

A LITURGY FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION (PALM SUNDAY)

LITURGICAL NOTES

Holy Week

Within the framework of the Lenten season, the last week stands out for special attention, not simply because it contains Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, but because the whole week is a commemoration and celebration of our Lord's Passion. This week of the Passion is inaugurated on Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday or 6th Sunday of Lent) with the reading of the Passion Gospel which sets the tone for the rest of the week.

To mark out this week as one of special solemnity, the decoration of the liturgical space might well mark the change by using passion red as the colour. A large cross may be placed centrally, for this is the Week of the Cross. Branches and Palm fronds may be left in the church from the Sunday through to Maundy Thursday, when they should be removed.

In Holy Week we need to be particularly careful not to try and 're-enact' the events of the days before the death of Jesus. Liturgy is about celebration and commemoration rather than re-enactment. The careful and simple use of our symbols can serve this. The cross should be large and preferably wooden; branches, palm fronds or crosses need to be of an adequate size; processions need to go from one place to another.

The Eucharist, the celebration of Christ's saving death, is the primary focus of our liturgies for the week. Many communities will therefore want to celebrate the Eucharist on each day until Thursday. Other devotions, such as Stations of the Cross or Tenebrae should not replace the church's main celebration on these days, but may well be an adjunct to it.

As this is the central week of the Christian Year and central to the life of the Church, it is recommended that wherever possible there be only one celebration of the Liturgies for Passion (Palm) Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. While it may be ideal to celebrate only one great Liturgy of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, this is often not practicable.

Passion (Palm) Sunday

In early times there were two liturgical celebrations on this Day: the Eucharist of the Day which commemorated the Passion of our Lord and, later in the day, a procession of all the people carrying palms in procession to the Great Church in Jerusalem for Vespers. As the years passed, these two different commemorations merged into one, and in some places the re-enactment of the 'Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem' took over in importance. Some communities have made this the main theme of the Day's liturgy and omitted the Passion reading altogether. It should be remembered, however, that it is not the entry into Jerusalem, but rather the Passion Reading that sets the major theme for the whole week (as is recognised in the *Book of Common Prayer*).

The Liturgy of the Palms

The Palm Gospel needs to be read in a loud and clear voice, especially if it is read in the open air.

The Distribution of the Palms is best done before the liturgy begins. It is important for a good number of large palm fronds to be carried in the procession. It is appropriate to distribute the crosses for personal use. This may happen at the end of the liturgy.

The Procession is the major part of the Palm Liturgy. The first Palm Pilgrims moved from the Mount of Olives into the Great Church in Jerusalem. Palm processions ought to enter the church building from outside. The gathering of the people may take place in another building, the church driveway, a nearby park or in the street. A procession is a public event, and should take a route that will cause it to be public. Effort should be made to include all the members of the assembly in the procession. This may necessitate helping the elderly or having a number of stations (stops) along the way to help people keep together.

Special consideration needs to be given to music for the Procession. A music group playing wind or brass instruments could be placed in the middle of the group to help keep the singing together. “All glory, laud and honour” can become tedious if it is sung for too long. Taizé settings of the “Hosanna” can be very effective in procession.

A station (stop) at the church entrance can be a useful way of gathering everyone together again after processing. It also enables a change of hymn to take place as the people enter the building and go to their places. This hymn can be accompanied by the usual musical instrument(s) of the congregation.

The Liturgy of the Palms and the Palm Procession have been used as occasions for ecumenical co-operation. In some places a number of congregations gather for the Palm Liturgy in some common (public) place and then process to their own building for whatever service is to follow. Such a practice has all sorts of imaginative possibilities.

The Ministry of the Word

The Passion Gospel is always read. While the lectionary provides two other readings and a psalm it may be appropriate to have only one other reading and omit the psalm.

There are a number of possibilities when it comes to reading the Passion Gospel, including:

- ◆ reading with 3 readers (a narrator, Jesus, and the rest);
- ◆ reading with as many readers as there are characters in the story, including the congregation, provided copies are available;
- ◆ musical settings to be sung using a few voices or with choir or even with congregation (see resources). However, to bring off such a presentation well requires considerable skills by the singers/musicians—such a method should only be used if the musical resources are up to it;
- ◆ antiphonal reading between one voice and the congregation;
- ◆ one voice reading the whole passage alone.

In order to best convey the story of the Passion, all readers should be competent and well rehearsed. The words of Jesus should not be reserved to clergy or to men only, but may be spoken by any member of the community.

The Passion Gospel is long. Permission should be given for people to sit. Appropriate changes in posture may include standing when Jesus is taken out to be crucified and bowing or kneeling with a short silence when Jesus dies.

It is important that a sermon is preached.

A LITURGY FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION
(PALM SUNDAY)

LITURGY OF THE PALMS

When all are gathered, the presider begins:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

A minister may then address the people in these or similar words.

This morning begins the Great Week of the Christian Year.
During Lent we have been preparing by works of love and self-sacrifice
for the celebration of the Lord's death and resurrection.
With Christians throughout the world,
we come together this week to call to mind,
and to express in word and action,
the centre of the Easter mystery:

our Lord's Passover from death to life.

Christ entered in triumph into the Holy City to complete his work as Messiah:
to suffer, to die and to rise to new life.

Today we commit ourselves to walk the way of the cross,
so that, sharing his sufferings,
we may be united with him in his risen life.

All may hold up their palms for this blessing, said by the presider.

Sovereign God,
we thank you for these branches [and crosses] of palm.
By your blessing may they be for us signs of the victory of your Son.
May we who carry them in his name ever hail him as our Messiah,
and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Palm Gospel is read.

Year A: Matthew 21.1-11

Year B: Mark 11.1-11 or John 12.12-16

Year C: Luke 19.28-40

The following may be used in place of the usual Gospel responses.

Before: **Hosanna in the highest.**

After: **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

THE PROCESSION

The presider invites the people to the procession, saying,

Let us praise Jesus our Messiah,
as did the crowds who welcomed him to Jerusalem.

Let us proceed in peace.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Hymns are sung as the procession moves into the church.

At the entrance to the church building this prayer may be said.

Merciful God,
as we enter this holy week
and gather at your house of prayer,
turn our hearts again to Jerusalem,
to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ,
that, united with Christ and all the faithful,
we may one day enter in triumph the city not made with hands,
the new Jerusalem, eternal in the heavens,
where, with you and the Holy Spirit,
Christ lives in glory forever. **Amen.**

After the Procession the liturgy continues with the Prayer of the Day, said by the presider.

God of all,
you gave your only-begotten Son
to take the form of a servant,
and to be obedient even to death on a cross:
give us the same mind that was in Christ Jesus
that, sharing in his humility,
we may come to be with him in his glory,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

or the alternative Prayer of the Day on APBA page 494 may be used.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

OT Reading: Isaiah 50.4-9a

Psalm 31.9-18

NT Reading: Philippians 2.5-11

A hymn may be sung.

*Gospel Reading: Year A: Matthew 26.14 - 27.66 or Matthew 26.36 - 27.66 or Matthew 27.11-54
Year B: Mark 14.1 - 15:47 or Mark 14.32 - 15.47 or Mark 15.1-39
Year C: Luke 22.14 - 23:56 or Luke 22.39 - 23.56 or Luke 23.1-49*

The Gospel reading may be introduced as follows.

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to ...

The Sermon

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The Prayers are led by one or more ministers. An alternative form is provided in the Appendix.

I ask you to pray for the peace of Jerusalem,
and for all the nations of the world.
Pray for enemies to be reconciled and for justice to be done.

(pause for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

Lord, hear our prayer.

I ask you to pray for candidates for baptism and confirmation,
and for Christians everywhere.
Pray for courage and integrity in following the way of the cross.

(pause for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

Lord, hear our prayer.

I ask you to pray for all who offer their gifts to Christ,
and for those who have betrayed his trust in them.
Pray for love and loyalty in all our relationships.

(pause for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

Lord, hear our prayer.

I ask you to pray for the sick and all prisoners,
and for people preparing to die.
Pray for healing, freedom, and hope.

(pause for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

Lord, hear our prayer.

I ask you to pray for the forgiveness of our sins
through our Lord Jesus Christ.
Pray for pardon and peace.

(pause for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

Lord, hear our prayer.

I ask you to give thanks for [N and] all the saints,
and for the resurrection light that shines on them.
Remember those who have died.

(pause for silent prayer)

Lord, hear us.

Lord, hear our prayer.

The presider concludes with this prayer

Holy God,
hear the prayers of your Church.
Forgive our sins,
and send us the grace we need
to be faithful followers of our crucified and risen Lord,
for we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

THE GREETING OF PEACE

Christ has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross.

We meet in his name and share his peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

All may exchange a greeting of peace.

While the Table is prepared, a hymn may be sung.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

An authorised Prayer of Thanksgiving and Consecration is used.

When Thanksgiving 1 is used, the Seasonal Preface is on APBA page 152

The Lord be with you

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

....

Holy, holy, holy, Lord,

God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

....

Lord, by your cross and resurrection

you have set us free.

You are the Saviour of the world.

....

Blessing and honour and glory and power

are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

As our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are confident to pray,

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE COMMUNION

The presider breaks the bread, then says

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies,

it remains just a single grain;

but if it dies it bears much fruit.

If we have died with him, we shall live with him.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ

in remembrance that he died for us,

and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

Communion is administered in the customary manner.

The following may be said or sung.

**Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.**

AFTER COMMUNION

God our help and strength,
through these holy mysteries
confirm our faith,
that by the death and resurrection of your Son
we may walk in the way of salvation.

Father,
**we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory.**

A hymn may be sung.

This prayer over the people may be said:

Grant, merciful Lord,
to your faithful people pardon and peace,
that they may be cleansed from all their sins
and serve you with a quiet mind;
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

or the Blessing on APBA page 152 is said by the presider.

The dismissal is then given:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

APPENDIX: THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE – AN ALTERNATIVE FORM

For Christian communities everywhere,
following the way of the cross this week:
that the passion of Christ may sustain our faith
and enliven our witness to the world,
we pray to you, Living God:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the pastors, teachers, evangelists and prophets of the church:
that the wisdom of Christ may keep them grounded in the gospel,
we pray to you, Living God:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For NN and all candidates for baptism,
and for the church preparing to welcome them:
that the faith of Christ may gather us together at the foot of the cross,
we pray to you, Living God.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the nations of the world, and for the peace of Jerusalem:
that the kingdom of Christ may come with true peace
and the forgiveness of our enemies,
we pray to you, Living God.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the endangered earth,
where human carelessness and waste threaten the environment:
that the Spirit of Christ may teach us how to care for the earth,
and revive our delight in creation,
we pray to you, Living God.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the hungry, the homeless and the outcasts of the world:
that the love of Christ may teach us hospitality, hope,
and care for the least of our sisters and brothers,
we pray to you, Living God.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For people whose lives are limited by sickness, grief, or fear:
that the compassion of Christ may come to them
with comfort and courage,
we pray to you, Living God.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who bear the weight of others' troubles:
that the easy yoke of Christ may lighten their burdens
and strengthen them for service,
we pray to you, Living God.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For people offering their lives in loving service:
that the blessing of Christ may come to them,

and their gifts be received and remembered with joy,
we pray to you, Living God.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who deny their faith or betray their friends,
for all who repent of their sins,
and for ourselves as we turn and ask for mercy:
that the forgiveness of Christ may come with healing and love,
we pray to you, Living God.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For people preparing to die:
that the light of Christ may shine on them
both now and in the day of resurrection,
we pray to you, Living God.

Lord, hear our prayer.

The presider concludes with this prayer

Living God, you listen when your people cry out to you,
Hearing our prayers and forgiving our sins:
Hear us now, forgive us,
And send us on in newness of life,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**