

Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday), Year A

This document provides:

- *Introductory notes*
- *Guidance for preparing for the Liturgy of the Palms*
- *Metrical Psalms for the day*
- *Suggestions for expanding your repertoire of hymns and songs*
- *Notes re: the proclamation of the Passion Gospel*
- *Prayers of the People*

Today's lections escort us from Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the seeming defeat of his Passion. This Sunday marks the first step of transition from our Lenten journey to the fifty-day celebration of Easter. While this may seem like a stark contrast *tempting preachers and liturgical planners to skip the Passion narrative until Good Friday, this temptation must be resisted.* The sharp transition of this day is deliberate.

In the paradoxical coupling of the today's Gospel narratives, two "kingdoms," and the choice between them, are on display. The one seen in Jesus and that personified by Pilate and Herod stand in complete contrast to each other. The latter stands for greed, status, ruthlessness, trust in economic or military might. That embodied in Christ is characterized by non-violence, service, compassion, solidarity with the world's vulnerable and rejected, trust in God.

For most of us, both dominions make a persuasive claim on our lives. Through our participation in the liturgies of Holy Week, the Spirit orients us to active citizenship in the everlasting Reign of God, immersing us once again in the story of Christ Jesus, crucified and risen. It is vital to recognize that this story is our story, too – the story of the baptized, the story of our world, and the story of God at work today.

The above notes may be adapted for use in worship bulletins, omitting the italicized words.

Preparing for the Liturgy of the Palms

The Palms:

It is recommended that you don't skimp on your order of palms. It is also best if you acquire palms that are not overly stripped. Indeed, you may wish to purchase palm fronds and strip them yourself. The fronds should be stripped into sizeable pieces. You are encouraged to decorate the worship space with open palm fronds in order to foster a sense of connection between the actual plant and the torn leaf in people's hands.

It is customary that palms shaped as crosses are provided for members of the congregation. These should not replace, however, the fronds provided for worshipers to use in the Liturgy of the Palms. You may wish to provide instructions in the worship bulletin or parish newsletter, or on the church's website or social media page, for how to make palm crosses out of the stripped fronds. (Illustrated examples are available online. If you cannot find them, feel free to contact the Congregational Development Officer.) Likewise, you could host an intergenerational gathering following the Liturgy during which people could make their palm crosses with some instruction and guidance.

It is appropriate to use the branches of other trees or shrubs indigenous to your area instead of palm branches.

The Procession:

If possible, it is desirable for the procession to involve as many members of the congregations as possible, rather than only the "sanctuary party" and choir. Again, if possible, it is desirable for the processional route to begin somewhere other than the worship space. Walk through the route ahead of time to identify any potential trouble spots. If your route may disrupt local traffic, be sure to enlist the permission and cooperation of local civil authorities.

In addition to the processional cross and palms, the procession may include banners, censer, candles, and so on, as well as drums and various portable musical instruments. It is not recommended that the procession include a donkey, with out without the Presiding Celebrant as its passenger. This is not simply a dramatic reenactment of an event long ago and far away. Rather, it is an act of worship celebrating a present mystery and ritually forming us in the life of Christ.

It is wise to choose music that can be sung easily by the congregation as they walk in procession. Chants or refrains simply repeating phrases like "Hosanna!" or "Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord" are appropriate. The hymn "All Glory, Laud and Honour" is usually well known to worshipers, too.

Expanding your Hymn/Song Repertoire

CP = Common Praise: Anglican Church of Canada (1998)

RB = The Hymn Book of the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada (1971) "Red Book"

BB = The Book of Common Praise: being the Hymn Book of The Church of England in Canada (1938) "Blue Book"

Metrical Psalm for the Liturgy of the Palms:

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Metre: SM

Give thanks for God is good,
God's love is steadfast, sure;
Let Israel confess, "God's love
Forever will endure."

Fling wide the Temple gates
That I may enter them;
"This is the gateway of the Lord,
The just may now come in."

You answered me in need,
You are my health alone;
The stone the builders cast aside
Is now the cornerstone.

This is the Lord's own work
And marvelous to see;
The Lord has acted on this day,
We praise God's victory.

Suggested tunes:

Festal Song (CP 496; BB 552)

Franconia (CP 439; RB 58; BB 59)

St. Thomas (CP 350; RB 397; BB 59)

Metrical Psalm for Sunday of the Passion Eucharist:

Psalm 31:9–16

Metre: CMD

Here in my need be pleased, O God,
To grant me some relief;
My soul and body waste away,
My eye is dim with grief.
For sorrow now consumes my life,
And sighs drown out my years;
My bones grow weak, and all my strength
Flows out in ceaseless tears.

My enemies and neighbors both
Regard me with dismay;
And when friends see me in the street,
They quickly move away.
I am forsaken, seen as dead,
A broken, useless pot;
I hear the whispers; fear surrounds;
Against my life they plot.

For I have said, “You are my God.
My times are in your hand;
Deliver me from every foe,
From all their hostile band.
O make your face, Lord, shine on me.”
I call upon your Name
But silence those who turn from you;
Let them be put to shame.

Suggested tunes:

Resignation (CP 583)

Kingsfold (CP 508; RB 115; BB 503)

Additional Suggestions Worth Trying:

“Holy Spirit, Storm of Love” (Brian Wren, Hope Publishing)

This hymn not only gives expression to the mystery of Christ’s Passion and Resurrection, but also of our sharing in it to “become the story we tell.” This song is available in Common Praise.

“Now We Remain” (David Haas, GIA Publications)

The refrain can be used during the Passion Gospel (see below). Likewise, this song can be used during Communion, during the Preparation of the Gifts/offertory, or as a song after Communion. It can also be used during the Paschal Triduum, providing “resonance” over the course of Holy Week. This selection is available in Common Praise and Gather Comprehensive.

“Unless a Grain of Wheat” (Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications)

Very suitable during Communion. This selection is available in Gather Comprehensive.

Gather Comprehensive is published by GIA Publications, Chicago, IL.

<https://www.giamusic.com/products/P-4200.cfm>

Reading of the Passion Gospel

In many congregations it is customary for parts to be assigned for the proclamation of the Passion story. If this option is chosen, it is recommended that the congregation not be delegated the part of the crowd, shouting “Crucify Him!” It is a questionable practice to have Christians ritualize themselves in opposition to Christ when they should be strengthening their identification with Christ and his devotion to God.

Instead, the congregation might take part through a refrain sung at the start of the passage and after Matthew 26.35; 26.75; 27.32; 27.50. Possible refrains include “Jesus, Remember Me” (Taize), the refrain from “Now We Remain” (Haas), “Bless the Lord, My Soul (Taize), or a setting of the Kyrie or Trisagion. If your “script” of the Passion Gospel has a part for the congregation to voice the part of the crowd, this part can be assigned to a chorus of readers.

If the Passion Gospel is proclaimed in the manner suggested here, there is no need to provide copies of the passage to members of the congregation.

The proclamation of the Passion Gospel is introduced, “The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.” There is no preliminary greeting or congregational response to this announcement. Likewise, the proclamation ends in silence.

Prayers of the People

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April 9, 2017

While a number of congregational responses are possible, the following litany is structured for use with a sung response which adapts a prayer by Archbishop Desmond Tutu: "Goodness is Stronger than Evil" (music by John Bell, GIA Publications). This response follows each petition. The words and music are available at:

http://www.hymnary.org/text/goodness_is_stronger_than_evil

On this day, the church hears again the Passion of our Lord, into which we are baptized. That the victory of the cross may be claimed and savored by all people, let us join our voices in prayer and confess the power of God's love as we sing/say: **[Response]**

We pray for goodness to reign in our world.

(allow time for silent prayer)

That the governments and citizens of this nation
will demonstrate concern for the most vulnerable in society,
and that business leaders will not seek profit
at the expense of Creation's wellbeing,
let us confess the power of God's love: **/R/**

We pray for love to reign in our world.

(allow time for silent prayer)

That we will notice and reach out to those
who endure loneliness, persecution, or injustice,
and that families divided by hostility may know reconciliation,
let us confess the power of God's love: **/R/**

We pray for God's light to reign in our world.

(allow time for silent prayer)

That nations and tribes, ethnic groups, and individuals alike
will turn from the futility of prejudice and violence,
and that those preparing for baptism may shine
as examples of God's power to change lives,
let us confess the power of God's love: **/R/**

We pray for life to reign in our world.

(allow time for silent prayer)

That the sick and suffering, *especially N.*, may know healing and
wholeness,
and that, remembering *N. and* all who have died,
those who mourn may find hope in the promise of Resurrection,
let us confess the power of God's love: **/R/**

As we join with Anglicans around the world in prayer
for Bishop Suheil Dawani and the Church in Jerusalem and Middle East,
we pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

As we join in prayer with Anglicans across this Diocese
for Anne, our Bishop,

and for North Muskoka Pioneer Parish and its congregations:
St John the Baptist, Ravenscliffe, served by The Rev. Judie Cooper
St. Mary's Church in Aspdin St. Paul's Church, Grassmere,
and Christ Church, Ilfracombe,

we pray that the story we proclaim and celebrate this week
may take flesh in the life and witness of our congregation,
and we confess the power of God's love: **/R/**

The Presider or Intercessor concludes with the following Collect:

God of the covenant, through baptism we pass
from the darkness of sin and death to the light of resurrection life.
May we, walking in the way of the cross,
arrive at our Passover celebration
with a deeper awareness of the life we share in the Risen Saviour,
Jesus Christ our Lord.