

# Purification and Enlightenment Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA  
Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion • Year A

## Catechist Preparation

**FIRST READING**—Isaiah 50:4–7

After commemorating the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, we continue the Liturgy by contemplating the image of the Suffering Servant from the prophet Isaiah, an image which prefigures the work of Christ on our behalf as he suffers and dies for our sins.

**SECOND READING**—Philippians 2:6–11

We meditate further, using Paul's sublime Christological hymn extolling Jesus who "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Philippians 2:7) only to be raised up to glory, a glory above all others.

**GOSPEL READING**—Matthew 26:14–27:66

Matthew's account of the Gospel presents Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law and the embodiment of the New Covenant. The Scriptures of ancient Israel are quoted in Matthew's account in support of this notion. In this depiction of the Passion of Jesus from Matthew's Gospel, there are thus four allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures: Matthew 26:16 (which echoes Zechariah 11:12), Matthew 26:26 (which echoes Exodus 24:8), Matthew 27:29 (which echoes Isaiah 50:4–7, today's First Reading), and Matthew 27:46 (which echoes Psalm 22, the Psalm text for today's Liturgy).

## Making Connections

### Key Images and Symbols

Jerusalem (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] 559)

The Hour is at Hand (CCC 730)

Cross (CCC 617)

Blood of the New Covenant (CCC 762, 781)

Son of God (CCC 663)

### Music Suggestions

"Hosanna," F. P. O'Brien. (GIA)

"Hosanna to the Son of David," D. Schutte. (OCP)

"God So Loved the World," P. Tate. (WLP)

## Dismissal Session

(Allow about 20 minutes)

Have the space set with chairs in a circle. On a small table place a purple cloth, a crucifix, and palm branches.

### Respond

Allow for a sufficient amount of quiet time for the group to quietly reflect or journal on their experience of the Liturgy of the Word. After some time, invite anyone who wants to share what touched them and what surprised them during the Liturgy.

### Enhance

Lead a guided meditation using these or similar words:

Close your eyes . . . take a few deep breaths . . .  
Imagine yourself as part of crowd walking on the road to Jerusalem . . . what do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? . . . There seems to be something happening behind you. You stop and watch and wait . . . The crowd seems to part and you see a man riding on a donkey . . . The people are throwing their cloaks down on the path in front of him. They are waving palm branches and crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David." As the man on the donkey comes near you, your eyes meet and they hold your attention . . . He is speaking to your heart. What does he say to you? (*long pause*)  
You speak to him about your desire to be baptized. (*long pause*) What does he say in response to you? (*long pause*) You continue to walk with the crowd and then he is hidden from your view.

### Pray

Invite the participants to talk to the Lord, in the quiet of their hearts, about their desire for Baptism. Then conclude by praying the prayer from the participant page: *Almighty Father, by your Son's holy and glorious wounds guard us, keep us, save us, and raise us up. Amen.*

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## Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

### Readings

Matthew 21:1–11 (Procession with Palms)

Isaiah 50:4–7

Psalms 22:8–9, 17–18, 19–20, 23–24

Philippians 2:6–11

Matthew 26:14–27:66

### Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including godparents, sponsors, team members, and spouses who are joining the group. Spend a few minutes to gather some first responses and reactions to the Liturgy of the Word.

### Uncover

1. Play or sing the chant “Jesus, Remember Me” as you pass a crucifix around the group, encouraging each person to hold and gaze upon it for a few minutes.
2. Read or summarize the first section of the Lord, We are Unworthy section of the participant resource, and allow time for quiet reflection on the questions presented there. Then invite the participants to share their reflections with one or two other people.
3. Encourage volunteers to share their thoughts with the large group.

### Purify

1. Play or sing the chant “Jesus, Remember Me” as you pass a crucifix around the group again, encouraging each person to hold and gaze upon it for a few minutes.
2. Read or summarize the second section of the Lord, Make Us Worthy section of the participant resource, and allow time for quiet reflection on the question given at the end. Then invite the

participants to share their reflections with one or two other people. Encourage them to share with different people than last time.

3. Invite several volunteers to share with the large group what they heard others sharing.

### Enlighten

1. Summarize or invite the participants to read Church Teaching: Christ, Our Life. Then discuss the following points:
  - Jesus willingly stretched out his arms to embrace death. He was not conquered by death. He conquered all sin and death for us.
  - Jesus willingly embraced death to save us.
  - In Baptism, we are immersed into the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. We enter the waters of Baptism to die with Christ in order to rise anew in Christ. We become a new person.
2. Explore Key Images and Symbols of the Season.

### Live

1. The end of the journey toward initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—is just a few days away. Encourage the group to participate in the Liturgies of Holy Thursday and Good Friday and the Preparatory Rites of Holy Saturday Morning.
2. Invite the group to reflect on Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. If there is time, encourage volunteers to share their reflections.

### Pray

Use the Responsorial Psalm from today's Liturgy (Psalm 22:8–9, 17–18, 19–20, 23–24) as the closing prayer.