

Suggested Opening Song: To Jesus Christ, Our Sovereign King, #206

We begin today's liturgy in joy. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he did so in triumph, as a hero would when returning from a victorious battle. What the crowds did not truly realize—but we do today—is that Jesus' battle was just beginning. More importantly, the battle would look to be lost when he dies on the cross, when instead *this* was his victory over sin and death. Therefore, as we hold these branches high and sing hosannas to acclaim our king, we do so not only with heaviness in our hearts for Jesus' suffering and death, but with joy as well, for it is on the cross that Jesus redeems us from our sins.

As we gather let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith p. 22

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (*bow as we say*) and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Introductory Rite:

Greeting:

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

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

Penitential Rite: p. 8

Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to participate in this sacred celebration.

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Opening Prayer:

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading p. 70

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Isaiah 50:4-7

The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to GodResponsorial Psalm*Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24*

R/. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

R/. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

All who see me scoff at me; they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads:
 “He relied on the LORD; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, if he loves him.” **R/.**

Indeed, many dogs surround me, a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;
 They have pierced my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones. **R/.**

They divide my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.
 But you, O LORD, be not far from me; O my help, hasten to aid me. **R/.**

I will proclaim your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you:
 “You who fear the LORD, praise him; all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him;
 revere him, all you descendants of Israel!” **R/.**

Second Reading

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

Philippians 2:6-11

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

*Matthew 27:11-54***Glory to you, O Lord**

Jesus stood before the governor, Pontius Pilate, who questioned him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You say so.” And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?” But he did not answer him one word, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now on the occasion of the feast the governor was accustomed to release to the crowd one prisoner whom they wished. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had assembled, Pilate said to them, “Which one do you want me to release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus called Christ?” For he knew that it was out of envy that they had handed him over. While he was still seated on the bench, his wife sent him a message, “Have

nothing to do with that righteous man. I suffered much in a dream today because of him.” The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to destroy Jesus. The governor said to them in reply, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” They answered, Barabbas!” Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” But he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Let him be crucified!” When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. Look to it yourselves.” And the whole people said in reply, “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him. As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon; this man they pressed into service to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha — which means Place of the Skull — they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink.

After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, and come down from the cross!” Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way.

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Some of the bystanders who heard it said, “This one is calling for Elijah.” Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, “Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him.” But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.

Here all kneel and pause for a short time.

And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many. The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, “Truly, this was the Son of God!”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection on the Word:

- “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” are the words on Jesus’ lips as he hangs dying on the cross (Matthew 27:46). These are the opening words of Psalm 22, which we sang in the responsorial psalm. It seems to suggest that in his final hour, Jesus had felt abandoned by everyone, even the Father. But his use of this exact phrase also suggests that he was reciting the twenty-second psalm, which in its entirety conveys a much different meaning. After all, other parts of this same psalm are referenced by the chief priests when they say, “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him” (Matthew 27:43, cf. Psalm 22:9) and when “they divided his garments by casting lots” (Matthew 27:35, cf. Psalm 22:19). But the psalm does not end as a lament or crisis of

faith, but as a song of thanksgiving. God “did not turn away from me, / but heard me when I cried out” (Psalm 22:25). Its final sentence is prescient in the way it can be applied perfectly to every generation from Matthew’s to ours: “The generation to come will be told of the Lord, / that they may proclaim to a people yet unborn / the deliverance you have brought” (Psalm 22:32). Jesus’ prayer to his Father may have begun as a cry of despair, but it ends as a song of praise, acknowledging the Father’s saving grace.

- Sometimes God’s plans are unwittingly aided by the actions of malevolent actors. Judas, of course, is a prime example. His betrayal of Jesus sets the entire Passion in motion. The chief priests and Pharisees who talked Pilate into setting a guard to secure the tomb also unintentionally helped convince many who would otherwise be skeptical about the Resurrection. By ensuring that the tomb was well-guarded, the authorities eliminated that alternative explanation when in fact Jesus was raised from the dead. Their plan backfired when Jesus’ body disappeared from the well-guarded tomb, enabling Jesus’ disciples to indeed “say to the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’” just as they had feared would happen without a guard (Matthew 27:64). God’s plan succeeded even when Jesus’ opponents tried to prevent it.
- In Gethsemane, Jesus asks his disciples to stay and keep watch while he prays, but repeatedly they fall asleep. After he had first told his disciples that he would be put to death, Jesus said that whoever would follow him must also take up their cross. Sometimes taking up our cross means helping someone whose cross is too heavy to carry themselves. Perhaps it just means accompanying them through a difficult time. This week we will be invited to remain with the Lord and keep watch as we recall this scene. Other times, we may be offered the opportunity to stay and keep watch with someone who needs a hand to hold or a shoulder to cry on during times of anxiety or grief. When we do so, let us recall this scene and recognize the Lord in the person who needs our watchful presence.

Question of the Week

Will I keep watch and pray during the Triduum? When have I accompanied someone during a difficult time, if only to ensure they are not facing it alone?

Prayer of the Faithful:

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus prayed for his needs and accepted the Father’s will as the proper response. In that spirit, we now address our needs to our Father in heaven.

- For the Church, that our Holy Week celebrations may draw us deeper into the paschal mystery and strengthen our faith as we confess to the world that Jesus Christ is Lord, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For peace and reconciliation among all those who make their home in the Holy Land, that all leaders and organizations may renounce the use of violence, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- That all nations may recognize the gift from God that human life is and reject the use of the death penalty at any time for any crime, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For our Jewish brothers and sisters, who celebrate Passover later this week, that it may be meaningful and joyful, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For our faith community, that, like Simon of Cyrene, we may assist others in carrying their crosses, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For what else should we pray? Let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Almighty and eternal God, your Son trusted in you until the end. Deepen our faith in you so that we too may trust in your will. Grant this and all our prayers through your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer: p. 54

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Rite of Peace:

The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion:

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

Nourished with these sacred gifts, we humbly beseech you, O Lord, that, just as through the death of your Son you have brought us to hope for what we believe, so by his Resurrection you may lead us to where you call.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Concluding Rite:

Final Blessing:

May the Lord bless us, ✠ protect us from all evil and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Go in peace! **Thanks be to God.**

Suggested Closing Song: Were You There, #162