



## ONE MISSION, TWO CHURCHES

### Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Year A - 29th March 2026



Isaiah 50:4-7, Psalm 21(22), Philippians 2:6-11  
GOSPEL READING: **Matthew 26:14-27:66**

*Meditation: Lord God, I meditate today on the Passion of your Son and his trial before Caiaphas. I am moved to tears as I contemplate what he suffered on account of my sins and those of my brothers and sisters. I thank you for sending him to redeem me and release me, through his passion and death, from the slavery to sin and the fear of death.*

**The High Priest Tore His Robes:** When the high priest tore his robes at Jesus' night time trial, it was a moment of outrage or sorrow. We see this in the Old Testament. When Reuben, the firstborn son of Jacob, returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was no longer in the pit, he tore his clothes at the loss of his brother (Genesis 37:29). When Elijah was taken up into heaven, his disciple, Elisha, tore his clothes at the loss of his mentor (2 Kings 2:12). But there might be something deeper going on. In Numbers 20:26-28, Moses defrocked the high priest Aaron on top of Mount Hor and transferred the high priesthood to his son, Eleazar. Furthermore, the Law of Moses forbade the high priest to tear his sacred vestments (Leviticus 10:6; 21:10). Taken together, we can discern the transfer of the high priesthood from Caiaphas to Jesus, the true and eternal high priest. The high priesthood was stripped from Caiaphas, who tore his priestly garment, and given to Jesus, who wore a seamless garment (John 19:23; Leviticus 16:4; 21:10).

**The Revelation of the Son of Man:** When Jesus was asked about his identity at his trial, he chose to reveal himself not only as the "Christ" and "Son of God" but also as the "Son of Man." All three titles have some ambiguity to them. The title "Christ" simply meant an "anointed one." Priests, prophets, and kings were all anointed. But it could also refer to the long-awaited Messiah and royal Son of David – the Christ that prophets such as Isaiah and Daniel prophesied would come to establish justice, liberate the people of God, and lead a new Exodus. The title "son of God" could mean either an angel or a king who, by the covenant with David, was an adopted "son of God." But when Jesus claims he is the only-begotten "Son of God," he doesn't mean that he is an angel or merely a king. He is the eternally begotten divine Son, who is one with God the Father. Finally, the title, "son of man," could simply mean that he is a human being, a "son of Adam." But the way Jesus uses it is in reference to a prophecy of Daniel, which speaks about "one like a son of man" who receives power, authority, and kingship from God, the Ancient of Days. The "Son of Man" is the title Jesus prefers to refer to himself because it means that he is both human and divine and that he has been sent by God the Father to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

**Peter's Denial:** While Jesus is inside on trial, Peter is outside, in the high priest's courtyard, and he, in a sense, is put on trial. Unlike Jesus, who, under oath, answers truthfully about his person and mission, Peter denies three times, and the third time under oath, that he was a disciple of Jesus or even knew Jesus. Jesus didn't flinch from the truth when he was struck across the face. Peter flinched just because someone called out his Galilean accent. As Jesus stood and endured persecution, punches, spitting, and slaps across the face, Peter was warming his hands by a fire and denying that he knew the man he had followed faithfully for three years. While Jesus was led out, bound, to be handed over to the Roman governor, Peter fled from those who accused him of being one of Jesus' disciples. However, Peter will repent from his denials of Jesus, and will testify to Jesus over the course of several decades, and ultimately give his life for his Lord and teacher, the Son of God, the Christ, and the Son of Man.

**Conversing with Christ:** Lord Jesus, I kneel before your Cross today and revere you on the Cross. You loved me to the end and suffered for my sins. I unite my life and all that I am to you, asking that you transform my simple offering and present it in a worthy and pleasing way to God the Father.

**Living the Word of God:** How can I embrace suffering and sacrifice this Holy Week? What time will I dedicate to prayer and liturgy this week? How am I called to take up my cross today?



Crucifixion by Andrea Mantegna (1458), tempera on panel © Louvre Museum, Paris

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St Luke the Evangelist, 46 Orchard Grove, Blackburn South

Email: foresthill@cam.org.au | Web: sttimothys.org.au / Email: blackburnsouth@cam.org.au | Web: blackburnsouth.org.au

Parish Priest

Fr Alex Chow

Parish Secretary

Sonya O'Farrell

Wednesdays,

Thursdays & Fridays

10am – 2pm

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**SUNDAY MASS**

**Saturday Vigil:** 5pm (SL)

**Sunday:** 8:30am (SL)

10:30am (ST)

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**WEEKDAY MASSES**

**Tues.** 6:30pm (SL)

**Wed.** 9.15am (ST)

1st Wed Mass of Anointing  
@10am

**Thurs.**

**Fri.**

**Sat.**

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**RECONCILIATION**

SL: Tues 5:30 - 6:10pm

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**EXPOSITION OF THE  
BLESSED SACRAMENT &  
EVENING PRAYER**

SL: Tues 5:30 - 6:30pm

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**HOSPITALITY AFTER MASS  
AT ST. LUKE'S**

Second weekend of each  
month - bring a plate to  
share (optional)

**YOUNG ADULT GROUP -**

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April @  
7pm at St Luke's

Presbytery

**LEGION OF MARY -**

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April @  
10.30am at St Luke's  
Parish Hall Kitchen



**30 APRIL 2026**

*Thinking about life, purpose, and what really matters.* If you're asking

big questions about faith or simply  
curious — you are very welcome.

**ALPHA Australian Edition, ALPHA Chinese Mandarin** (adults) and **ALPHA Youth** (ages 13–17) offer a relaxed, no-pressure space to connect with others, enjoy a free dinner, watch engaging short videos, and have honest conversations about life and faith. Come as you are, bring your questions, and see where the conversation leads. No pressure, no strings attached.

Email us at [Alphastlukesbbs@gmail.com](mailto:Alphastlukesbbs@gmail.com)  
or register your interest via the QR code  
We'd love to see you at Alpha!

**Next Week's Daily Readings 30 Mar - 5 Apr**

**MONDAY Mar 30** Is 42:1-7 Ps 26:1-3, 13-14  
Jn 12:1-11

**TUESDAY Mar 31** Is 49:1-6  
Ps 70:1-6, 15, 17 Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

**WEDNESDAY Apr 1** Is 50:4-9:  
Ps 68:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34 Mt 26:14-25

**THURSDAY APR 2** Ex 12:1-8, 11-14  
Ps 115:12-13, 15-18: 1 Cor 11:23-26  
Jn 13:1-1

**THURSDAY of the LORD'S SUPPER**

**FRIDAY APR 3** Is 52:13-52:  
Ps 30:3, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25 Heb 4:14-16,  
5:7-9 Jn 18:1 - 19:42

**FRIDAY of the PASSION of the LORD**

**SATURDAY APR 4** Gen 1:1 - 2:2: Ps 103:1-2,  
5-6, 10, 12-14, 24, 35: Ex 14:15 - 15:1: Ex  
15:1-6, 17-18 Is 55:1-11 Is 12:2-6 Ezek  
36:16-28 Ps 41:3, 5; 42:3, 4  
Mt 28:1-10

**HOLY SATURDAY**

**SUNDAY APR 5** Acts 10:34, 37-43 Ps 117:1-2,  
16-17, 22-23 Col3:1-4": Jn 20:1-9 or Mt  
28:1-10

**SUNDAY of the RESURRECTION**

**ALTAR SERVING MINISTRY**

Are you interested in assisting as an altar server? If so, or if you have any questions about this ministry, please contact Chris Lim on 0419 470 267

**MINISTERS OF THE WORD**

Saturday 5pm SL Olive Hammill, Marg Yore & Lucy Ferris  
Sunday 8:30am SL Steve Kilroe-Smith & Beryl Chelliah  
10:30am ST Trevis Yee & Sarah Ahmed

**28 and 29 MAR**

**4 and 5 APR**

See separate  
Easter Roster on  
back page

**EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST**

Saturday 5pm SL Val Gardiner  
Sunday 8:30am SL Lynda Kilroe-Smith  
10:30am ST Pat Kawalevski  
See separate  
Easter Roster on  
back page

**SLIDE OPERATORS**

Saturday 5pm SL Choir 7.30pm - Choir  
Sunday 8:30am SL Megan McLean Paul Tierney  
10:30am ST Manny Gonzalez Lee Min Yee

**SL WELCOMERS 28 - 29 Mar**

5pm John Ryan  
8.30am Janette Clark  
10.30am Volunteer

**SL CHURCH CLEANING**

4th April - Megan's team  
Megan McLean, Janette Clark,  
Maureen Davis & Quyen Nguyen

**SL CHURCH FLOWERS**  
Easter: Kate Skowronska

**ST CHURCH FLOWERS**  
Easter: Parishioners

**SL WELCOMERS 4 - 5 Apr**

5:00pm John Ryan  
8.30am Janette Clark  
10.30am Volunteer

**ST CHURCH CLEANING**

3rd April  
Susan Chen & Isaac Cheng

**ST COUNTERS**  
This week Team 8:  
Sarah Ahmed & Ann Abrero  
Next week Team 1:  
Raj Fonn & Harin Perera

## WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

**All who are sick**, especially Frances O'Donoghue Brian Koh, Brian McHugh, Suzy Bookluck, Emilio Moreno Garcia, Agatha Wink, Chris Leach, Dora Leung, Hazel Grealy, Josephine Alexander, Grace Dimattina, Kit Bing Fan, Kathryn Holmes, Stewart Davis, Mark, Margaret Hayes, Charmaine Bancroft, Marilene Japour, Paciencia Cabral and all those parishioners unable to be among us this weekend.

**All who have died**, especially ?? who died recently and those whose anniversaries occur about this time especially Harold Lapsley, Olanda Mead, Joseph Boo Chiang Wee, Margaret Lancashire, Kevin Slavin, John Arelette, Roy Agosta, Colin Dughard, George Arulanandam, Maria De Lourdes Pinaud Lobato Costa, Jimmy Ong, Jenene Lancashire, Santa Taranto, Donald Andriesz, & Ellen Kelly. May they rest in peace.

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## POPE LEO'S PRAYER INTENTION FOR MARCH:

For disarmament and peace. Let us pray that nations move toward effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and that world leaders choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy instead of violence.

**HOLY WEEK MASSES:** Please note that there will be **NO MORNING MASSES** on Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April or Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April in either church.

## STATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR LENT:

**St Luke's, Blackburn South:** Tuesdays @ 5.30pm including confession & adoration, followed by 6.30pm Mass.

**PARISH & SCHOOL FETE:** The next fete committee meeting will be held on Thurs. 23<sup>rd</sup> April at 7pm in St Luke's parish hall kitchen. We are currently asking all parishioners and school families if they run a market stall and would like to take part or have a business that would be interested in sponsoring our fete. We are also looking for stall coordinators for our Pre-loved Books, Silent Auction, Beer Garden/Wine & Cheese & BBQ stalls. Contact Sonya in the parish office or email [stlukesfete@gmail.com](mailto:stlukesfete@gmail.com). **More volunteers are very welcome to join us, as many hands make light work!**

**UPCOMING BAPTISMS:** We warmly welcome the Jodana and Felicio families who will present their children to the church community this weekend in advance of their baptisms over the next two weeks.

**LIGHT INTO THE CITY:** The Archbishop has launched the restoration & redevelopment project for St Patrick's Cathedral. For more information please visit: <https://lightintothecity.org.au/>

**SAFEGUARDING ESSENTIALS TRAINING:** All church volunteers must complete this training which can be done online via this link: [Safeguarding Essentials training module | Melbourne Catholic](#) Please email your certificate to the parish office when you receive it.

Resources ....

**MELBOURNE CATHOLIC:** [Sr Helen continues Mary Glowrey's mission in India](#)

**MAJELLAN MEDIA:** [Jesus' torment](#)

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## **STEWARDSHIP CORNER:**

*The First collection is for the priest and retired priests.*

*The Second collection is for parish expenses.*

Please note that collection totals will no longer be published each week in the newsletter. Presbytery and Church donations will be reported on a monthly basis at all weekend Masses. To donate regularly via envelope, credit card or bank account, please contact the parish office.

## Parish Groups & Contacts

### **Volunteers and Rosters:**

*Kelvin & Susan Chen (ST),*

*Margaret Gearon (SL)*

**Baptism Preparation:** *Fr Alex*

### **Parish Collection Preparers**

*ST: Barry Silvester &*

*Michael Kawalevski*

### **Parish Safeguarding Committee**

*Fr Alex, Sonya O'Farrell,*

*Darren McLean & Janette Clark*

### **Parish History**

*SL: Margaret Gearon*

### **Parish Accountant**

*Bernard Negline*

### **SL & ST: Hall Hire**

*Sonya O'Farrell @ 9877 2292*

### **Church Sacristan**

*ST: Roster of Parishioners*

*SL: Greg Grant*

### **Church Cleaning & Flowers**

*SL: Megan McLean*

*ST: Susan Chen*

**Church Linen:** *SL: Beryl Chelliah*

### **Parish Garden Maintenance**

*ST: Des Connors*

*SL: Darren McLean*

### **Parish Choirs**

*ST: Miguel Ilagan*

*SL: Fr Alex*

**Bible Timeline:** *Chris Lim*

**ALPHA:** *Lynda Kilroe-Smith*

### **Young Adult Ministry:**

*Sarah Santilli & Jersy Soesanto*

**RCIA:** *David West*

### **St Vincent de Paul Conference**

*For Assistance: 1800 305 330*

*(Monday to Friday 10am-3pm)*

*ST: John McCoy*

*SL: Margaret Gearon &*

*Steve Kilroe-Smith*

**Entrance Antiphon:** Six days before the Passover, when the Lord came into the city of Jerusalem, the children ran to meet him; in their hands they carried palm branches and with a loud voice cried out: \* Hosanna in the highest! Blessed are you, who have come in your abundant mercy!

**Response to the Psalm:** My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

**Gospel Acclamation:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory! Christ became obedient for us even to death, dying on the cross. Therefore God raised him on high and gave him a name above all other names. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

**Eucharistic Acclamation:** We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

**Communion Antiphon:** Father, if this chalice cannot pass without my drinking it, your will be done.

## CHILDREN'S LITURGY

**ST TIMOTHY'S:** Sunday 12th April at the 10.30am Mass. This will run on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month.



**ST LUKE'S:** Saturday 11th April at the 5pm Mass. This will run on the 2nd Saturday of each month.

## SACRAMENTAL DATES FOR 2026

**First Reconciliation** - May 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> from 3.30 to 5.30pm

**Confirmation** - June 25<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm

**First Eucharist** - August 1<sup>st</sup> @ 5pm

Parents of children who do not attend Catholic schools are asked to contact the parish office asap to enrol in preparation sessions for any of the above sacraments.

## HOLY WEEK ROSTER

### HOLY THURSDAY:

7.30pm at St Timothy's (2/4)

*Readers - Michelle Chen & Steve Kilroe-Smith*

*Eucharistic Ministers - Susan Chen & Lynda Kilroe-Smith*

### GOOD FRIDAY:

3pm Passion of our Lord at St Luke's (3/4) followed by Confession (until 5:30pm)

*Readers - Lucy Ferris, Michael Ballek & Margaret Gearon*

*Eucharistic Ministers - Marg Yore, Anico Yee & Kana Chelliah*

### EASTER VIGIL: 7.30pm at St Luke's (4/4)

*Readers - Melina Barcellona, Kelvin Chen, Marg Yore,*

*Ryan Yee & Kana Chelliah*

*Eucharistic Ministers - Beryl Chelliah, Susan Chen & Lynda Kilroe-Smith*

### EASTER SUNDAY:

8.30am Mass at St Luke's (5/4)

*Reader - Darren McLean, Eucharistic Minister - Megan McLean*

10.30 Mass at St Timothy's (5/4)

*Reader - Gabby Chen, Eucharistic Minister - Susan Chen*

## TENEBRAE

### *A Liturgy of Shadows Before the Light*

Tenebrae is a powerful Holy Week liturgy that draws us into Christ's Passion through Scripture, chant, and striking symbolism.

You are invited to:

- Sit with the reality of suffering and sin
- Reflect deeply on Jesus' Passion
- Enter the tension between darkness and hope

Meditate on the Cost of the redemption of the world and experience the weight of the Cross.

*Friday 3 April 2026, 7.30pm, St Patrick Cathedral,  
East Melbourne*



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our local conference of St Vincent de Paul, Blackburn South is currently looking for people to help with visits, updating the database, bread run (pick up and distribution), purchasing food trips, drivers & voucher control. Many tasks have no more than a one hour commitment per week.

If you are interested please contact Steve 0458 673 514 or Margaret 0409 807 135 (or email [margaret.gearon@svdp-vic.com.au](mailto:margaret.gearon@svdp-vic.com.au)). New members are always very welcome!



## "SYNOD CORNER"

### 3. Synodality is not new

Synodality is not a modern invention. From the earliest days of the Church, Christians gathered to pray, listen, and discern together. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Church faced difficult questions and resolved them not through power struggles, but through prayer, dialogue, and trust in the Holy Spirit.



# Hosanna!



**Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, Year A**

Fill in the details of the events of Holy Week.

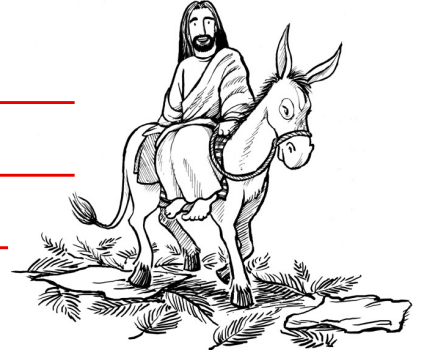
## PASSION SUNDAY

Write down what you know about the procession of palms.

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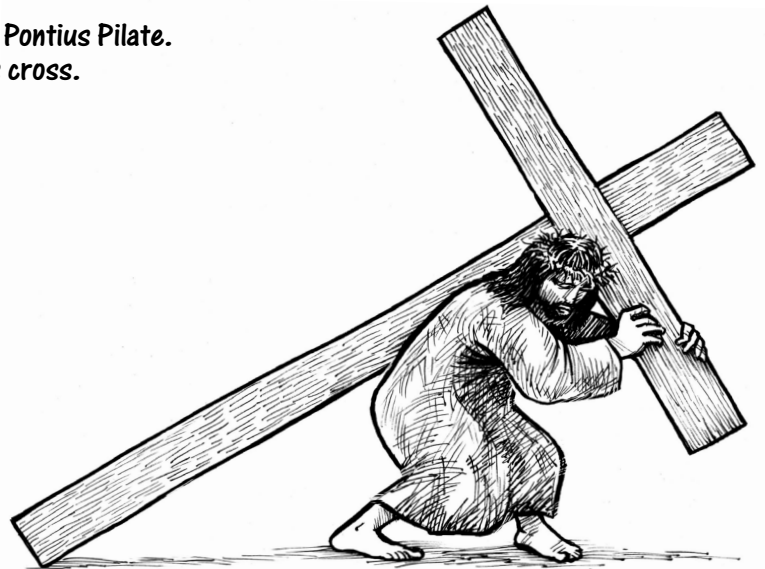


## HOLY THURSDAY

Draw Jesus and his disciples at the last supper.

## GOOD FRIDAY

Draw Jesus standing trial before Pontius Pilate. Then colour in Jesus carrying his cross.



## HOLY SATURDAY

Holy Saturday is a quiet time when we reflect on the death of Jesus.

How do you think Jesus' friends and family were feeling on that day?

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# PALM SUNDAY – 29 MARCH 2026



## COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,  
who as an example of humility for the human race to follow  
caused our Saviour to take flesh and submit to the Cross,  
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering  
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

The people were mightily impressed with Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. So, even as some of the leaders begin to plot Jesus' demise, the people shout hosanna and wave branches to greet Jesus as he enters Jerusalem on a donkey. This is where the liturgy today begins. At the church door, we read this story from Matthew's gospel. The mood of joy and exultation changes dramatically with the Collect: it speaks of Jesus' patient suffering as he submits to the Cross.

The Liturgy of the Word leads us into the proclamation of the Passion from Matthew's gospel. Today's liturgy is a doorway, an entry point into the celebration of the Paschal Mystery over the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday evening to Easter Sunday evening). For this reason, it is very important to make provision for the full story of the passion, breaking it up to be read in several parts, or taking it in sections with a different reader for each. Periods of silence or a sung refrain may also help people to enter the narrative with attention and faith.

## A reading from the prophet Isaiah 50:4–7

The Lord has given me  
a disciple's tongue.  
So that I may know how to reply to the wearied  
he provides me with speech.  
Each morning he wakes me to hear,  
to listen like a disciple.  
The Lord has opened my ear.  
For my part, I made no resistance,  
neither did I turn away.  
I offered my back to those who struck me,  
my cheeks to those who tore at my beard;  
I did not cover my face against insult and spittle.  
The Lord comes to my help,  
so that I am untouched by the insults.  
So, too, I set my face like flint;  
I know I shall not be shamed.

## Responsorial Psalm Ps 21:8–9, 17–20, 23–24

**R.** My God, my God,  
why have you abandoned me?  
All who see me deride me.  
They curl their lips, they toss their heads.  
'He trusted in the Lord, let him save him;  
let him release him if this is his friend.' **R.**  
Many dogs have surrounded me,  
a band of the wicked beset me.  
They tear holes in my hands and my feet.  
I can count every one of my bones. **R.**  
They divide my clothing among them.  
They cast lots for my robe.  
O Lord, do not leave me alone,  
my strength, make haste to help me! **R.**  
I will tell of your name to my brethren  
and praise you where they are assembled.  
'You who fear the Lord give him praise;  
all sons of Jacob, give him glory.  
Revere him, Israel's sons.' **R.**

## First Reading

Being a prophet is not easy. Often their challenging message led to rejection and persecution. Isaiah speaks of such a Suffering Servant who nevertheless remains steadfast in his God-given mission. This is part of Isaiah's third Servant Song. The fourth and most powerful of the Servant Songs will be read on Good Friday.

Messianic expectation awaited a leader who would come with power and glory, but Jesus came to see his messianic role through the lens of suffering. The gospels use Isaiah's Servant Songs to speak of Christ's work of reconciliation.

The Servant listens to God's word and thus knows what to say. This gives him the confidence to accept persecution and insult – he knows he has the help of the Lord.

The reader and the people will no doubt have Christ in mind as they hear this text. It should be read with strong determination and with pathos.

## Responsorial Psalm

Jesus has the words of Psalm 21/22 on his lips as he dies. He knew it by heart. It is clear that this psalm has shaped the telling of the story of the Passion of Christ in the gospels. We cannot hear it without recognising Christ – the mockery of Christ on the cross, the wounds in hands and feet, dividing his clothing by casting lots.

Like the prophet Isaiah, the Psalmist is experiencing opposition but, as the psalm progresses, he recognises God's presence. This leads in the last part of the psalm to affirmations of praise of God. This is reflected in the last stanza of this selection.

In view of the account of the passion which is soon to follow, the cantor/reader should proclaim this text with a tone of anguish on the one hand, but still with hope and trust on the other.

## A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians

2:6-11

His state was divine,  
yet Christ Jesus did not cling  
to his equality with God  
but emptied himself  
to assume the condition of a slave,  
and became as men are,  
and being as all men are,  
he was humbler yet,  
even to accepting death,  
death on a cross.  
But God raised him high  
and gave him the name  
which is above all other names  
so that all beings  
in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld,  
should bend the knee at the name of Jesus  
and that every tongue should acclaim  
Jesus Christ as Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

## The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew 26:14 – 27:

(N. Narrator, J. Jesus, O. Other single speaker, C. Crowd or more than one other speaker.) Short form: omit text in brackets.

### 1. The Last Supper

[N One of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said:

O What are you prepared to give me if I hand him over to you?

N They paid him thirty silver pieces, and from that moment he looked for an opportunity to betray him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus to say,

C Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the passover?

N He replied:

J Go to so-and-so in the city and say to him, 'The Master says: My time is near. It is at your house that I am keeping Passover with my disciples'.

N The disciples did what Jesus told them and prepared the Passover. When the evening came he was at table with the twelve disciples. And while they were eating he said:

J I tell you solemnly, one of you is about to betray me.

N They were greatly distressed and started asking him in turn,

C Not I, Lord, surely?

## Second Reading

Let the same mind be in you as was also in Jesus Christ, writes Paul. Then, to illustrate what this means, he quotes this hymn. He is urging the Philippians to avoid rivalry and vanity, to consider others first, and to preserve unity in humility. We humble ourselves; God exalts us.

These dense poetic lines sum up the entire mystery of the Cross which we celebrate at Easter: the death which is also resurrection, the humility which is also glorification. Christ the universal king reigns from the throne of the cross.

Readers should take their time to communicate the contrast between the first half and the second. The first half is read with quiet awe and respect; the second half with joyous and energetic acclamation.

The NRSV uses inclusive language.

## Gospel

The short version (basically sections 4 and 5) should only be used in exceptional circumstances. If necessary, even one of the other readings may be omitted. After the passion reading, the priest's homily should be brief, or a period of silence may be kept.

The Gospel may be presented with four readers taking parts as indicated here. It is also possible for five readers each to read one whole section. In either case, it may be pastorally helpful to sing an antiphon or hymn verse or to have some silence between each section.

The reading should be engaging but not melodramatic.

### 1. The Last Supper

Matthew presents the Lord's Last Supper as a Passover meal. This creates a context for the event of the passion story which is to follow. Jesus' death and resurrection is the foundational event of our liberation, the establishment of the new covenant of love sealed in the blood of the Lamb of God.

This meal which opens the passion narrative is intimately connected to the cross. This is my body [given for you]; *This is my blood of the new covenant which is to be poured out...* When is Jesus body given and his blood poured out? On the cross.

**N** He answered:

**J** Someone who has dipped his hand into the dish with me, will betray me. The Son of Man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say he will, but alas for that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Better for that man if he had never been born!

**N** Judas, who was to betray him, asked in his turn,

**O** Not I, Rabbi, surely?

**N** Jesus answered:

**J** They are your own words.

**N** Now as they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to the disciples and said:

**J** Take it and eat; this is my body.

**N** Then he took a cup, and when he had returned thanks he gave it to them saying:

**J** Drink all of you from this, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. From now on, I tell you, I shall not drink wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in the kingdom of my Father.

**N** After psalms had been sung they left for the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them,

**J** You will all lose faith in me this night, for the scripture says: I shall strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after my resurrection I shall go before you to Galilee.

**N** At this, Peter said:

**O** Though all lose faith in you, I will never lose faith.

**N** Jesus answered him,

**J** I tell you solemnly, this very night, before the cock crows, you will have disowned me three times.

**N** Peter said to him,

**O** Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

**N** And all the disciples said the same.

## 2. Jesus in the Garden

Then Jesus came with them to a small estate called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples,

**J** Stay here while I go over there to pray.

**N** He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him. And sadness came over him, and great distress. Then he said to them:

**J** My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and keep awake with me.

**N** And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed:

This section begins with the betrayal of Judas and ends with Peter's bravado in saying he will never lose faith. In the course of the meal, Jesus tackles Judas' betrayal head on. It is particularly distressing because the betrayer is sharing the common dish with them.

At the end of the meal, Jesus looks forward to the new wine of the kingdom of God. Then, after the meal, as they are leaving, Jesus mentions his resurrection; but he also notes that the sheep will scatter when the shepherd is struck and Peter will disown him. Peter says, 'I will never disown you, even if I have to die with you'. All the disciples concur...

Yes, they sing psalms as they leave for the Mount of Olives, but there is a strong sense of foreboding cast over the festivity.

## 2. Jesus in the Garden

Jesus is overcome with sadness and great distress – sorrowful to the point of death. He is terrified of what is coming but will not escape miraculously. He accepts the Father's will that he should give everything for the sake of the kingdom of God. His prayer has strengthened him to go to meet his betrayer.

The previous section ended with the disciples agreeing with Peter that they would be willing to die with Jesus. This section ends with the disciples deserting him and running away.

**J** My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it.

**N** He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter:

**J** So you had not the strength to keep awake with me one hour? You should be awake, and praying not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

**N** Again, a second time, he went away and prayed:

**J** My father, if this cup cannot pass by without my drinking it, your will be done!

**N** And he came again back and found them sleeping, their eyes were so heavy. Leaving them there, he went away again and prayed for the third time, repeating the same words. Then he came back to the disciples and said to them,

**J** You can sleep on now and take your rest. Now the hour has come when the Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up! Let us go! My betrayer is already close at hand.

**N** He was still speaking when Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared, and with him a large number of men armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests and elders of the people. Now the traitor had arranged a sign with them. He had said:

**O** 'The one I kiss, he is the man. Take him in charge.'

**N** So he went straight up to Jesus and said:

**O** Greetings, Rabbi,

**N** and kissed him. Jesus said to him,

**J** My friend, do what you are here for.

**N** Then they came forward, seized Jesus and took him in charge. At that, one of the followers of Jesus grasped his sword and drew it; he struck out at the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. Jesus then said:

**J** Put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father who would promptly send more than twelve legions of angels to my defence? But then, how would the scriptures be fulfilled that say this is the way it must be?

**N** It was at this time that Jesus said to the crowds:

**J** Am I a brigand, that you had to set out to capture me with swords and clubs? I sat teaching in the Temple day after day and you never laid hands on me.

**N** Now all this happened to fulfil the prophecies in scripture. Then all the disciples deserted him and ran away.

In the previous section, Jesus tells Peter he will disown him three times. In this section, Jesus says to Peter: *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

In the previous section, Jesus speaks of his forthcoming betrayal. Now, in this section, Judas betrays him with the kiss of friendship.

As we listen, we become acutely aware of human weakness. As Paul would write to the Romans: *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (7:24)*

### 3. The High Priest and Peter

The men who had arrested Jesus led him off to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. Peter followed him at a distance, and when he reached the high priest's palace, he went in and sat down with the attendants to see what the end would be.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus, however false, on which they might pass the death sentence. But they could not find any, though several lying witnesses came forward. Eventually two stepped forward and made a statement,

○ This man said: 'I have power to destroy the Temple of God and in three days build it up',

N The high priest then stood up and said to him:

○ Have you no answer to that? What is this evidence these men are bringing against you?

N But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him:

○ I put you on oath by the living God to tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.

N Jesus answered:

J The words are your own. Moreover, I tell you that from this time onward you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

N At this, the high priest tore his clothes and said:

○ He has blasphemed. What need of witnesses have we now? There! You have just heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion?

N They answered:

C He deserves to die.

N Then they spat in his face and hit him with their fists; others said as they struck him:

C Play the prophet, Christ! Who hit you then?

N Meanwhile Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came up to him and said:

○ You too were with Jesus the Galilean.

N But he denied it in front of them all, saying:

○ I do not know what you are talking about.

N When he went out to the gateway another servant-girl saw him and said to the people there:

○ This man was with Jesus the Nazarene.

N And again, with an oath, he denied it,

○ I do not know the man.

N A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter:

### 3. The High Priest and Peter

The religious leaders are keen to eliminate Jesus. They look for evidence to bring against him and eventually provoke a messianic statement from Jesus: *you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power...* This is taken as blasphemy and negates the need of any other evidence. He deserves to die, they say, and then they mistreat him.

Next comes the tragic story of Peter's denial. By the time the long night is ending and the cock crows, Peter realises what he has done and weeps with remorse.

In the morning, the religious leaders send him to the Roman governor, Pilate. Seeing Jesus condemned, Judas tries to backtrack. The religious leaders reject his attempt, and he is lost in despair. The section ends with a digression on the potter's field. This story of Judas is unique to Matthew's gospel.

**C** You are one of them for sure! Why, your accent gives you away.

**N** Then he started calling down curses on himself and swearing:

**O** I do not know the man.

**N** At that moment the cock crew, and Peter remembered what Jesus had said, 'Before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly. When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people met in council to bring about the death of Jesus. They had him bound, and led him away to hand him over to Pilate, the governor. When he found that Jesus had been condemned, Judas his betrayer was filled with remorse and took the thirty pieces of silver back to the chief priests and elders, saying:

**O** I have sinned. I have betrayed innocent blood.

**N** They replied:

**C** What is that to us? That is your concern.

**N** And flinging down the silver pieces in the sanctuary he made off, and went and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the silver pieces and said:

**C** It is against the Law to put this into the treasury; it is blood money.

**N** So they discussed the matter and bought the potter's field with it as a graveyard for foreigners, and this is why the field is called the Field of Blood today. The words of the prophet Jeremiah were then fulfilled: And they took the thirty silver pieces, the sum at which the precious One was priced by children of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, just as the Lord directed me.]

#### 4. Jesus before Pilate

Jesus, then, was brought before the governor, and the governor put to him this question:

**O** Are you the king of the Jews?

**N** Jesus replied:

**J** It is you who say it.

**N** But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders he refused to answer at all. Pilate then said to him:

**O** Do you not hear how many charges they have brought against you?

**N** But to the governor's complete amazement, he offered no reply to any of the charges. At festival time it was the governor's practice to release a prisoner for the people, anyone they chose. Now there was at that time a notorious prisoner whose

#### 4. Jesus before Pilate

In the three synoptic gospels, Jesus makes no reply to Pilate. Only John's gospel (which we hear on Good Friday) has a conversation between Pilate and Jesus. Nevertheless, Pilate does try to avoid condemning Jesus to death. He seems to realise the motives of jealousy behind his arrest.

Pilate tries to have him released as a concession for the festival of Passover. But the religious leaders have been busy, working the crowd. The people have been persuaded to choose Barabbas for release and Jesus for execution.

It is horrifying for us to hear ordinary people shout for crucifixion. Pilate is caught between a rock and a hard place... he washes his

name was Barabbas. So when the crowd gathered, Pilate said to them,

**O** Which do you want me to release for you: Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?

**N** For Pilate knew it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. Now as he was seated in the chair of judgement, his wife sent him a message,

**O** Have nothing to do with that man; I have been upset all day by a dream I had about him.

**N** The chief priests and the elders, however, had persuaded the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. So when the governor spoke and asked them:

**O** Which of the two do you want me to release for you?

**N** They said:

**C** Barabbas.

**N** Pilate said to them:

**O** What am I to do with Jesus who is called Christ?

**N** They all said:

**C** Let him be crucified!

**N** Pilate asked:

**O** Why? What harm has he done?

**N** But they shouted all the louder,

**C** Let him be crucified!

**N** Then Pilate saw that he was making no impression, that in fact a riot was imminent. So he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd and said:

**O** I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your concern.

**N** And the people, to a man, shouted back:

**C** His blood be on us and on our children!

**N** Then he released Barabbas for them. He ordered Jesus to be first scourged and then handed over to be crucified. The governor's soldiers took Jesus with them into the Praetorium and collected the whole cohort round him. Then they stripped him and made him wear a scarlet cloak, and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head and placed a reed in his right hand. To make fun of him they knelt to him saying:

**C** Hail, king of the Jews!

**N** And they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head with it. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the cloak and dressed him in his own clothes and led him away to crucify him.

hands of Jesus' death, but still orders him to be crucified.

It is more horrifying still to see the dignified figure of the Lord tortured, mocked and ridiculed. There is action here, but this passage should be read with pathos and received with deep sadness.

## 5. Jesus' Crucifixion

On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, and enlisted him to carry his cross. When they had reached a place called Golgotha, that is, the place of the skull, they gave him wine to drink. When they had finished crucifying him they shared out his clothing by casting lots, and then sat down and stayed there keeping guard over him. Above his head was placed the charge against him; it read: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews'. At the same time two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said:

**C** So you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself! If you are God's son, come down from the cross!

**N** The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way, saying:

**C** He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He put his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he wants him. For he did say, 'I am the son of God'.

**N** Even the robbers who were crucified with him taunted him in the same way. From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice:

**J** Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?

**N** That is: 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood there heard this, they said:

**C** The man is calling on Elijah,

**N** and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he dipped in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. The rest of them said:

**C** Wait! See if Elijah will come to save him.

**N** But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.

*(All kneel and pause a moment.)*

**N** At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead, and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people. Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said:

**C** In truth this was a son of God.

[**N** And many women were there, watching from a distance, the same women who had followed Jesus

## 5. Jesus' Crucifixion

The journey to Golgotha and the act of crucifixion is told economically in a single paragraph. The sign on the cross (*This is Jesus, the King of the Jews*) ironically becomes a statement of faith in the midst of Jesus' humiliation and execution as a criminal.

More space is given to the jeering and mocking of the passers-by and the religious leaders. But again, the irony here is that the words they shout are affirmations of faith: he saved others, he is the King of Israel, son of God.

Then darkness. Jesus prays Psalm 21/22 in a loud voice, cries out, and breathes his last.

Silence.

The torn Temple veil says something new is happening. The earthquake, the tombs opening and the dead rising up are all signs that there is more to Jesus' death than meets the eye. There is even a reference to his own resurrection. All this is affirmed by the centurion who acknowledges the truth: Jesus was a son of God. The story of Jesus' death is already opening up to the resurrection on the third day.

The witness of the women who had been looking after Jesus is impressive, especially in light of the apostles who ran away.

The description of Jesus' burial and the mounting of a guard may reflect later polemics surrounding the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection.

from Galilee and looked after him. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. When it was evening, there came a rich man of Arimathea called Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate thereupon ordered it to be handed over. So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean shroud and put it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a large stone across the entrance of the tomb and went away. Now Mary of Magdala and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulchre. Next day, that is, when Preparation Day was over, the chief priests and the Pharisees went in a body to Pilate and said to him,

**C** Your Excellency, we recall that this imposter said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I shall rise again'. Therefore give the order to have the sepulchre kept secure until the third day, for fear his disciples come and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead'. This last piece of fraud would be worse than what went before.

**N** Pilate said to them:

**O** You may have your guards. Go and make all as secure as you know how.

**N** So they went and made the sepulchre secure, putting seals on the stone and mounting a guard.]

# CONCLUDING PRAYER

## Prayer over the People (Palm Sunday)

Look, we pray, O Lord, on this your family,  
for whom our Lord Jesus Christ  
did not hesitate to be delivered into the hands of the wicked  
and submit to the agony of the Cross.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on us and remain with us for ever.  
**Amen.**

(From the Prayer over the People for Palm Sunday, Roman Missal p. 313)



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