

# Purification and Enlightenment Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA  
Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord • Year B • March 24, 2024

*O Most Holy Redeemer,  
we adore you  
and acclaim  
your saving sacrifice,  
by which  
we are healed  
and made new.  
Amen.*



## Sunday Word

Mark 11:1-10 (at the procession with palms)

Isaiah 50:4-7

Psalms 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Philippians 2:6-11

Mark 14:1-15:47

### *The King*

At his trial before Pilate, much is made of the accusation that Jesus sets himself up as king. That is, of course, a false accusation. But when questioned, Jesus makes no defense. He does not contest the lie. Pilate is amazed.

How things are communicated—including titles and terms—is important to Jesus, the Eternal Word, whose mission, in part, consists of preaching and teaching. But in this instance, he remains virtually silent before Pilate, because his actions speak louder than words. He is truly King of kings, Lord and ruler, but as such, his work is our Redemption. And our Redemption is accomplished through his loving self-sacrifice upon the Cross.

### *For Reflection*

*When you contemplate an image of the Crucifixion, what do you see?*

*Jesus stands silently and patiently before you: what does his stance communicate to you?*

*What question do you have for Christ?*

### *The Son of God*

The centurion is the man in charge of the Roman detail given the task of crucifying Jesus. As they set out from the trial, Jesus is nothing more than a criminal to them, someone who merits execution because he has been judged by the authority of Rome.

As the Crucifixion unfolds, as Jesus suffers and prays from the Cross, something must change within the centurion. The crowd keeps taunting Jesus. But the centurion stands apart and watches.

He sees. And what he sees touches him. He acclaim Jesus as the very Son of God. This eventful moment touches not only the centurion but generations of the faithful through the centuries. The Cross of Christ becomes the turning point of faith the world.

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## For Reflection

What went through your heart and mind as you knelt during the proclamation of the Passion this Sunday?

How has your heart changed during this initiation process?

## Church Teaching: Christ, Son of God

Jesus freely accepts death on the Cross. His death by crucifixion is not a pretend death. It is full of anguish and it culminates in a real death. Yet Jesus is not without hope. He cries out loudly, victoriously, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This echoes the psalmist’s words (see Psalm 22:2). The psalm concludes that God will give us life and be our vindication.

The centurion sees into the truth of the matter. Who else can appeal to God on our behalf but God’s Son? Whose voice can carry the weight of our appeal—from creation until the end of time—but the Son of God? Who else can break the bonds of sin and death, conquer this Cross at Golgotha and all crosses, but the Son of God? Who else can heal, redeem, restore, and raise us to newness of life but the Son of God?

## Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Saint Augustine writes, Christ “took on the speech of our infirmity, in which ‘our sinful nature was crucified with him’ (Ephesians 5:29) that the body of sin might be destroyed, and said: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ . . . Thus the Psalm begins, which was sung so long ago, in prophecy of his passion and the revelation of the grace which he brought to raise up his faithful and set them free.”

Prompted by the Son of God, we pray along with him Psalm 22. We find our vindication in Christ. We find our hope in his Cross. We find our Redemption in his love.

## Key Images and Symbols of the Season

**JERUSALEM**—city of Jesus’ triumph (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 559, 569, 570)

**CROSS**—instrument of death, instrument of our Salvation (see CCC 616, 618, 2166)

**THAT WE MAY SEE AND BELIEVE**—mocking cry of the bystanders, our firm cry of faith as we celebrate the liturgy (see CCC 142, 1067, 1068, 1072, 1075, 1076, 1082)

**VEIL OF THE SACRATORY**—torn from top to bottom revealing God’s holy presence in the sacrifice of Christ (see CCC 585, 593)

**SON OF GOD**—humbly accepting death, greatly exulted by his heavenly Father (see CCC 442, 444, 663)

## Preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist

What high points have you experienced in the liturgy today?

Christ offers himself for you; what do you offer of yourself to Christ?

