

We begin the holiest week of the year by recalling the palm branches the crowds used two thousand years ago to welcome the Lord into the holy city. Though the people of Jerusalem had no idea what the true nature of Jesus' triumph would soon be, we do and so we anticipate Jesus' ultimate victory while recognizing the intense suffering and profound grief that will accompany it. Let us raise our voices as we sing out as even the stones will, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

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

Profession of Faith p.

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.

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:

Almighty ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Savior 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.

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

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading p.

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 God**

Responsorial 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 Luke

*Luke 23:1-49*

**Glory to you, Lord**

The elders of the people, chief priests and scribes, arose and brought Jesus before Pilate. They brought charges against him, saying, "We found this man misleading our people; he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and maintains that he is the Christ, a king." Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He said to him in reply, "You say so." Pilate then addressed the chief priests and the crowds, "I find this man not guilty." But they were adamant and said, "He is inciting the people with his teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to here."

On hearing this Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean; and upon learning that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod who was in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was very glad to see Jesus; he had been wanting to see him for a long time, for he had heard about him and had been hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at length, but he gave him no answer. The chief priests and scribes, meanwhile, stood by accusing him harshly. Herod and his soldiers treated him contemptuously and mocked him, and after clothing him in resplendent garb, he sent him back to Pilate. Herod and Pilate became friends that very day, even though they had been enemies formerly.

Pilate then summoned the chief priests, the rulers, and the people and said to them, "You brought this man to me and accused him of inciting the people to revolt. I have conducted my investigation in your presence and have not found this man guilty of the charges you have brought against him, nor did Herod, for he sent him back to us. So no capital crime has been committed by him. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him."

But all together they shouted out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us." — Now Barabbas had been imprisoned for a rebellion that had taken place in the city and for murder. — Again Pilate addressed them, still wishing to release Jesus, but they continued their shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate addressed them a third time, "What evil has this man done? I found him guilty of no capital crime. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him." With loud shouts, however, they persisted in calling for his crucifixion, and their voices prevailed. The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted. So he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked, and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished.

As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus. A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.' At that time people will say to the mountains, 'Fall upon us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?" Now two others, both criminals, were led away with him to be executed.

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." They divided his garments by casting lots. The people stood by and watched; the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at him and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews."

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"; and when he had said this he breathed his last.

*Here all kneel and pause for a short time.*

The centurion who witnessed what had happened glorified God and said, "This man was innocent beyond doubt." When all the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had happened, they returned home beating their

breasts; but all his acquaintances stood at a distance, including the women who had followed him from Galilee and saw these events.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reflection on the Word:

- When Jesus entered the provincial capital of Jerusalem, he proclaimed that the very stones would cry out if the authorities tried to silence his disciples. But when Jesus was put on trial, no one spoke up for him. Peter denied even knowing him, the rest of the disciples fled, and the stones themselves remained silent. Was Jesus mistaken? Or was he speaking of a more distant show of support? Indeed, over the course of the last two millennia, millions of congregations such as ours have sung out virtually the same words as his disciples, recalling this very event. We are the ones who will not keep silent.
- Paul points out the paradoxical way in which Jesus lived his life on earth. Though he was God, “he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (Philippians 2:7), yet now, at his name “every knee should bend” (2:10). His complete obedience to the Father’s will, which makes him seem servile, gives him the strength to face the physical and psychic torture he must endure. His complete obedience to the One with the power to “greatly exalt” him and “bestow on him the name which is above every name” (2:9) enables him in the end to become the king that his disciples had proclaimed as they entered Jerusalem.
- Luke’s version of the Passion includes three examples of Jesus’ mercy toward sinners that are not mentioned by the other evangelists. First, for Peter: Even as Jesus tells Peter that he will deny him three times, he also tells him that when he turns back, he must strengthen the other disciples. Implicitly he forgives Peter for the cowardice he knows that he will show under duress, going so far as to rely on this disciple who will show terrible weakness to be a source of strength in the future. Later, Luke alone writes that when the cock crowed, Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Without saying anything more, we know that Jesus did not look at him in anger or disappointment, but with sympathy and mercy. Second, for those who played a role in his death sentence: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Finally, for the penitent criminal on the cross, whom he assures will be with him in heaven. Right up until his final breath, Jesus offered unconditional mercy to those who needed it. We are those sinners in need now.

**Question of the Week**

Who can I forgive with the Lord’s mercy this week?

Prayer of the Faithful:

“The Lord GOD is my help,” as Isaiah proclaimed, and so we cry out to God with our needs and the needs of our sisters and brothers.

- For the Church, that we may heed the cries of the suffering and crucified Christ in those in need, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For those who call the Holy Land home, that they may all live in peace, justice, and mutual respect of each other’s humanity, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- That the death penalty may be abolished throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For those who will be welcomed into the Church at the Easter Vigil, that their participation in the liturgies of Holy Week may deepen and strengthen their faith, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- That as pilgrims of hope we may look to Jesus' triumph on the cross in order to cope with our own suffering and despair, 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.**

God of all goodness, you accompanied your Son when he suffered and was crucified. Hear the prayers we make today and accompany us on our life's journeys as we strive to follow your will. We ask this and all our prayers through your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer: p.

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.**