



# SPIRIT



**PALM/PASSION**

**PALM/PASSION SUNDAY** begins the holiest week of the Christian year. We bless palms, often outdoors, and reenact the welcome people gave Jesus when he and the men and women who followed him arrived in Jerusalem. The Liturgy of the Word centers on the story of Jesus' passion and death.



Photo: Wittman

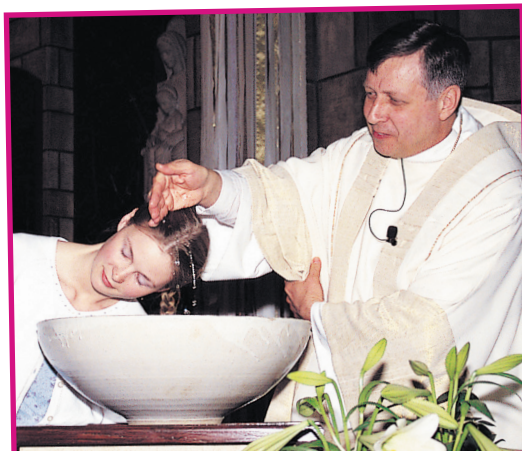
**HOLY THURSDAY**

**HOLY THURSDAY** evening the Church gathers to remember and celebrate Jesus' last supper with his followers. He washed their feet to give them an example of service. He broke bread, blessed it, and gave it to his friends. He poured a cup of wine, blessed it, and gave it to them, too, asking them to do the same to remember him. Each Eucharist continues this action.

**ON GOOD FRIDAY**, which remembers Jesus' giving of his life, we do not celebrate Eucharist. The cross is the focus as Catholics gather and pray for the needs of the Church and the people of the world for whom Jesus died. We kiss the cross or show it reverence in this liturgy and receive communion.



**GOOD FRIDAY**



**EASTER VIGIL**

**THE EASTER VIGIL** on Holy Saturday evening is the holiest night of the year. The parish community gathers in darkness to light the Easter candle, symbolizing Jesus' resurrection. By the light of the candle we stay awake and listen to stories of God's goodness, beginning with the creation of the world and continuing to God's raising Jesus from the dead. We baptize new Christians on this night that celebrates Jesus' passage from death to life.

# HOLY WEEK

# FREEDOM SUPPER

**H**oly Thursday reminds us of two things central to following Jesus. First, Jesus' act of footwashing calls Christians to serve others unselfishly and willingly. Second, we are reminded that to become, like Jesus, bread broken for the world is every Christian's mission.

Set a festive table with at least three candles, plates, and wine or juice glasses for all. Place the following symbolic foods for the meal in the center:

- matzo crackers (unleavened bread);
  - a drink for making toasts.
- Sparkling catawba juice makes a festive substitute for wine.

## GATHERING

**LEADER:** On the night before he died, Jesus gathered with his closest friends to celebrate a Passover meal, a meal that celebrates Israel's escape from slavery in Egypt and the people's journey to freedom. Jesus made this meal a way to remember him in breaking bread together and sharing a cup of wine.

## BLESSING OF LIGHT

*Light a candle with each blessing.*

**BLESSING 1:** God, you light our days with sun and our nights with the stars. You turn our world toward spring and bring us to this night of freedom.

**ALL: Blessed are you, Giver of Light.**

**BLESSING 2:** God, you set us free. Open our eyes to see you in our companions at this table, in all those who need our love.

**ALL: Blessed are you, God our friend.**

**BLESSING 3:** God, you are with us in our doubts, in our desires,

our dreams, our discontent. Bring us through this night of passing from death to life.

**ALL: Blessed are you, God with us.**

## BLESSING OF BREAD & WINE

**LEADER:** We come together this night to eat unleavened bread. It is the bread of freedom our ancestors ate when they escaped from slavery in



Egypt. It is the bread Jesus gives us to become his Body, a community set free to love.

**TOAST:** Our God, you call us to freedom, service, and love. You give us this wine, this supper, these friends. May we be poured out for others as Jesus poured out this cup for us.

**ALL: Blessed are you, Lord Jesus, who set us free to love.**

*All drink the toast.*

**BREAD BLESSING:** *Hold up the matzo.* Blessed are you, Creator of the earth. You call us this night to become bread for one another and for the people of your earth.

**ALL: May this bread make us hungry for a table at which all may eat.**

**LEADER:** Jesus broke the bread and gave it to us, his friends, saying, "Take

this and eat. This is my body to be given for you. Do this to remember me." And we always have.

**ALL: Give us an attitude like Christ's—to be bread for one another.**

## THE QUESTIONS, THE STORY

**QUESTION 1:** Why is this night different from all other nights?

**MIRIAM:** Let me tell you the story of this night. Once we were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt. Life was good there, but not for us. We made bricks for Pharaoh's cities. He feared us because we grew so numerous, and he told the midwives to kill every male baby. Shiphrah and Puah were our midwives. They paid no attention to Pharaoh. "The women have their babies before we can get there," that's what they told Pharaoh. I hid my brother when he was born. I put him in a basket in the rushes where Pharaoh's daughter bathed in the Nile. Sure enough, when she saw him, she wanted to keep him alive. Then I turned up and offered to find him a wet nurse—our mother. By the way, his name was Moses.

**ALL: We outsmarted Pharaoh.**

**QUESTION 2:** On all other nights we talk about many things. Why on this night do we remember the passover?

**MOSES:** We are the people God set free. These slaves, our ancestors, cried out to God to help them, and God called me, a man who stuttered, to speak for them. I did everything God commanded. I threatened Pharaoh. God sent terrible plagues on

the Egyptians! First the Nile turned to blood, then came frogs, gnats, flies, pestilence, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness. But Pharaoh didn't listen until the night when Death passed over our houses but killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. Pharaoh set us free!

**ALL:** We are the people God led on a dry path through the sea when Pharaoh sent his army after us. God is our strength and our courage.

**QUESTION 3:** On other nights we eat leavened bread. Why on this night do we eat unleavened bread?

**MIRIAM:** This is the bread of freedom like that our ancestors took with them out of Egypt when they left too quickly for bread to rise. (*Passes matzo crackers. Each takes one.*)

**CHRISTIAN:** This bread is like the unleavened bread that Jesus blessed and gave his friends. We eat it to become like Jesus, bread broken to give life to the people of the world.  
**ALL:** We believe in the gift Jesus gave us, himself as our spiritual food. (*All eat matzo.*)

### MEAL

*After these prayers at a Passover meal, everyone eats dinner.*

## BLESSING FOR SERVICE

**JOHN:** This was the night Jesus washed our feet like a house slave. He put a towel around him and washed our feet one by one. Peter objected,

but Jesus insisted. I'll never forget what he said when he finished. "What I just did was to give you an example. As I have done, so you must do."

**LEADER:** Jesus gave us an example of how to serve one another. Let us remember his example by washing each others' hands before we leave our meal. (*Hand out warm, wet towels. Wash each others' hands in pairs.*)

**LEADER:** Bless our hands for service. Bless our hands for showing support. Bless our hands for expressing praise and enthusiasm. Bless our hands for writing our best thoughts. Bless our hands for creativity and music. Bless our hands for...(*Add blessings.*)

## SUNDAY GOSPEL

Palm/Passion Sunday

## Jesus journeys from death to life.

**SPIRIT** puts Sunday's gospel, which is Matthew's version of Jesus' passion, into seven stations (Matthew 26.14—27.66). Work in groups to make contemporary stations by either visiting places in your area where people suffer or by making seven collages in cross shapes that show ways people are suffering in our world. Use magazine and newspaper clippings to make the collages. Use the prayers below for each station or write your own.

### Station 1: Betrayal

**LEADER:** Jesus' friend Judas turned him in for a little money. His other friends



split when he was arrested. Peter claimed he never knew him.

**PRAYER:** Loving God, keep us from being shallow friends or Christians in name only. Deepen our commitment to you and Jesus, your Son.

### Station 2: Charges

**NARRATOR 1:** Jesus stood before the Roman procurator.

**PILATE:** Are you the king of the Jews?

**JESUS:** You say so.

**PILATE:** You hear how many charges they bring against you?

**NARRATOR 2:** Jesus did not answer. Usually at Passover, the procurator released a prisoner, the one for whom the crowd asked.

**PILATE:** Whom do you want me to release, Barabbas or Jesus, the so-called Messiah?

**NARRATOR 1:** Pilate realized that the chief priests and elders had handed Jesus over out of jealousy. As he was presiding, his wife sent him a message.

**WIFE:** Have nothing to do with this innocent man. I had a dream about him today which has greatly upset me.

**NARRATOR 2:** Meanwhile the chief priests and elders convinced the crowd to ask for Barabbas.

**PILATE:** Who do you wish me to release to you?

**CROWD:** Barabbas.

**PILATE:** What am I to do with Jesus, the so-called Messiah?

**CROWD:** Crucify him.

**PILATE:** What evil has he done?

**CROWD:** Crucify him.

**PRAYER:** Jesus, your teachings and healing revealed a way of peace and faith in God. Your reign threatens how others reigned in your time and how many leaders reign today. Help us bring your kin\*dom from heaven to earth.



### Station 3: Handed Over

**NARRATOR 2:** Pilate could see the people were about to riot, so he called for water, washed his hands, and declared:

**PILATE:** I am innocent of this just man's blood.

**PRAYER:** You took the easy way, stopped the riot, sat back, handed Jesus over. You didn't stand up for this innocent man. Stand with us, Jesus, when our time comes to stand with a friend.

### Station 4: Ridicule

**NARRATOR 1:** Pilate had Jesus scourged and handed him over to be crucified. The soldiers stripped him, put a scarlet cloak on him, and put a crown of thorns on his head. They mocked him.

**SOLDIERS:** All hail, king of the Jews.

**NARRATOR 2:** They spit in his face. When they finished making a fool of him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him to be crucified.

**PRAYER:** We know how violent teasing and mocking are. Help us recognize the evil we do to one another.



**The Paschal mystery of Christ's cross and resurrection stands at the center of the Good News that the apostles, and the Church following them, are to proclaim to the world.**

*Catechism of the Catholic Church #571*

### Station 5: Carrying the Cross

**NARRATOR 1:** On their way they met a man from Cyrene named Simon. They enlisted him to carry the cross.

**PRAYER:** A man Jesus never met helps him carry his cross. Help us recognize the burdens those around us carry and help them carry on. Help us carry our pressures and uncertainties.

### Station 6: Crucifixion, Shame

**NARRATOR 1:** At the place called Golgotha (the name means Skull Place), they gave him wine flavored with gall, which he tasted but refused to drink.

**NARRATOR 2:** When they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among them by casting lots and sat down to keep watch. Above Jesus' head they put the charge against him in writing: This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.

**NARRATOR 1:** Two insurgents were crucified with him, one at his right and one at his left. Passersby kept insulting him.

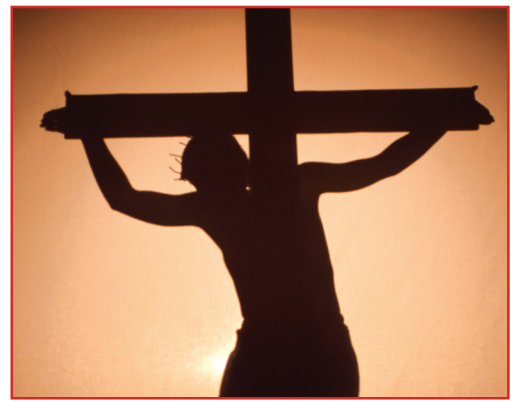
**PASSERSBY:** So you are the one who was going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days! Save yourself, why don't you? Come down off that cross if you are God's Son.

**CHIEF PRIEST:** He saved others but he cannot save himself.

**SCRIBES:** So he is the king of Israel! Let's see him come down from that cross, then we will believe in him.

**ELDERS:** He relied on God, let God rescue him now if God wants to. After all, he claimed, "I am God's Son."

**PRAYER:** Jesus, you are one of us. You suffered and died. You loved us unto death. Help us remember your love for us always.



### Station 7: Death

**NARRATOR 2:** The insurgents also kept taunting him. From noon onward, there was darkness over the whole land until midafternoon. Then Jesus cried out in a loud tone.

**JESUS:** Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani.

**NARRATOR 1:** Which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

**BYSTANDERS:** He is calling for Elijah.

**NARRATOR 2:** Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, soaked it in cheap wine, stuck it on a reed, and tried to make him drink.

**BYSTANDERS:** Leave him alone. Let's see whether Elijah comes to rescue him.

**NARRATOR 1:** Once again Jesus cried out in a loud voice and then gave up his spirit. Suddenly the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, boulders split, tombs opened. Many bodies of saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

**CENTURION:** Clearly this was the Son of God.

**PRAYER:** Jesus, you entrust your spirit to God when no one hears your name or honors your claim to be God's Son. Help us see that every person is God's own, worthy of respect and reverence.

### Station 8: Easter

Plan a celebration of new life. Bring spring to people in your parish who need help.