



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Children's Liturgy of the Word Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Entering Jerusalem

Overview

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, commemorating Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the Passion narrative. The readings for this day are rich in themes of suffering, humility, and redemption. However, they are challenging, particularly for children.

The opening of the Palm Sunday Mass is a vivid expression of public worship. Parishes generally offer a procession to begin the liturgy, and the faithful are invited to participate actively. This opening is called "The Commemoration of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem." The word commemoration implies more than a historical lesson. People are to do more than remember. They are to partake in the Lord's entry.

As recounted in the Gospel, Jesus's Passion narrative provides profound insights into the nature of suffering, particularly from a Christian theological perspective.

This narrative not only depicts the physical and emotional anguish endured by Jesus but also reveals deeper spiritual truths about suffering itself.

Due to the length of the readings in the *Lectionary for Mass*, this Children's Liturgy of the Word focuses on the entrance into Jerusalem with an adapted Gospel that the children would have heard at the beginning of Mass.

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Key Messages

- † Jesus is the kind of King who loves us and came to help, not to show off.
- † We can praise Jesus too — with voice, songs, prayers, and heart.
- † Jesus knows and cares for us and is always watching over us.
- † Trust God, even when His plan looks different than yours.
- † We were made to praise God — just like all of creation.

Background

Luke 19:28- 40 Jesus arrives in Jerusalem — a big moment. He knows this is the city where he will be arrested, tried, and crucified. But instead of sneaking in quietly, he chooses to make a public entrance that sends a strong message.

He tells his disciples to get a young donkey (colt) that has never been ridden. It is very symbolic. In ancient times, kings rode donkeys to show they were coming in peace, not war. This is also a direct fulfillment of a prophecy (from Zechariah 9:9) that says the Messiah (God's chosen king) will come riding on a donkey.

The disciples bring the donkey and place their cloaks on it — like making a royal saddle — and Jesus rides it into Jerusalem. As Jesus rides along, people begin spreading their cloaks on the road — a traditional sign of honour, like laying out the red carpet. Then the crowd starts praising God with loud voices, shouting things like:

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

They recognize Jesus as King—the one sent by God—and are excited because they think he will free them from Roman rule. But Jesus came for something much deeper: to free people from sin and bring peace between them and God.

Some Pharisees (religious leaders) are not happy. They tell Jesus to make his followers stop shouting these praises. But Jesus responds: "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." That means what's happening is so important and powerful that even creation itself would shout if people didn't.

This passage reminds us that Jesus is the true King, but not the kind people expected — he comes humbly and in peace. The crowd celebrates him, but many don't fully understand what kind of king he is. Jesus accepts the praise, knowing this is the right time to reveal who he truly is.

The Pharisees' rejection contrasts with the crowd's joy, showing that not everyone welcomed Jesus — and that tension leads to the cross.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: (in these or similar words)

Palm Sunday is a very special day in our Church. It marks the beginning of Holy Week when we remember the important events in Jesus' life leading up to Easter. Today, you will hear about Jesus entering Jerusalem and the events that led to his suffering.

When most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the place of the celebration. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the location of the celebration, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may say the following prayer in these or similar words.

Let us pray:

(pause for a few seconds)

Dear God, thank you for bringing us together today. Help us to understand the story of Palm Sunday and to open our hearts to Jesus' love and sacrifice. May we learn to follow Jesus and share his love with others. Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

Gospel Reading (Luke 19:28-40 Adapted for Children)

A reading from the gospel according to Luke.

One day, Jesus and his friends walked toward Jerusalem. When they reached a small village nearby, Jesus said to two of his friends, "Go into the village ahead. There, you will find a young donkey tied up. Untie it and bring it to me. If anyone asks, say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

The two friends did exactly as Jesus asked. When they found the donkey, they brought it to Jesus, put their cloaks on its back, and helped Jesus climb on.

As Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem, a big crowd of people gathered. They were so happy to see Jesus! They spread their cloaks on the road, waved palm branches, and cheered,

"Hosanna! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory to God!"

The whole city was excited! But some of the religious leaders were not happy. They told Jesus, "Tell your followers to be quiet!"

But Jesus answered, "If they keep quiet, even the stones will shout out!" And so, Jesus rode on, with the people celebrating and praising God.

The Gospel of the Lord

A PERIOD OF SILENCE IS OBSERVED AFTER THE READING.

THE CHILDREN RESPOND: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

What did you hear? *(Allow children to respond)*

Why do you think the people were so happy to see Jesus?

Before Jesus entered Jerusalem, Jesus had performed many miracles, including healing the sick, raising the dead, and feeding the multitudes. The people celebrated his arrival and the miracles they had witnessed, believing he could change their lives and society. As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds greeted him with shouts of "Hosanna!" which means "Save us!" or "Give salvation!" He rode a donkey or colt rather than a horse. Kings rode horses. Jesus is showing his humility.

How can we show kindness and humility as Jesus did?

Humility acknowledges limitations and learning from others. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses, and we value the contributions of others. We are grateful for the blessings God gives us in life, and we share them and appreciate others. Jesus lived a life of simplicity, focusing on spiritual wealth rather than earthly possessions. Sharing what one has with others is a powerful expression of humility and kindness.

What does it mean to welcome Jesus into our lives today?

Welcoming Jesus into our lives requires faith, openness, and active participation in his teachings. It means letting his presence affect our lives, leading to personal growth and a commitment to living by the Gospel. This welcoming enriches our lives and helps the Church spread Christ's love.

So, what can we learn from this Gospel?

We can think about showing love and joy in our lives, just like the people did for Jesus. Every day, we can welcome Jesus into our hearts by being kind to others, helping those in need, and sharing our happiness. Remember, Jesus brings hope and joy, especially to humble and simple people.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them - an assistant may announce them.

The leader says:

Jesus entered Jerusalem joyfully, and people praised him as their king. Let us bring our prayers to God, trusting in his love for us. The response is: Lord, hear our prayer. R: Lord, hear our prayer.

For the Church, that we may always welcome Jesus with open hearts, just as the people welcomed him into Jerusalem. We pray to the Lord. R:

For our families, that we may support one another and share the joy of Jesus' love in our homes. We pray to the Lord. R:

For those who are sad or lonely, that they may feel the joy and love of Jesus in their lives. We pray to the Lord. R:

For our community, that we may work together to create a place where everyone feels welcome and loved, just like the people welcomed Jesus. We pray to the Lord. R:

For all who are sick or suffering – that God may bring them healing, peace, and comfort. We pray to the Lord. R:

The Leader says:

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus, our king and Saviour. Hear our prayers and help us to follow him with love and joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: Let's finish by making the Sign of the Cross together.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Return to the church.

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and think about what they have heard and are now doing. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

Readings: Lectionary for Sundays and Solemnities, CCCB, Ottawa, ON.
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