

Purification and Enlightenment Session

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

*Almighty Father,
by your Son's holy
and glorious wounds,
guard us,
keep us,
save us,
raise us up.*



Sunday Word

Luke 19:28-40 (Procession with Palms)

Isaiah 50:4-7

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

Philippians 2:6-11

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

Repent

As the Passion Narrative unfolds, Jesus is betrayed by Judas. Then the disciples are seen arguing about who should be considered the greatest. Later as Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives, the disciples, weak with fear, fall asleep. At Jesus' arrest, one of the disciples engages in violence, cutting off the servant's ear. In the courtyard, Peter denies the Lord. Betrayal, misunderstanding, weakness, violence, and denial were part of the experience of Jesus' closest disciples.

For Reflection . . .

Which betrayal—such as pride, foolishness, or indifference—have you engaged in? Why?

Which weakness—such as vanity, pleasure in the misfortune of others, or overindulgence—is yours? What can you do about it?

Which denial—such as failing to help a neighbor, misusing your gifts, forgiving slowly, neglecting responsibilities, fearing to stand up for what is right—is yours? How can you make amends?

Renew

Jesus cries out in a loud voice and commends his spirit to the Father. The pagan soldier who witnesses the Crucifixion gives voice to the truth, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent" (Luke 22:47).

Innocent and without sin, Jesus takes our transgressions upon himself. He loves us and redeems us. Therefore he cries out in a loud voice on our behalf not because he is guilty—he cries out to express solidarity with humanity in our sinfulness so that we might, in him, be reconciled to the Father.

For Reflection . . .

What words would be included in your prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus for all he has done for you?

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Church Teaching: Jesus Christ, King and Savior, Who Reigns from the Cross

At the Crucifixion, “darkness came over the whole land” (Luke 22:44). But the light of Jesus’ love shines through that darkness, piercing it. His innocence was readily apparent to the hardened soldier, a member of the execution detail, who ends up witnessing to the Lord’s goodness.

One of the criminals executed with Jesus recognizes Jesus’ true identity. In the light of that realization, the thief also acknowledges that he himself deserves punishment. But he pleads, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). In Luke’s Gospel account, the use of the name of Jesus is rare. Its use here by this criminal indicates how he regards Jesus as someone who can save him—a King whose kingdom represents mercy, forgiveness, conversion, fullness of life, and eternity.

Jesus is King. He reigns from the Cross as victor over sin and death. Jesus promises, “. . . today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). The offer of Salvation is extended to all who acclaim the Lord in faith and acknowledge Jesus as Savior and King.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, “When he hung on the precious cross, two thieves were hung with him. What comes of this? It was truly a mockery as far as the plan of the Jews, but it was also the commemoration of prophecy. It is written, ‘He was also numbered with the transgressors.’ He paid our debts in our place. He bore our sins.”

Pray slowly and repetitively, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Saint Cyril of Alexandria also says, “The Savior is led to the suffering that brings salvation. . . . Now the cross has become the means by which he governs, through which he continues to rule over all heaven, since it is true that even as ‘far as death’ he has become ‘obedient, even to death on a cross. Therefore God has exalted him.’ ”

Reread Philippians 2:6-11 (the Second Reading from today’s Mass).

Key Images and Symbols of the Season

LAST SUPPER—last Passover meal Jesus shared with his disciples, first supper of the dawning Kingdom of God.

JERUSALEM—the city of Jesus’ triumph.

JESUS—name that means “God saves.”

THE CROSS—instrument of Jesus’ Death, instrument of our Salvation.

THE KINGDOM—the everlasting reign or rule of God in righteousness, peace, and joy here and in eternity.

Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist

The liturgy today is overwhelming in its power. There are many images, many layers of significance, and many realizations that await us in the liturgy and in contemplating it afterward. What stands out for you most of all?

Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior, is the Son of God. He was obedient and freely accepted death for our sake. You will soon receive Baptism into that same “death,” that you might be raised by Christ into his new life. What do you offer him in return in thanksgiving, praise, and love?

