of riding on an ass fulfills a prophecy of Zechariah, presenting him as the king, God's anointed one (9:9).

As the crowds that gathered for Passover remembered the ancient slavery in Egypt, they hoped that God would again liberate them from their current warlords. The sight of Jesus arriving both in humility and majesty inspires them to treat him as

a king entering the city. He is a living sign of hope and promise. Using their own cloaks and branches and foliage from the roadside, they create a pathway for the one they honor as son of David. Their cry of "Hosanna" ("Save, I pray") is a word of both plea and praise, a liturgical acclamation from Psalm 118, one of the psalms recited at Passover. They acclaim Jesus as the descendant of King David, worthy of their homage. The wider response, particularly that of Roman authorities and Jewish leaders, is one of alarm. Such a dis-

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 22:8–9, 17–18, 19–20, 23–24 (2a)

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

All who see me scoff at me;
they mock me with parted lips, they wag
their heads:

"He relied on the LORD; let him deliver him,
let him rescue him, if he loves him."

Indeed, many dogs surround me,
a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;
they have pierced my hands and my feet;
I can count all my bones.

They divide my garments among them,
and for my vesture they cast lots.
But you, O LORD, be not far from me;
O my help, hasten to aid me.

I will proclaim your name to my brethren;
in the midst of the assembly I will
praise you:

"You who fear the LORD, praise him;
all you descendants of Jacob, give glory
to him;
revere him, all you descendants of Israel!"

READING II Philippians 2:6–11

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

**Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
something to be grasped.**

Rather, he emptied himself,
**taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness,
and found human in appearance,**
he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.

Because of this, **God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
which is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,**

Philippians = fih-LIP-ee-uhn-z

Proclaim this reading with confidence. Let the
assembly hear strength in your voice. Take
your time and speak with clarity. Pay
attention to the words in bold.

Build intensity.

play of enthusiasm during Passover could
ignite a fire among the people. The city is
shaken, portending the earthquake that is
about to shake the foundations. The cause
of the coming earthquake is Jesus, humble
king, descendant of David, and divinely
anointed prophet.

READING I

In the reading from Isaiah,
the prophet is speaking in
the first person as he describes his role as
a prophet to whom God has given a tongue
to speak and ears to hear. His description

here has a thematic link with three other
poetic passages in Isaiah (42:1–4; 49:1–6,
and 52:13–53:12), each of them contribut-
ing to a portrait of a servant called to fulfill
a divinely ordained mission. In each of
these prophecies, Isaiah may well be
describing himself, or he may be depicting
an ideal servant of God, reminiscent of
Moses or David or Jeremiah. He may also
be alluding to Israel as a whole, regularly
called God's servant in Isaiah (e.g., 41:8;
43:10; 49:3). With the identity of the servant
veiled and open to differing interpretations,

Christians have long seen Jesus as the full-
est embodiment of Isaiah's faithful servant.

The poem today begins with God giving
the servant a tongue, well-trained like that
of a disciple, so he will know how to speak a
word that will rouse the weary. In the origi-
nal context of Isaiah, those who are weary
may refer to the disheartened exiles in
Babylon. Beyond the original context, God
bestows the prophetic word to be given to
anyone in need of physical and spiritual res-
toration. Every morning the Lord opens the
servant's ear so he may hear the life-giving

Pause and say slowly: "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Iscariot = ih-SKAYR-ee-uht

The Passion of Our Lord is full of emotion.
Take your time. Pause before different people
speak. Rehearse for emotion in your voice.
Always use good volume and eye contact.

Speak in an informative tone.

Read with clarity and purpose.

of those **in** heaven and on **earth** and under the earth,
and **every** tongue confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of **God the** Father.

GOSPEL Matthew 26:14—27:66

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

One of the **Twelve**, who was called Judas Iscariot,
went to the chief **priests** and said,
"What are you willing to give me
if I hand him over to you?"

They paid him thirty pieces of **silver**,
and from that time on he looked for **an opportunity**
to hand him over.

On the first day of the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**,
the disciples **approached** Jesus and said,
"Where do you want us to **prepare**
for you to eat the Passover?"

He said,

"Go into the city to a certain man and tell him,
'The teacher says, "My **appointed time** draws **near**,
in **your** house I shall **celebrate** the Passover with
my **disciples**.'""

The disciples then **did** as Jesus had ordered,
and prepared the Passover. >>

Word afresh. The servant saying, "I have not rebelled, have not turned back," suggests that God's Word may be difficult for him to hear, and even more difficult to speak. While the intention of the Word is to give solace to the faint of heart, the immediate and harsh result for the prophet is beating, buffeting, and bruising. What makes the servant's task even more onerous is that the ones persecuting him seem to be the very ones he came to restore.

After such torment, the servant's declaration, "The Lord God is my help," sounds

both like a martyr's statement of faith and an agonized cry for God's help. Though he seems disgraced in human eyes, the Lord God will not put him to shame. The declaration that he is "setting his face like flint" presents a dramatic visual contrast with his current battered appearance. The image is similar to Jeremiah's picturing himself as a pillar of iron, and a wall of brass (1:18), and to Ezekiel's self-image of being stubborn of brow, with face like diamond (3:9). Isaiah's own face, with plucked beard, buffeted, and covered in spittle, is still as sharp and

firm as flint. God's prophets and servants, often rejected and mistreated by their own people, are analogous to the hardest of rocks and metals. They remain resolute in speaking the word that God has given them, for the Lord God is always their help, their shield, and their vindication.

READING II This hymn from Philipians, like many other Christian hymns throughout the ages, was probably composed for liturgical celebrations. Whether Paul wrote the hymn himself or