

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion • Year B • April 1, 2012

*Saving God,
you do not abandon us
but hold us close
in your love
through your Son
who suffered death
and rose for us.
From the cross,
Jesus cries out
on our behalf,
speaking words of faith,
trust and praise
to you,
his heavenly Father.
Amen.*

Sunday Word

(Procession) Mark 11:1–10 or John 12:12–16
Isaiah 50:4–7
Psalm 22:8–9, 17–18, 19–20, 23–24
Philippians 2:6–11
Mark 14:1–15:47 [or (short form) 15:1–39]

God is our Help

The prophet describes the Suffering Servant of God. Jesus Christ is the Suffering Servant. All those who count themselves as servants of the Most High look to God for their help.

He Emptied Himself

Christ obeys the plan of the Father and sacrifices himself for the salvation of all. Thus he is exalted as Lord and Savior.

Jesus, the Son of God

The crowds acclaim Jesus as he enters Jerusalem. Only days later, he is put to death on a cross. The Roman soldier is so moved he declares this executed criminal to be the very Son of God!

Church Teaching: The Gift of Perseverance

The Young Man and Courage in Christ

During the arrest of Jesus a young man runs away naked (Mark 14:51–52). The *neaniskos* (Greek for “young man”) later appears in Mark’s narrative at the empty tomb of Jesus. He is now fully clothed in a “long white robe” (Mark 16:5)

The early Church baptized disrobed candidates, telling them they were “drowning” in a watery tomb, dying to the old ways of sin and rising to newness of life in Christ. They were clothed in his grace, pristinely sporting the white robe of the neophyte. Perhaps the figure of the *neaniskos* represents all those baptized in the tomb of Christ, all those given new life.

Baptism affords us encouragement. It gives rise to perseverance. And our own perseverance is modeled on the resoluteness of Christ.

The Son of God, Resolute

On one level, the passion of Christ describes a horrible execution. It details the conspiracy against Jesus, his betrayal, condemnation and abandonment by all but his mother and the other women. On another level, the passion details how the Son of God never faltered in his mission.

Even in his cry from the cross, Jesus employs the language of prayer, for in this soulful cry he quotes from today's Psalm 22. Note that the psalm concludes by expressing trust in the Lord God. Verse 32 of the psalm, not used in today's liturgy, declares that a future generation will experience God's saving deliverance.

Perseverance

In the midst of blessings and trials the aspiration of every believer is to remain steadfast in faith to the very end. This "final perseverance" has been modeled for us in an exemplary fashion by the Son of God.

We strive to open ourselves in every situation of life to the love of God that guides us on right paths, even when we find that we share in the cross of suffering and pain.

The Paschal Mystery unleashes for us the tremendous saving love of God. We take to heart the message of Saint Paul and confess in faith that the eternal Word of Glory emptied himself, dying for our sake so that he might be raised above all to save all.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

We remain steadfast in faith. We persevere to the end because even in the most difficult of situations we know that good is being done by God through us. In essence, God the Father, in his loving plan, means for us to participate in the mysteries of Christ's saving ministry. We partake in those mysteries and extend them as they permeate the entire Church being built up in grace, love, peace and holiness.

Key Terms

PASCHAL MYSTERY

Christ's saving work in redeeming us, his suffering, death, Resurrection and Ascension; mystery made present in the sacraments, especially Eucharist (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 571).

PERSEVERANCE

Habit that flows from the virtues of hope and courage, enabling us to adhere steadfastly to the end (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1821).

Voices of Faith

In [Christ's] most compassionate humanity and through his servant form . . . he took on the speech of our infirmity, in which "our sinful nature was crucified with him" that the body of sin might be destroyed, and said: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" . . . Thus the Psalm begins . . . in prophecy of his passion and the revelation of his grace which he brought to raise up his faithful and set them free.

—Saint Augustine

Living to the Lord also means recognizing that suffering, while still an evil and a trial in itself, can always become a source of good. It becomes such if it is experienced for love and with love . . . in the suffering of Christ crucified.

—Blessed Pope John Paul II

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1820 (joy in our trials), 1821 (hope as it relates to perseverance), 2016 (final perseverance)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 8 (The Saving Death and Resurrection of Christ), especially the section entitled "Lift High the Cross," pages 91–93

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

387 (hope), 540 (Psalms in the life of the Church), 543 (Jesus' prayer during his Passion)