

# Sunday and Feast Day Liturgical Notes for Priests and Deacons

## Suggestions for Leading Worship



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**RE:** Liturgical Suggestions for the Palm Sunday of our Lord's Passion – Cycle B

**Sunday or Feast Day date:** April 4-5, 2009

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Dear Fathers and Deacons,

### **An Overview for this Sunday...**

On this last Sunday of Lent we enter the most solemn of all the weeks in the liturgical year. The writers of Liturgical Press' *Living Liturgy* describes the tone and significance of Palm Sunday as a way to prepare the community for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery during the Triduum:

In spite of the fact that we have two distinct gospels with two distinct "feelings" at Mass this Sunday (quite unusual in itself), the purpose of the first gospel and procession is to ready us in a most profound way to hear the proclamation of the Passion and to celebrate the Triduum. Our procession with the palms is a way to engage our whole selves – including the actual bodily movement from one place to another – in symbolizing our own paschal journey with Christ. This procession with palms brings us, literally, to the doorstep of the Passion and in this way prepares and readies us for the proclamation of the Passion.

This suggests two ways to live Holy Week. First, to see all our actions this week as a continuation of the procession with palms, joining ourselves with Jesus on His journey to the

cross. Rather than a somber, morbid week, we live in anticipation of embracing the cross so that we might experience new life on Easter.

Second, knowing full well that the journey this week (and of our whole Christian life) leads to the cross, to commit ourselves to be especially aware of those around us in need, as Jesus was always compassionate toward those in need. No matter how busy we preparing for a holiday weekend, we want to redouble our efforts to be mindful of the countless ways each day we are called to die to self for the sake of others.” (adapted from *Living Liturgy*. J. A. Zimmermann, *et al.* Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006)

### **Questions for Faith Sharing...**

1. Like the disciples, how have I betrayed, denied or abandoned Jesus?
2. How has Lent been a time for returning to the Lord?
3. What glory have I experienced and found in “emptying myself” for others?
4. What dies in me when I, like Simon the Cyrenian, am pressed to carry another person’s cross?
5. What comes to new life in me during these encounters?

### **Some Other Considerations as You Prepare...**

**Introductory Rites:** The *Missal* provides 3 options for the beginning of today’s liturgy:

1. The first option, “The Procession” seems to be preferred and implies that the people gather in a separate building or distinct place from the church to which the procession will move. This procession is a public sign of our union with the Church and is an outward sign of discipleship.
  - a. As the people gather in this separate place, a hymn, “Hosanna to the Son of David” is sung.
  - b. The priest introduces the liturgy in his own words or using the text provided in the *Missal*.
  - c. Then he blesses the palms using one of the two prayers. (Please note that ushers should distribute palm branches to the people as they arrive, so that the palms may be raised by the assembly as the blessing prayer is said. Ideally the priest should walk through the assembly, sprinkling the raised palm branches with holy water.)
  - d. Now, the Gospel account of Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem is read (Mk 11:1-10).
  - e. After an invitation to “go forth praising Jesus our Messiah,” the procession led by incense, cross (suitably decorated with a palm branch) and candles begins to make its way to the Church. As they walk, the people sing in a responsorial form Psalm 23, Psalm 46 or another hymn (i.e., “All Glory Laud and Honor”).
  - f. Once the assembly enters the church the priest and deacon reverence the altar, concluding the Procession with the Opening Prayer. There is no Penitential Rite in today’s Mass.

- g. The use of a P/A or sound system is necessary so that the assembly may fully participate in this first option, especially if the assembly gathers in an outdoor location. .
  - h. Realistically it would be difficult to do the long Procession well at multiple masses.
2. **The Second Option, “The Solemn Entrance”** is for use at the Masses where the long procession would be difficult or as a “rainy day” option. The Solemn Entrance contains all of the elements of the first option, but is designed to begin at the rear of the church building.
  3. **The Third Option, the Simple Entrance** includes only the entrance song (antiphon) as the priest moves toward the altar. The simple entrance has no blessing of palms, reading of the Gospel, or elaborate procession.

### **The Liturgy of the Word**

1. A dramatic change of tone takes place with the Liturgy of the Word. The loud shouts of “Hosanna” give way to the words of the psalm quoted by Jesus from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” The high point in the Liturgy of the Word comes with the proclamation of the Passion of St. Mark. There are many ways to proclaim the Passion: read in dialogue by multiple readers and assembly, or chanted by ministers, cantors & choir. It may also be proclaimed straight through by one person (deacon or priest). The most important thing is that the passion proclamation be well prepared by gifted ministers.
2. Note the fine print about the ritual surrounding today’s Gospels: The first Gospel proclamation about Jesus entry into Jerusalem is done in the usual way, with incense, candles, greeting and the signing of the cross. When the Passion is proclaimed, candles, incense, greeting and signing of the cross are *omitted*. For the Passion, the readers or cantors move to their places during the singing of the Gospel Acclamation.

### **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

There is a Proper Preface (P19) and a Solemn Blessing for today’s Mass.

## Sample Intercessions for Passion (Palm) Sunday

*Priest:* In the name of Jesus, the name that is above every name, let us offer our intercessions to God:

*Deacon* (or other reader if there is no deacon):

1. That the Church, teaching in the name of Christ, may sustain the weary with a word of courage, righteousness and hope, we pray to the Lord.
2. That world leaders may hear the voices that cry out for food, for dignity and for peace, we pray to the Lord.
3. That all people may soon experience justice and peace, and that military and diplomatic personnel and civilians may be protected from all harm, we pray to the Lord.
4. That the sick, the elderly and the homeless, who by their sufferings share in the passion of Christ, may also share in Christ's resurrection, we pray to the Lord.
5. That we may accompany the Elect to the waters of baptism, supporting them by our prayer and fasting, and confessing with them that Jesus Christ is Lord, we pray to the Lord.
6. That, as we celebrate Holy Week we may empty ourselves like Christ Jesus, serving with unselfish love, we pray to the Lord.
7. That those who have died, especially \_\_\_\_\_, may know God's peace, we pray to the Lord.

*[pause for the community to pray silently for other needs; the presider alone concludes]*

*Priest:* O God, for whom all things are possible,  
you have highly exalted your suffering Servant,  
who humbled himself even to death on a cross.  
As we begin the journey of Holy Week,  
take our sin away by Christ's glorious passion  
and confirm our worship and witness,  
so that when we proclaim His name,  
every knee shall bend and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.  
We ask this through your Son, the Christ, our Passover and our Peace,  
who lives with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.  
Amen.