

SUNDAY READINGS

READ AT HOME

Palm Sunday
Year B
24 March 2024



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,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Readings and Commentaries

The procession with palms in commemoration of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem (along with other features of our paschal liturgies) can be traced back at least as far as 4th century Jerusalem. Pilgrims flocked to the holy city after the peace of Constantine. One of them was a devout lady, perhaps a Spanish nun, named Egeria. Keen to share her experiences with her circle of friends, she kept a diary of her stay in Jerusalem around 384-385. It contains invaluable descriptions of the liturgies in which she took part.

On Palm Sunday afternoon, she reports, the faithful gathered with palms on the Mount of Olives and processed down to the city to the place of Jesus' resurrection (now the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), chanting on their way. Over 1700 years later, a procession with palms and chants still takes place on this day in churches around the world.

All four gospels contain a great deal of material for the period between Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his betrayal. They testify to the growing tension that eventually reaches crisis point. This in-between time is ignored by the liturgy, making today's transition from "Hosanna" to "Crucify him" shockingly abrupt. It's reminiscent of what happened in the synagogue in Nazareth where Jesus "won the approval" of his townsfolk only to have them swiftly become enraged and murderous (Lk 4:22-30). In each case, the time frame has been condensed but the trajectory of Jesus' reception remains truthfully reflected.

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.

First Reading

The book of the prophet Isaiah is the longest of the prophetic books and the most frequently used in the lectionary. The breadth and diversity of its material allows particularly pertinent passages to be chosen for liturgical seasons such as Advent and Lent. This is especially the case in Holy Week. Each day features a reading from one of the four oracles known collectively as the Servant Songs. They are scattered through chapters addressed to the exiles in Babylon.

The servant is a mysterious figure who could be the prophet himself, Moses, another salvific individual, or the people of Israel personified. Parallels with the suffering undergone by Jesus have led to the songs being given a Christian interpretation. Like Jesus, the servant is singled out by God for a mission that provokes hostility and involves suffering but advances the cause of salvation. The last and longest of the songs is proclaimed in full on Good Friday because the servant's ordeal is described in terms that are matched in the various passion narratives. Today's reading, from the third of the songs, has been chosen for the same reason. It reports the servant's personal experience. He identifies himself as a disciple who declares what he has heard from the Lord, suffers physical abuse in return, but refuses to resist. "I set my face like flint," he says, in words that echo how Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51).

This reading signals a marked change of mood after the upbeat celebration of Jesus' palm-strewn entry into Jerusalem. Readers should deliver this oracle with a deliberate degree of pathos.

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.**

Responsorial Psalm

Just as the Servant Songs foreshadow the passion narratives, so too do some of the psalms, most especially Psalm 21/22. This is the prayer whose unforgettable opening words – "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" – are cried out from the cross by Jesus. As the response for today's responsorial psalm, they plunge the assembly directly into the depths of his suffering.

However, there is more to the psalm than a cry of dereliction. Lament and pleading dominate the first half but their sombre tones are gradually lightened by renewed trust and praise as the psalm unfolds. This evolution is reflected in the responsorial psalm. The first three verses are full of anguish, while the fourth is a confident call to praise.

The passion narratives draw explicitly on this psalm. Mocking crowds, holes torn in hands and feet, clothing divided up by lot – all are familiar elements of the scene on Calvary. Jesus' last words in Luke's account – "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" – reflect the latter part of the psalm.

Like the first reading the psalm needs to be proclaimed with respect for its serious content. While the last verse is quite different in tone, it is prepared for by the prayer at the end of the preceding verse, "make haste to help me!"

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 Mark 14:1 - 15:47

(N. Narrator, J. Jesus, O. Other single speaker,
C. Crowd or more than one other speaker.)

N It was two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, and the chief priests and scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by some trick and have him put to death. For they said,

C It must not be during the festivities, or there will be a disturbance among the people.

N Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper; he was at dinner when a woman came in with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the ointment on his head. Some who were there said to one another indignantly,

C Why this waste of ointment? Ointment like this could have been sold for over three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor;

N and they were angry with her. But Jesus said,

J Leave her alone. Why are you upsetting her? What she has done for me is one of the good works. You have the poor with you always and you can be kind to them whenever you wish, but you will not always have me. She has done what was in her power to do; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. I tell you solemnly, wherever throughout all the world the Good News is proclaimed, what she has done will be told also, in remembrance of her.

N Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, approached the chief priests with an offer to hand Jesus over to them. They were delighted to hear it, and promised to give him money; and he looked for a way of betraying him when the opportunity should occur.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, his disciples said to him,

C Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?

N So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them,

Second Reading

At the very outset of Jesus' public ministry, as we heard on the first Sunday of Lent, the devil tempts him to use his divine powers for his own interests. At the very end, while Jesus hung upon the cross, onlookers taunted him to save himself (Lk 23:35). From start to finish Jesus refuses to play god. These stories are crystallised in the early Christian hymn that is today's second reading. "Christ Jesus did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself . . . and became as human beings are . . . even to death on a cross."

Coming on Palm Sunday, this reading serves as an overture to the Paschal Triduum, encapsulating all the themes of the paschal mystery that will be teased out over those holy days. It imagines Jesus' itinerary as an inverted parabola, starting on high from the divine realm, descending to the depth of the cross, and ascending again to glory. For Paul, as for the hymn, the cross is at the heart of the whole movement. It's the key to the mystery.

The reading as it stands gives no clue to the community issues that prompt Paul to cite this hymn. It is self-contained enough to stand on its own merits. Readers preparing to proclaim this confession of faith will quickly see what a work of literary art it is. The wealth of meaning condensed in its short lines calls for a delivery that is thoughtful and dignified but joyful. The NRSV renders it in inclusive language.

Gospel

Along with the commemoration of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the distinguishing feature of today's liturgy is the solemn proclamation of the passion. As with the entrance rite, there are choices to be made. Should the longer or the shorter version be read? How should the gospel be proclaimed? With one voice or many? Should the assembly be one of those voices? Should the proclamation be interspersed with silence or music or chant? These decisions need to be made in the light of local pastoral circumstances. What will best enable the worshipping community to be fully engaged in the hearing of this essential story?

The three synoptic gospels are more in agreement about the events of Jesus' last hours than about the rest of his life, but each has its own particular emphases. Here are points made by scripture scholar Brendan Byrne in his introduction to Mark's passion narrative (*A Costly Freedom: A Theological Reading of Mark's Gospel*. Sydney: St Paul's, 2008, 213-216):

- It is the most stark and unrelieved of the four gospels.
- From the start the whole gospel has been driving towards the passion story.
- The tension between Jesus being Messiah and Son of God, yet destined to suffer and die, "finds some measure of resolution in the centurion's confession following Jesus' death on the cross" (15:39).

J Go into the city and you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him, and say to the owner of the house which he enters, 'The Master says: Where is my dining room in which I can eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room furnished with couches, all prepared. Make the preparations for us there.

N The disciples set out and went to the city and found everything as he had told them, and prepared the Passover.

When evening came he arrived with the Twelve. And while they were at table eating, Jesus said,

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

N They were distressed and asked him, one after another,

O Not I, surely?

N He said to them,

J It is one of the Twelve, one who is dipping into the same dish with me. Yes, 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 And as they were eating he took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them saying,

J Take it; this is my body.

N Then he took a cup, and when he had returned thanks he gave it to them, and all drank from it, and he said to them,

J This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many. I tell you solemnly, I shall not drink any more wine until the day I drink the new wine in the kingdom of God.

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

J You will all lose faith, for the scripture says, 'I shall strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.' However after my resurrection I shall go before you to Galilee.

N Peter said,

O Even if all lose faith, I will not.

N And Jesus said to him,

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

N But he repeated still more earnestly,

O If I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

N And they all said the same.

They came to a small estate called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples,

J Stay here while I pray.

N Then he took Peter and James and John with him.

And a sudden fear came over him, and great distress.

And he said to them,

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

N And going on a little further he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, this hour might pass him by. He said,

J Abba (Father)! Everything is possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you, not I, would have it.

- "Jesus' conflict with the demonic comes to a climax as, in the utter loneliness of his death, he plumbs human alienation from God to its depth." His closest friends fail to give him comfort and companionship. "Most poignant of all . . . is the sense of silence 'from heaven' that will culminate in his cry of abandonment just before he dies on the cross" (15:34).
- But "there is a response 'from heaven' (the rending of the Temple curtain) that shows, as the centurion goes on to avow, that this 'truly was the Son of God' (15:39), and that in his dying the divine presence and power was striking the decisive blow in reclaiming humanity for the Kingdom".
- The gospel addresses the question as to how "Israel's Messiah, who was also God's beloved Son, was allowed to suffer and die" by showing that "it was God's express design that Israel's Messiah should accomplish his saving work through suffering and death" as the Scriptures had foreshadowed.
- To assist the preaching of the gospel in the Greco-Roman world, it shifts the blame for Jesus' death away from the Roman authorities and back towards the Jewish, with tragic historic consequences for the descendants of those who were Jesus' own people.

The attention given to the story of Jesus' suffering and death by all four evangelists confirms how central it was for the early Christian community and how vividly it was remembered. Its unique importance in grounding the community's faith in Jesus has been upheld ever since. Ministers of the word have both the responsibility and the opportunity to tell the story well. Familiar as it may be, it should be thoroughly rehearsed, even if it is read by a single voice, but especially if a number of voices are to be used. Every generation deserves to hear it proclaimed with faith, devotion, clarity and conviction. It is always their story.

The commentary for the gospel ends here.

On the next two pages, the remaining text of the gospel reading is presented across both columns.

N He came back and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter,
J Simon, are you asleep? Had you not the strength to keep awake for 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 he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came back and found them sleeping, their eyes were so heavy; and they could find no answer for him. He came back a third time and said to them,
J You can sleep on now and take your rest. It is all over. The hour has come. Now the Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up! Let us go! My betrayer is close at hand already.
N Even while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, came up with a number of men armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the traitor had arranged a signal with them. He had said,
O 'The one I kiss, he is the man. Take him in charge, and see he is well guarded when you lead him away.'
N So when the traitor came, he went straight up to Jesus and said,
O Rabbi!
N and kissed him. The others seized him and took him in charge. Then one of the bystanders drew his sword and struck out at the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus spoke,
J Am I a brigand that you had to set out to capture me with swords and clubs? I was among you teaching in the Temple day after day and you never laid hands on me. But this is to fulfil the scriptures.
N And they all deserted him and ran away. A young man who followed him had nothing on but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the cloth in their hands and ran away naked.
They led Jesus off to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes assembled there. Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the high priest's palace, and was sitting with the attendants warming himself at the fire.
N The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus on which they might pass the death sentence. But they could not find any. Several, indeed, brought false evidence against him, but their evidence was conflicting. Some stood up and submitted this false evidence against him,
C We heard him say, 'I am going to destroy this Temple made by human hands, and in three days build another, not made by human hands.'
N But even on this point their evidence was conflicting. The high priest then stood up before the whole assembly and put this question to Jesus,
O Have you no answer to that? What is this evidence these men are bringing against you?
N But he was silent and made no answer at all. The high priest put a second question to him,
O Are you the Christ the Son of the Blessed One?
N Jesus said,
J I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

N The high priest tore his robes, and said,
O What need of witnesses have we now? You heard the blasphemy. What is your finding?
N And they all gave their verdict: he deserved to die.
Some of them started spitting at him and, blindfolding him, began hitting him with their fists and shouting,
C Play the prophet!
N And the attendants rained blows on him. While Peter was down below in the courtyard, one of the high-priest's servant-girls came up. She saw Peter warming himself there, stared at him and said,
O You too were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.
N But he denied it, saying
O I do not know, I do not understand what you are talking about.
N And he went out into the forecourt. The servant-girl saw him and again started telling the bystanders,
O This fellow is one of them.
N But he again denied it. A little later the bystanders themselves said to Peter,
C You are one of them for sure! Why, you are a Galilean.
N But he started calling curses on himself and swearing,
O I do not know the man you speak of.
N At that moment the cock crew for the second time, and Peter recalled how Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will have disowned me three times.' And he burst into tears.
First thing in the morning, the chief priest together with the elders and scribes, in short the whole Sanhedrin, had their plan ready. They had Jesus bound and took him away and handed him over to Pilate.
Pilate questioned him,
O Are you the king of the Jews?
N He answered,
J It is you who say it.
N And the chief priests brought many accusations against him. Pilate questioned him again,
O Have you no reply at all? See how many accusations they are bringing against you!
N But to Pilate's amazement, Jesus made no further reply.
At festival time Pilate used to release a prisoner for them, anyone they asked for. Now a man called Barabbas was then in prison with the rioters who had committed murder during the uprising. When the crowds went up and began to ask Pilate the customary favour, Pilate answered them,
O Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?
N For he realised it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over. The chief priests, however, had incited the crowd to demand that he should release Barabbas for them instead. Then Pilate spoke again.
O But in that case, what am I to do with the man you call king of the Jews?

N They shouted back.

C Crucify him!

N Pilate asked them,

O Why? What harm has he done?

N But they shouted all the louder,

C Crucify him!

N So Pilate, anxious to placate the crowd, released Barabbas for them and having ordered Jesus to be scourged, handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led him away to the inner part of the palace, that is, the Praetorium, and called the whole cohort together. They dressed him up in purple, twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on him. And they began saluting him,

C Hail, king of the Jews!

N They struck his head with a reed and spat on him; and they went down on their knees to do him homage.

And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the purple and dressed him in his own clothes.

They led him out to crucify him. They enlisted a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. They offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he refused it. Then they crucified him, and shared out his clothing, casting lots to decide what each should get. It was the third hour when they crucified him.

The inscription giving the charge against him read: 'The king of the Jews.' And they crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said,

C Aha! So you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself: come down from the cross!

N The chief priests and the scribes mocked him among themselves in the same way. They said,

C He saved others, he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross now, for us to see it and believe.

N Even those who were crucified with him taunted him. When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice,

J Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?

N This means, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood by heard this, they said,

C Listen he is calling on Elijah.

N Someone ran and soaked a sponge in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink, saying,

O Wait and see if Elijah will come to take him down.

N But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

All kneel and pause a moment.

And the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he died, and he said,

O In truth this man was a son of God.

N There were some women watching from a distance. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary who was the mother of James the younger, and Joset, and Salome.

These used to follow him and look after him when he was in Galilee. And there were many other women there who had come up to Jerusalem with him.

N It was now evening, and since it was Preparation day (that is the vigil of the Sabbath), there came Joseph of Arimathaea, a prominent member of the Council, who himself lived in hope of seeing the kingdom of God, and he boldly went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate, astonished that he should have died so soon, summoned the centurion and enquired if he was already dead. Having been assured of this by the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph who brought a shroud, took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in the shroud and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joset were watching and took note of where he was laid.

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah 50:4–7

The servant of the Lord said:
“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 wakens—
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 backward.
“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.”

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians 2:6–11

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 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.

GOSPEL (NRSV)

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark 14:1 – 15:47

[It was two days before the Passover
and the festival of Unleavened Bread.
The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way
to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said,
“Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.”
While Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,
as he sat at the table,
a woman came with an alabaster jar
of very costly ointment of nard,
and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.

But some were there who said to one another in anger,
"Why was the ointment wasted in this way?
For this ointment could have been sold
for more than three hundred denarii,
and the money given to the poor."
And they scolded her.
But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her?
She has performed a good service for me.
For you always have the poor with you,
and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish;
but you will not always have me.
She has done what she could;
she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial.
Truly I tell you,
wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world,
what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."
Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve,
went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them.
When they heard it, they were greatly pleased,
and promised to give him money.
So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.
On the first day of Unleavened Bread,
when the Passover lamb is sacrificed,
the disciples said to Jesus,
"Where do you want us to go and make the preparations
for you to eat the Passover?"
So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them,
"Go into the city,
and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you;
follow him, and wherever he enters,
say to the owner of the house,
'The Teacher asks, "Where is my guest room
where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"
He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready.
Make preparations for us there."
So the disciples set out and went to the city,
and found everything as he had told them;
and they prepared the Passover meal.
When it was evening, Jesus came with the twelve.
And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said,
"Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me,
one who is eating with me."
They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another,
"Surely, not I?"
He said to them,
"It is one of the twelve,
one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me.
For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him,
but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!
It would have been better for that one not to have been born."
While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread,
and after blessing it he broke it,
gave it to them, and said,
"Take; this is my body."
Then he took a cup,
and after giving thanks he gave it to them,
and all of them drank from it.
He said to Them,
"This is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many.
Truly I tell you,
I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day
when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

And Jesus said to them,

"You will all become deserters; for it is written,
'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'
But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."

Peter said to him,

"Even though all become deserters, I will not."

Jesus said to him,

"Truly I tell you,

this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice,
you will deny me three times."

But he said vehemently,

"Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you."

And all of them said the same.

They went to a place called Gethsemane;

and Jesus said to his disciples,

"Sit here while I pray."

He took with him Peter and James and John,
and began to be distressed and agitated.

And he said to them,

"I am deeply grieved, even to death;
remain here, and keep awake."

And going a little farther,

he threw himself on the ground and prayed that,
if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible;
remove this cup from me;

yet, not what I want, but what you want."

Jesus came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter,

"Simon, are you asleep?"

Could you not keep awake one hour?

Keep awake

and pray that you may not come into the time of trial;
the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

And once more he came and found them sleeping,

for their eyes were very heavy;

and they did not know what to say to him.

He came a third time and said to them,

"Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?"

Enough! The hour has come;

the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Get up, let us be going.

See, my betrayer is at hand."

Immediately, while he was still speaking,

Judas, one of the twelve, arrived;

and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs,
from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying,

"The one I will kiss is the man;

arrest him and lead him away under guard."

So when he came, he went up to Jesus at once and said,

"Rabbi!" and kissed him.

Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

But one of those who stood near drew his sword

and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Then Jesus said to them,

"Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me
as though I were a bandit?"

Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching,
and you did not arrest me.

But let the scriptures be fulfilled."

All of them deserted him and fled.

A certain young man was following Jesus,
wearing nothing but a linen cloth.

They caught hold of him,

but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

They took Jesus to the high priest;
and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled.
Peter had followed him at a distance,
right into the courtyard of the high priest;
and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire.
Now the chief priests and the whole council
were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death;
but they found none.
For many gave false testimony against him,
and their testimony did not agree.
Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying,
"We heard him say,
'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands,
and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'
But even on this point their testimony did not agree.
Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus,
"Have you no answer?
What is it that they testify against you?"
But he was silent and did not answer.
Again the high priest asked him,
"Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"
Jesus said, "I am;
and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,'
and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'"
Then the high priest tore his clothes and said,
"Why do we still need witnesses?
You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?"
All of them condemned him as deserving death.
Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him,
and to strike him, saying to him,
"Prophesy!"
The guards also took him over and beat him.
While Peter was below in the courtyard,
one of the servant girls of the high priest came by.
When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said,
"You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth."
But he denied it, saying,
"I do not know or understand what you are talking about."
And he went out into the forecourt.
Then the cock crowed.
And the servant girl, on seeing him,
began again to say to the bystanders,
'This man is one of them."
But again he denied it.
Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter,
"Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean."
But he began to curse, and he swore an oath,
"I do not know this man you are talking about."
At that moment the cock crowed for the second time.
Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him,
"Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times."
And he broke down and wept.]
As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation
with the elders and scribes and the whole council.
They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate.
Pilate asked him,
"Are you the King of the Jews?"
He answered him, "You say so."
Then the chief priests accused him of many things.
Pilate asked him again,
"Have you no answer?
See how many charges they bring against you."
But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.
Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them,
anyone for whom they asked.
Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels
who had committed murder during the insurrection.

So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate
to do for them according to his custom.
Then he answered them,
"Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"
For he realized that it was out of jealousy
that the chief priests had handed him over.
But the chief priests stirred up the crowd
to have him release Barabbas for them instead.
Pilate spoke to them again,
"Then what do you wish me to do with the man
you call the King of the Jews?"
They shouted back, "Crucify him!"
Pilate asked them,
"Why, what evil has he done?"
But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!"
So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd,
released Barabbas for them;
and after flogging Jesus,
he handed him over to be crucified.
Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace
(that is, the governor's headquarters);
and they called together the whole cohort.
And they clothed him in a purple cloak;
and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him.
And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"
They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him,
and knelt down in homage to him.
After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak
and put his own clothes on him.
Then they led him out to crucify him.
They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country,
to carry his cross;
it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.
Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha
(which means the place of a skull).
And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh;
but he did not take it.
And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them,
casting lots to decide what each should take.
It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.
The inscription of the charge against him read,
"The King of the Jews."
And with him they crucified two bandits,
one on his right and one on his left.
Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying,
"Aha! You would destroy the temple and build it in three days;
save yourself, and come down from the cross!"
In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes,
were also mocking him among themselves and saying,
"He saved others; he cannot save himself.
Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now,
so that we may see and believe."
Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.
When it was noon,
darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.
At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice,
"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?"
which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
When some of the bystanders heard it, they said,
"Listen, he is calling for Elijah."
And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine,
put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying,
"Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."
Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

All may kneel for a period of silence.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Now when the centurion,
who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last,
he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

[There were also women looking on from a distance;
among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee;
and there were many other women
who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come,
and since it was the day of Preparation,
that is, the day before the sabbath,
Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council,
who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God,
went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead;
and summoning the centurion,
he asked him whether he had been dead for some time.
When he learned from the centurion that Jesus was dead,
he granted the body to Joseph.

Then Joseph bought a linen cloth,
and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth,
and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock.
He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.
Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses
saw where the body was laid.]

[Short Form: omit text in brackets.]

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.)