

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Isaiah 50:4-7

Psalms 22:7-8, 16-17, 18-19, 22-23

Philippians 2:6-11

Luke 22:14-23:56 [or 23:1-49]

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading that appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

The Word In Liturgy

Today, our focus is first on the Lord's triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, and then on the events of his passion and death. Nonetheless, we also celebrate his resurrection, as we recognize in the breaking of the bread the presence of the Risen One in our midst.

The second part of the Book of Isaiah, written during the exile in Babylon, was intended as a word of consolation and hope to the Jewish people in a time of severe national trial. Particularly in the so-called Songs of the Servant, the author attempts to make sense out of the suffering, which Israel was undergoing. Many scholars believe that the unnamed servant represents Israel (although there may have been an individual whose actual experience became in these poems a metaphor for the nation's suffering). Today's reading is from the third of the Servant Songs. The servant's sufferings, graphically portrayed here, are ultimately seen as redemptive. It is little wonder that the early Christian community identified Jesus with the servant, and even shaped their narrative of his passion and death in light of the descriptions found here.

While the other readings are the same every year, the Gospel reading changes in each lectionary cycle. In year C we read from Luke's account of the passion. Despite the many similarities of all of the passion accounts, each evangelist tells the story in ways that reflect his particular concerns. One of the distinctive features of Luke's account is his deliberate effort to stress the paradigmatic nature of Jesus' suffering and death. Luke is the only



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evangelist to record the words of Jesus, “Do this in remembrance of me.” (v 19) And, Luke shows that Jesus is the model for his disciples to follow by describing the death of the first martyr, Stephen, in terms clearly intended to evoke the pattern of Jesus’ death. For Luke our experience of suffering and death can only be understood in light of the meaning of the suffering and death of Jesus.

Catholic Doctrine

The meaning of suffering.

For the five weeks of the Lenten season the Church prepares by works of love and self-sacrifice to celebrate the Lord’s paschal mystery, his suffering, death and resurrection. Today’s feast celebrates how the Messiah accomplished our salvation through this passover from death to new life. Following Christ in faith, the Church professes that if we are united with the Lord in his suffering on the cross, we too will share in his resurrection and new life. From that union is derived the Christian understanding of pain and suffering.

Sickness, pain and suffering are burdens shared by everyone to greater or lesser degrees. In the light of faith, these burdens are given significance. Affirming the value and significance of human suffering does not mean, however, that we are not to fight against illness or do nothing to alleviate conditions of misery, suffering and pain. Jesus, in his earthly ministry had compassion on those who were sick and worked miracles of healing. As disciples who continue the ministry of Jesus, we owe those who are suffering as much physical relief and spiritual comfort as we can possibly provide.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick with its laying on of hands and anointing with holy oil seeks to help the ones suffering to see in their sickness the suffering of Christ. Those who are sick receive in this sacrament the strength to unite themselves more closely to the passion of Jesus. Thus, the sick participate in the saving work of Jesus, who, as the Lamb of God, the Suffering Servant, embodies the compassion of God.