



Celebrate

Sunday of the Passion / Palm Sunday

March 29, 2026

Today, we encounter the paradox that defines our faith: Jesus Christ is glorified king and humiliated servant. We too are full of paradox: like Peter, we fervently desire to follow Christ, but find ourselves afraid, denying God. We wave palms in celebration today as Christ comes into our midst, and we follow with trepidation as his path leads to death on the cross. Amid it all we are invited into this paradoxical promise of life through Christ's broken body and outpoured love in a meal of bread and wine. We begin this week that stands at the center of the church year, anticipating the completion of God's astounding work.

Procession with Palms

Matthew 21:1-11

If possible, the assembly gathers at a designated place outside the usual worship space, so that all may enter in procession. Palm branches, or branches of other trees and shrubs, are distributed before the service begins.

The presiding minister begins (repeated one or more times).

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

⁵"Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble and mounted
on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal
of a donkey."

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The

crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in
the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

We praise you, O God, for redeeming the world through our Savior Jesus Christ. Today he entered the holy city in triumph and was proclaimed messiah and king by those who spread garments and branches along his way. Bless these branches and those who carry them. Grant us grace to follow our Lord in the way of the cross, so that, joined to his death and resurrection, we enter into life with you; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

continued

The assisting minister addresses the assembly.

Let us go forth in peace,
in the name of Christ. Amen.

The assembly follows the ministers into the church. "All glory, laud, and honor" (ELW #344) and other suitable hymns, psalms, or anthems may be sung as the people process into the church or once they have taken their places.

The presiding minister concludes the procession.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Prayer of the Day

Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Psalm

Psalm 31:9-16; refrain, Ps. 31:5



In - to your hands, O LORD, I com - mend my spir - it.

Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I ¹ am in trouble;

my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat ¹ and my belly.

¹⁰ **For my life is wasted with grief, and my ¹ years with sighing;**

my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones ¹ are consumed.

¹¹ I am the scorn of all my enemies, a disgrace to my neighbors,
a dismay to ¹ my acquaintances;

when they see me in the street ¹ they avoid me.

¹² **Like the dead I am forgotten, ¹ out of mind;**

I am as useless as a ¹ broken pot. R

¹³ For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is ¹ all around;

they put their heads together against me; they plot to ¹ take my life.

¹⁴ **But as for me, I have trusted in ¹ you, O LORD.**

I have said, "You ¹ are my God.

¹⁵ My times are ¹ in your hand;

rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who ¹ persecute me.

¹⁶ **Let your face shine up- ¹ on your servant;**

save me in your ¹ steadfast love." R

First Reading

Isaiah 50:4-9a

The servant of the Lord expresses absolute confidence in his final vindication, despite the fact that he has been struck and spit upon. This characteristic of the servant played an important role in the early church's understanding of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The Lord GOD has given me
a trained tongue,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens,
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious;
I did not turn backward.
⁶I gave my back to those who struck me
and my cheeks to those who pulled
out the beard;

I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

⁷The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to
shame;

⁸he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand in court together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

^{9a}It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Second Reading

Philippians 2:5-11

Paul uses an early Christian hymn to help us comprehend Jesus' obedient selflessness on the cross and how God has made Christ lord over all reality. The perspective of the cross becomes the way we rightly understand God, Christ, our own lives, and fellowship within the community of Christ.

Let the same mind be in you that was in
Christ Jesus,
⁶who, though he existed in the form
of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be grasped,
⁷but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
assuming human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a
human,
⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point
of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God exalted him even
more highly
and gave him the name
that is above every other name,
¹⁰so that at the name given to Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and
under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel Matthew 26:14—27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54 [not printed]

In fulfillment of scripture and obedience to God's will, Jesus goes to the cross so that a new covenant in his blood may bring forgiveness of sins. Even the soldiers who crucify him recognize him to be the Son of God.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

O God, you announce words of grace and truth. Give wisdom to all preachers in your church both globally and locally (*here local bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay preachers may be named*). Open our hearts to encounter the infinite life you offer in Jesus. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You hold the whole universe. Gather sun and moon, clouds and stars, land and sea, and plants and animals around the cross, so that all creation bears witness to your saving love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your power is sure. Destroy inequity and division in every place, and build your beloved community among all people. Guide judges, attorneys, and juries so that they act with justice and fairness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your heart breaks open at our pain. Send healing and vindication to all who, like Jesus, know the sting of betrayal, denial, abuse, or false accusations. Be with those experiencing pain or loss this day (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your ways show compassion. Let this same mind be in us as we enter Holy Week. Bless those here who will lead worship and tell the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

O God, your embrace is eternal. Praise and thanks to you for (*Hans Nielsen Hauge and*) all the faithful departed who rest in your mercy. Deliver us all from death's power and raise us to life in you. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday of Holy Week Psalm 36:5-11. **Tuesday of Holy Week** (commemoration of John Donne, poet, died 1631) 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. **Wednesday of Holy Week** Isaiah 50:4-9a. **Maundy Thursday** John 13:1-17, 31b-35. **Good Friday** John 18:1—19:42. **Resurrection of Our Lord/Vigil of Easter** (commemoration of Benedict the African, confessor, died 1589) Romans 6:3-11. **Resurrection of Our Lord/Easter Day** Acts 10:34-43 *or* Jeremiah 31:1-6; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4 *or* Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 28:1-10 *or* John 20:1-18.

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