

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA
Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord • Year C • April 13, 2025

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—ISAIAH 50:4-7

Today's reading comes from the portion of the Book of Isaiah called the "Songs of the Servant," in which the author explores the meaning of Israel's suffering during the exile in Babylon. The anonymous servant who figures in these Scripture passages may represent Israel itself. Christians read these passages and see the Lord's Servant as a prefiguration of Christ, the Suffering Servant of God.

SECOND READING—PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11

This Scripture passage is believed by scholars to be an early Christian hymn used by Saint Paul as he wrote his letter to the Church in Philippi. This hymn is poetic and evocative while containing a rich theological understanding of the divine self-emptying in the Incarnation, which includes Jesus' embrace of suffering and Death.

GOSPEL—LUKE 22:14-23:56

It is only in this account of the Last Supper that we hear the words of Jesus, "... [D]o this in memory of me" (Luke 22:19). Luke thus underscores in his account of Jesus' Passion how it becomes the pattern for our own suffering, dying, and rising.

Church Teaching

For Luke, as for Paul, the experience of human suffering and death can only be understood in light of the significance of Christ's suffering and Death. A new creation comes about in Christ, even if it is not yet fully realized. Pain and suffering, dying, and death itself are defeated by the suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. In him, ours is the victory, because his love is greater than sin and stronger than death.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1499-1532

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 249-259

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 313-319

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Have the space set with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a red cloth, a candle, some palm branches, and a crucifix. When all are seated, light the candle and sit in quiet for a few minutes.

Discover

Invite the participants to reflect on their experience of the Liturgy of the Word. Use these questions to focus their reflection:

What did you see, hear, feel, or observe during today's liturgy?

What surprised you?

What, if anything, was new for you?

Deepen

1. In a slow, reflective pace, proclaim the Second Reading (Philippians 2:6-11). Give the participants copies of the passage and invite them to spend some time quietly rereading it.
2. Ask the following questions, and invite the participants to reflect on them quietly before sharing their responses with one or two other people:

What does this passage proclaim about Christ Jesus?

How can Christians grasp the depth of this self-emptying gift of Christ?

How are Christians called to respond to this gift?

3. Invite several volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.

Pray

Play a hymn suggested for today's session, or use the prayer from the participant page as the closing prayer: *Loving Father, your Son came among us as a servant, obedient to your plan of Salvation, pouring out his life upon the Cross so that we might be freed from sin and filled with faith. May every knee bend and every tongue proclaim him as Lord and Redeemer. Amen.*

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Readings

Luke 19:28-40 (at the procession with palms)

Isaiah 50:4-7

Psalms 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Philippians 2:6-11

Luke 22:14-23:56 (or 23:1-49)

Welcome

Begin by welcoming everyone who is present, including sponsors, team members, and spouses who are joining the group. Rephrase one or two questions from the Dismissal Session, and invite the participants to share in small groups. Then ask several volunteers to share their reflections with the large group.

Engage

1. Invite the participants to write on pieces of paper phrases, words, or actions that they heard when the Passion was proclaimed. Ask them to take turns speaking them aloud until all are heard. Invite the participants to share, with one or two other people, what they understand as the meaning or message of the words, phrases, or actions that they heard.
2. Highlight the following points with the group:
 - Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord begins Holy Week. This is the most important week of the whole Church year.
 - Jesus demonstrates great love in his willing embrace of suffering and Death for our sake.
 - When we celebrate the Eucharist, Jesus asks us, "Do this in memory of me."

Explore

1. Lead a group discussion about the following points:
 - Sickness, pain, and suffering are burdens that every human being must embrace to some degree.

- We are not passive in our approach to sickness, pain, and suffering; rather, we work to alleviate the root of all pain and misery in our world.
 - When we unite our suffering and pain to the Passion and Death of Jesus, we will also share in his Resurrection.
 - Every Eucharist celebrates the whole Paschal Mystery—the suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ.
 - In this most Holy Week, we remember and celebrate the whole of the Paschal Mystery, not individual events in the life of Christ.
2. Highlight key points from **Church Teaching: The Significance of Suffering**. Also highlight the **Key Terms** and **Voices of Faith** sections.

Apply

1. Encourage the catechumens and candidates to complete these statements:

From the prayer, discussion, and study for this Sunday, I understand the Church's teaching to be . . .

I am challenged to live the message of this Sunday by . . .

2. Invite the catechumens and candidates, their sponsors, and their families to come to the liturgies of Holy Week.

Pray

Play a hymn suggested for today's session, or use the prayer from the participant page as the closing prayer: *Loving Father, your Son came among us as a servant, obedient to your plan of Salvation, pouring out his life upon the Cross so that we might be freed from sin and filled with faith. May every knee bend and every tongue proclaim him as Lord and Redeemer. Amen.*