

# Palm Sunday at Home 2020

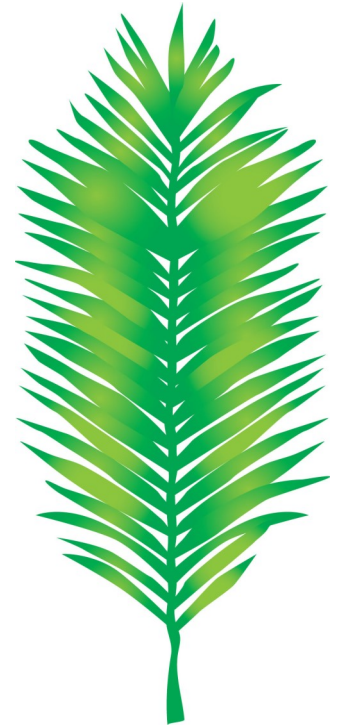
Palm Sunday, Year A

April 5, 2020

Use this resource for your personal or family devotion and worship time during Palm Sunday.

Find a leaf, branch, picture, or drawing or something representative of the palm branches that were waved and strewn before Jesus as he entered Jerusalem. Hold it in your hands and imagine the scene: the sights, the sounds, the smells, the joy. Take a picture of you and your palm leaf and email the picture to the Church Office, the Office will post your picture on Facebook

*Today, we encounter the paradox that defines our faith: Jesus Christ is glorified king and humiliated servant. We too are full of paradox: like Peter, we fervently desire to follow Christ, but find ourselves afraid, denying God. We wave palms in celebration today as Christ comes into our midst, and we follow with trepidation as his path leads to death on the cross. Amid it all we are invited into this paradoxical promise of life through Christ's broken body. We begin this week that stands at the center of the church year, anticipating the completion of God's astounding work.*



## GOSPEL

*The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew in the 21st chapter.*

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, 'Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven! When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

***Please wave your palm leaf and say:***  
Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!

**HYMN: ALL GLORY, LAUD, AND HONOR**

All glory, laud, and honor, to you, redeemer, king, to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

You are the king of Israel and David's royal Son, now in the Lord's name coming, our King and Blessed One.

All glory, laud, and honor, to you, redeemer, king, to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

Text: Theodulph of Orleans, c. 760-812; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818-1866, alt. Hymn is in Public Domain.

**ISAIAH 50:4-9a**

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he awakens—wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backwards. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

**PSALM 31:9-16**

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away. I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. For I hear the whispering of many—terror all around!— as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

**PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



## **THE PASSION STORY**

### **A DRAMATIC READING OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW**

This is the story of Jesus Christ in his final hours on earth. It's the story of our salvation. It tells some of it, not the whole part of it. It would take the rest of our lives to hear the whole of it.

One of the Twelve, the one named Judas Iscariot, went to the cable of high priests and said, "What will you give me if I hand him over to you?" They settled on thirty silver pieces. From that moment on Judas began looking for just the right moment to hand him over.

On the first Days of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare your passover meal?" "Enter the city. Go up to a certain man and say, 'The Teacher says, my time is near. I and my disciples plan to celebrate the Passover at your house.'" The disciples followed Jesus' instructions to the letter, and prepared the Passover meal.

After sunset, he and the Twelve were sitting around the table. During the meal, he said, "I have something hard, but important, to say to you: One of you is going to hand me over to conspirator." They were stunned, and then began to ask, one after another, "It isn't me, is it, Master?" Jesus said, "The one who hands me over is someone I eat with daily, one who passes me food at the table. In one sense the Son of Man is entering into a way of treachery well-marked by the Scriptures—no surprises here. In another sense, that man who turn him in, turns traitor to the Son of Man. Better never to have been born than do this!" Then Judas, already turned traitor, said, "It isn't me, is it, Rabbi?" "Don't play games with me, Judas," said Jesus.

During the meal, Jesus took bread and blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying, "Take, eat. This is my body." Taking the cup and thanking God, he gave it to them. "Drink this, all of you. This is my blood, God's new covenant poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins. I'll not be drinking wine from this cup again until that new day when I'll drink with you in the kingdom of my Father," said Jesus.

They sang a hymn and went directly to Mount Olives. Then Jesus said to them, "Before the night's over, you're going to fall to pieces because of what happens to me. There is a Scripture that says, 'I'll strike the shepherd; helter-skelter the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I, your Shepherd, will go ahead of you, leading the way to Galilee." Peter broke in, "Even if everyone else falls to pieces on account of you, I won't!" Jesus responded, "Don't be so sure. This very night, before the rooster crows up the dawn, you will deny me three times." Peter said, "Even if I had to die with you, I would never deny you. Never!"

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Jesus said, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he plunged into an agonizing sorrow. Then he said, "This sorrow is crushing my life out. Stay here and keep vigil with me." Going a little ahead, he fell on his face praying, "My Father, if there is any way, get me out of this. But please, not what I want. **You**...what do **You** want?"

When he came back to his disciples, he found them sound asleep. He said to Peter, "Can't you stick it out with me a single hour? Stay alert; be in prayer so you don't wander into temptation without even knowing you're in danger. There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything in God. But there's another part that's as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire.

He then left them a second time. Again, he prayed, "My Father, if there is no other way than this, drinking this cup to the dregs, I'm ready. Do it your way."

When he came back, he again found them sound asleep. They simply couldn't keep their eyes open. This time he let them sleep on, and went back a third time to pray, going over the same ground one last time. When he came back the next time, he said, "Are you going to sleep on and make a night of it? My time is up. The Son of Man is about to be handed over to the hands of sinners. Get up! Let's be going! My betrayer is here." The words were barely out of his mouth when Judas (the one from the Twelve) showed up, and with him a gang from the high priests and religious leaders brandishing swords and clubs. The betrayer had worked out a sign with them, "The one I kiss—that's the one—seize him." He went straight to Jesus, greeted him and kissed him. Judas said, "How are you, Rabbi?" Jesus responded, "Friend, why this charade?"

Then they came on him—grabbed him and roughed him up. One of those with Jesus pulled his sword and, taking a swing at the Chief Priest's servant, cut off his ear. Jesus said, "Put your sword back where it belongs. All who use swords are destroyed by swords. Don't you realize that I am able right now to call to my Father, and twelve companies—more, if I want them—of fighting angels would be here, battle-ready? But if I did that, how would the Scriptures come true that say this is the way it has to be?" Then Jesus addressed the mob, "What is this—coming out after me with swords and clubs as if I were a dangerous criminal? Day after day I have been sitting in the Temple teaching, and you never so much as lifted a hand against me. You've done it this way to confirm and fulfill the prophetic writings."

Then all the disciples cut and ran. The gang that seized Jesus led him before Caiaphas the Chief Priest, where the religion scholars and leaders had assembled. Peter followed at a safe distance until they got to the Chief Priest's courtyard. Then he slipped in and mingled with the servants, watching to see how things would turn out.

The High Priests, conspiring with the Jewish Council, tried to cook up charges against Jesus in order to sentence him to death. But even though many stepped up, making up one false accusation after another, nothing was believable. Finally, two men came forward with this, "He said, 'I can tear down this Temple of God and after three days rebuild it.'" The Chief Priest stood up and said, "What do you have to say about the accusation?" Jesus kept silent. Then the Chief Priest said, "I command you by the authority of the living God to say if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."



Jesus was curt: “You yourself said it. And that’s not all. Soon you’ll see it for yourself: The Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Mighty One, arriving on the clouds of heaven.” At that, the Chief Priest lost his temper, ripping his robes, yelling: “He blasphemed! Why do we need witnesses to accuse him? You all heard him blaspheme! Are you going to stand for such blasphemy?” They all said, “Death! That seals his death sentence.” Then they were spitting in his face and banging him around. They jeered as they slapped him: “Prophecy, Messiah: Who hit you that time?”

All this time, Peter was sitting out in the courtyard. One servant girl came up to him and said, “You were there with Jesus the Galilean.” In front of everybody there, he denied it, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” As he moved over toward the gate, someone else said to the people there, “This man was with Jesus the Nazarene.” Again he denied it, salting his denial with an oath, “I swear, I never laid eyes on the man!”

Shortly after that, some bystanders approached Peter and said, “You’ve got to be one of them. Your accent gives you away.” Then he got really nervous and swore, “I don’t know the man!” Just then a rooster crowed. Peter remembered what Jesus had said. “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” He went out and cried...and cried...and cried.

In the first light of dawn, all the High Priests and Religious Leaders met and put the finishing touches on their plot to kill Jesus. Then they tied him up and paraded him to Pilate, the governor. Judas the one who betrayed him, realized that Jesus was doomed. Overcome with remorse, he gave back the thirty silver coins to the High Priests, saying, “I’ve sinned. I’ve betrayed an innocent man.” They said, “What do we care? That’s *your* problem!” Judas threw the silver coins into the Temple and left. Then he went out and hung himself. The High Priests picked up the silver pieces, but didn’t know what to do with them. They said, “It wouldn’t be right to give this—a payment for murder!—as an offering in the Temple.” They decided to get rid of it by buying the “Potter’s Field” and use it as a burial place for the homeless. That’s how the field got called, “Murder Meadow,” a name that has stuck to this day. Then Jeremiah’s words became history, “They took thirty silver pieces, the price of the one priced by some Sons of Israel, and they purchased the Potter’s Field.”

And so they unwittingly followed the divine instructions to the letter.

Jesus was placed before the governor, who questioned him: “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus responded, “If you say so.” But when the accusations rained down hot and heavy from the High Priests and Religious Leaders, he said nothing. Pilate asked him “Do you hear the long list of accusations? Aren’t you going to say something?” Jesus kept silence—not a word from his mouth. The governor was impressed. Really impressed. It was an old custom during the Feast for the governor to pardon a single prisoner named by the crowd. At the time, they had the infamous Jesus Barabbas in prison. With the crowd before him, Pilate said, “Which prisoner do you want me to pardon: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus the so-called Christ?” He knew it was through sheer spite that they had turned Jesus over to him.



While court was still in session, Pilate's wife sent him a message: "Don't get mixed up in judging this noble man. I've just been through a long and troubled night because of a dream about him."

Meanwhile, the High Priests and Religious Leaders had talked the crowd into asking for the pardon of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. The governor asked, "Which of the two do you want me to pardon? The crowd shouted, "Barabbas!" The governor asked, "Then what do I do with Jesus, the so-called Christ?" The crowd shouted, "Nail him to a cross!" The governor asked, "But for what crime?" The crowd continued to shout, "Nail him...nail him...nail him to a cross!"

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was imminent, he took a basin of water and washed his hands in full sight of the crowd and said, "I'm washing my hands of responsibility for this man's death. From now on, it's in your hands. You're judge and jury." They said, "We'll take the blame...we and our children after us." Then he pardoned Barabbas. But he had Jesus whipped, and then handed over for crucifixion.

The soldiers assigned to the governor took Jesus into the governor's palace and go the entire brigade together for some fun. They stripped him and dressed him in a red toga. They plaited a crown from branches of a thorn bush and set it on his head. They put a stick in his hand for a scepter. They knelt before him in mocking reverence, "Bravo, King of the Jews! Bravo!" Then they spit on him and hit him on the head with the stick. When they had their fun, they took off the toga and put his clothes back on him. Then they proceeded out to the crucifixion.

Along the way they came on a man from Cyrene named Simon and made him carry Jesus' cross. Arriving at Golgatha, the place they call, "Skull Hill," they offered him a mild painkiller, a mixture of wine and myrrh, but when he tasted it, he wouldn't drink it. After they had finished nailing him to the cross and were waiting for him to die, they whiled away the time by throwing dice for his clothes. Above his head they posted the criminal charge against him, this is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

Along with him they also crucified two criminals, one to his right, the other to his left. People passing along the road jeered, shaking their heads in mock lament, "You bragged that you could tear down the Temple and then rebuild it in three days—so show us your stuff! Save yourself! If you're really God's Son, come down from that cross!" The High Priests, along with the Religion Scholars and Leaders, were right there mixing it up with the rest of them, having a great time poking fun at him, "He saved others—he can't save himself! King of Israel, is he? Then let him get down from that cross. We'll *all* become believers then! He was so sure of God—well, let him rescue his 'Son' now—if he wants him! He did claim to be God's Son, didn't he?" Even the two criminals next to him joined in the mockery.

From noon to three, the whole earth was dark. Around mid-afternoon he groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" Which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"



Some bystanders who heard him said, "He's calling for Elijah." One of them ran and got a sponge soaked in sour wine and lifted it on a stick so he could drink. The others jokes, "Don't be in such a hurry. Let's see if Elijah comes and saves him."

But Jesus, again crying loudly, breathed his last. At that moment, the Temple curtain was ripped in two, top to bottom. There was an earthquake, and rocks were split in pieces. What's more, tombs were opened up, and many bodies of believers asleep in their graves were raised. After Jesus' resurrection they left the tombs, entered the holy city, and appeared to many. The captain of the guard and those with him, when they saw the earthquake and everything else that was happening, were scared to death. They said, "This has to be the Son of God!"

There were also quite a few women watching from a distance, women who had followed Jesus from Galilee in order to serve him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee brothers.

Late in the afternoon a wealthy man from Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus arrived. His name was Joseph. He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate granted his request. Joseph took the body and wrapped it in clean linens, put it his own tomb, a new tomb only recently cut into the rock, and rolled a large stone across the entrance. Then he went off. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary stayed, sitting in plain view of the tomb.

After sundown, the High Priests and Pharisees arranged a meeting with Pilate. They said, "Sir, we just remembered that the liar announced while he was alive, 'After three days I will be raised.' We've got to get that tomb sealed until the third day. There's a good chance his disciples will come and steal the corpse and then go around saying, 'He's risen from the dead.' Then we'll be worse off than before, the final deceit surpassing the first." Pilate told them, "You will have a guard. God ahead and secure it as best you can." So they went out and secured the tomb, sealing the stone and posting guards.

This is the gospel of our Lord.



**HYMN: *GO TO DARK GETHSEMANE***

Go to dark Gethsemane, all who feel the tempter's pow'r; your Redeemer's conflict see. Watch with him one bitter hour; turn not from his griefs away; learn from Jesus Christ to pray.

Follow to the judgement hall, view the Lord of life arraigned; oh, the wormwood and the gall! Oh, the pangs his soul sustained! Shun not suff'ring, shame, or loss; learn from him to bear the cross.

Calv'ry's mournful mountain climb, there, adoring at his feet, mark that miracle of time, God's own sacrifice complete. "It is finished!" hear him cry, learn from Jesus Christ to die.

Early hasten to the tomb where they laid his breathless clay; all is solitude and gloom. Who has taken him away? Christ is risen! He meets our eyes. Savior, teach us so to rise.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771-1854. Hymn is in Public Domain.

