



# *Liturgy of the Word with Children*

## Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

# *Passion (Palm) Sunday, Year A*

*Red*

*It is recommended that children remain with the whole assembly today.*

*“This man really was God’s Son!”*

*Matthew 27:11-54*

*Jesus continued proclaiming the truth even if it meant he would die. He went through rejection, misunderstanding and violence by others and he experienced loneliness. When we have some upset, note the emotion we are feeling. We can look to when Christ experienced that particular emotion, and draw strength by knowing we are walking with Christ. He goes before us always. We know through his death came his resurrection. As we journey through difficult times, we are reminded that new life is emerging.*



## *Leader’s Preparation*

In preparation for leading this celebration, begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for the Passion Sunday, focusing on the Gospel. Then look through the preparatory material that follows and familiarise yourself with the Liturgy Outline.

## **GOSPEL**

Matthew 27:11-54

### **A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew**

Jesus was brought before Pilate the governor, who asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” “Those are your words!” Jesus answered. And when the chief priests and leaders brought their charges against him, he did not say a thing.

Pilate asked him “Don’t you hear what crimes they say you have done?”

But Jesus did not say anything, and the governor was greatly amazed.

During Passover the governor always freed as prisoner chosen by the people. At that time a well-known terrorist named Jesus Barabbas was in jail. So when the crowd came together, Pilate asked them, “Which prisoner do you want me to set free? Do you want Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate knew that the leaders had brought Jesus to him because they were jealous.

While Pilate was judging the case, his wife sent him a message. It said, “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man. I have had nightmares because of him.”

But the chief priests and the leaders convinced the crowds to ask for Barabbas to be set free and for Jesus to be killed. Pilate asked the crowd again, "Which of these two men do you want me to set free?"

"Barabbas!" they replied.

Pilate asked them, "What am I to do with Jesus, who is called the Messiah?"

They all yelled, "Nail him to a cross!"

Pilate answered, "But what crime has he done?"

"Nail him to a cross!" they yelled even louder.

Pilate saw that there was nothing he could do and that the people were starting to riot. So he took some water and washed his hands in front of them and said, "I won't have anything to do with killing this man. You are the ones doing it!"

Everybody answered, "We and our descendants will take the blame for his death!"

Pilate set Barabbas free. Then he ordered his soldiers to beat Jesus with a whip and nail him to a cross.

The governor's soldiers led Jesus into the fortress and brought together the rest of the troops. They stripped off Jesus' clothes and put a scarlet robe on him. They made a crown out of thorn branches and placed it on his head, and they put a stick in his right hand. The soldiers kneeled down and pretended to worship him. They made fun of him and shouted, "Hey, you king of the Jews!" Then they spit on him. They took the stick from him and beat him on the head with it.

When the soldiers had finished making fun of Jesus, they took off the robe. They put his own clothes back on him and led him off to be nailed to a cross. On the way they met a man from Cyrene named Simon, and they forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

They came to a place named Golgotha, which means "Place of the Skull". There they gave Jesus some wine mixed with a drug to ease the pain. But when Jesus tasted what it was, he refused to drink it.

The soldiers nailed Jesus to a cross and gambled to see who would get his clothes. Then they sat down to guard him. Above his head they put a sign that told why he was nailed there. It said, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." The soldiers also nailed two criminals on crosses one to the right of Jesus and the other to his left.

People who passed by said terrible things about Jesus. They shook their heads and shouted, "So you're the one who claimed you could tear down the temple and build it again in three days! If you are God's Son, save yourself and come down from the cross!"

The chief priests, the leaders, and the teachers of the Law of Moses also made fun of Jesus. They said, "He saved others, but he can't save himself. If he is the king of Israel, he should come down from the cross! Then we will believe him. He trusted God, so let God save him, if he wants to. He even said he was God's Son."

The two criminals also said cruel things to Jesus.

At noon the sky turned dark and stayed that way until three o'clock. Then about that time Jesus shouted, "Eli, Eli, Lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?"

Some of the people standing there heard Jesus and said, "He's calling for Elijah." One of them at once ran and grabbed a sponge. He soaked it in wine, then put it on a stick and held it up to Jesus.

Others said, "Wait! Let's see if Elijah will come and save him." Once again Jesus shouted, and then he died.

At once the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and rocks split apart. Graves opened, and many of God's people were raised to life. Then after

Jesus had risen to life, they came out of their graves and went into the holy city, where many people saw them.

The officer and the soldiers guarding Jesus felt the earthquake and saw everything else that happened. They were frightened and said, "This man really was God's Son!"

*Scriptures from the Lectionary for Masses with Children (CEV)*  
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## *Background to the Readings for Leaders*

The Jews had been longing for a great leader, like one of their Kings of old, who would lead them to victory against the Roman invaders. They thought that Jesus might be that leader. At this time of Passover many Jews gathered in Jerusalem to remember how God had saved them from slavery. But by his actions he shows everyone that he is no earthly king or soldier – he comes as the King of peace, love and forgiveness. This is why he chose to enter the city riding on a donkey, commonly used for carrying loads, rather than a battle horse.

It is important at this time of focusing on the agony and desolation of the passion, that we also remember the fact of the resurrection, as described by the evangelists and witnesses who viewed it from the perspective of the risen Christ ascending into glory.

## *Images from the Readings*

- *Palms*
- *King of the Jews*
- *Beaten with a whip*
- *Nail him to a cross*
- *A good man*

## *Reflection for Leaders*

Reflect on your feelings as you listened to the Passion being read. What does the Passion of Jesus tell us about where God is in the suffering of the world and in our own personal suffering? What does self-giving love imply for the way we live our lives? What does it ask of us personally?

## *Reflecting on the Readings with the children*

**Before Sunday read over the suggested discussion points given in the Leader's Liturgy Outline.**

**With the 8-12 year olds: First, listen to the children's own responses to the Gospel and then, if needed, use some of the discussion starters suggested.**

**With the 5-7 year olds: Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and then use the prayer and paper crosses provided for the 'Liturgical Action'.**

## Notes

We would encourage children to worship with the whole assembly today – if celebrating separately, allow for a lengthy session. It is a good idea to divide the reading of the Passion into sections so that three or four people can read it. You might enlist the help of two or three older children or adult readers. Do not make a play out of the reading of the Passion.

Processions are an integral part of the Easter feast and begin today with the procession of palms. They are signs of our willingness to live as pilgrims, like the Israelites in the desert, we only wander through this earthly life for a time and like Jesus we wander from place to place with the good news. In our processing this week we follow more meaningfully than at any other time of the year in the footsteps of Jesus, from his entry into Jerusalem to his last steps on Calvary and on to the road to Emmaus.

Mediaeval pilgrims who went on pilgrimages to shrines were called 'palmers' because they carried leafy branches from trees as a sign of their religious purpose and zeal.

"The act of walking in procession is an important ritual that promotes active, bodily participation in the liturgy. Processions are essential to Christian worship, walking and singing in procession teaches us in our bones what it means to be human, it makes us human, unites us in an assembly and puts us on the road to the new Jerusalem. Processions are great opportunities to worship God with our bodies as well as our minds, with walking as well as with words." (*Liturgy* 19, Feb/Mar 94)

## Suggested Focus

Prepare a focus for the area where the children's Liturgy of the Word is to be held:  
Red cloth, Lectionary, a crucifix, nails and palms surrounded by small tea-light candles.



# LEADER'S LITURGY OUTLINE

## Passion (Palm) Sunday, Year A

At a suitable moment after the Opening Rites, but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are presented with the Children's Lectionary and a candle and sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

*INVITATION – Pōwhiri* I invite the children to join in the procession for their celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

**To the Minister of the Word:** Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

Receive this candle as the light of Christ who is present in his Word.

*PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS – Te Kapa o te Pukapuka Tapu*

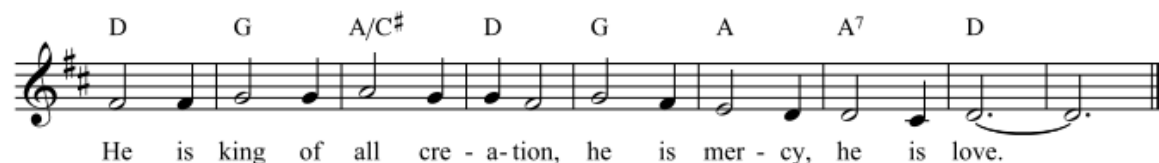
*WELCOME – Ko te whakatau*

**Leader:** O God, we thank you for making us your children. Help us to serve others, especially those who are close to us.

**R** Amen.

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Sing)*

Music © 2011 Maria Guzzo



## *Gospel: Matthew 27: 11-54*

**Minister of the Word:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew  
**Children:** **Glory to you, O Lord / Korōria ki ā koe, e te Ariki**

**At the end of the Gospel:** The Gospel of the Lord  
**Children:** **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ / Kia whakanuia rā koe, e te Ariki, e Hēhu Karaiti.**

## *REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH THE CHILDREN – Whai Whakaaro*

**8-12 year olds:** *Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.*

- Try to emphasise the resurrection – life that succeeds death, that we await the Alleluias of Easter Sunday morning. For now and the next five days, we follow the way of the Cross. Our procession today was the beginning, for the rest of the week we continue our pilgrimage to Easter.
- Who was there? Why did they want Jesus crucified?
- What does the story tell us about God and suffering in the world?
- Why was Jerusalem so busy at this time? (Passover)
- The Gospel reading for the Procession of Palms shows Jesus being warmly welcomed. Discuss the strong contrast between this and the Passion reading.



**5-7 year olds:** Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material.

## *LITURGICAL ACTION – Ko te Ritenga Karakia*

**8-12 year olds:** Use the 'three crosses' image on page 9.

**5-7 year olds:** Pray the following prayer with the children:

Thank you Jesus for loving us so much.  
Help us to show our love for you  
by the way we live our lives.

Hand the children the prepared paper crosses (print and pre-cut these from attached template, page 8) and have them write a promise of something kind they will do to show their love for Jesus.

## *PROFESSION OF FAITH – Panui o te Whakapono*

We believe in God the Father,  
who made the whole world.  
We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  
who was born in Bethlehem  
and lived among us,  
who died on the cross for us,  
and rose from the dead.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit  
who brings life and love to us all.  
We believe that the Church is one family,  
and that one day  
we will share everlasting life  
with God in heaven. Amen.

## *PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL – Te Īnoīnga o te Hunga Whakapono*

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

**Leader:** With hearts full of hope let us pray to God our creator and redeemer for our needs:

- That our gratitude and love for Jesus will grow  
Let us pray to the Lord **R Lord hear our prayer**  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

For those who do not believe in God, that they may experience his love  
Let us pray to the Lord **R Lord hear our prayer**  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

- That we, the children of Aotearoa-New Zealand, will be an example to others by our care for the poor, the sick and the unpopular  
Let us pray to the Lord **R Lord hear our prayer**  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- For the gift of caring for others  
Let us pray to the Lord **R Lord hear our prayer**  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

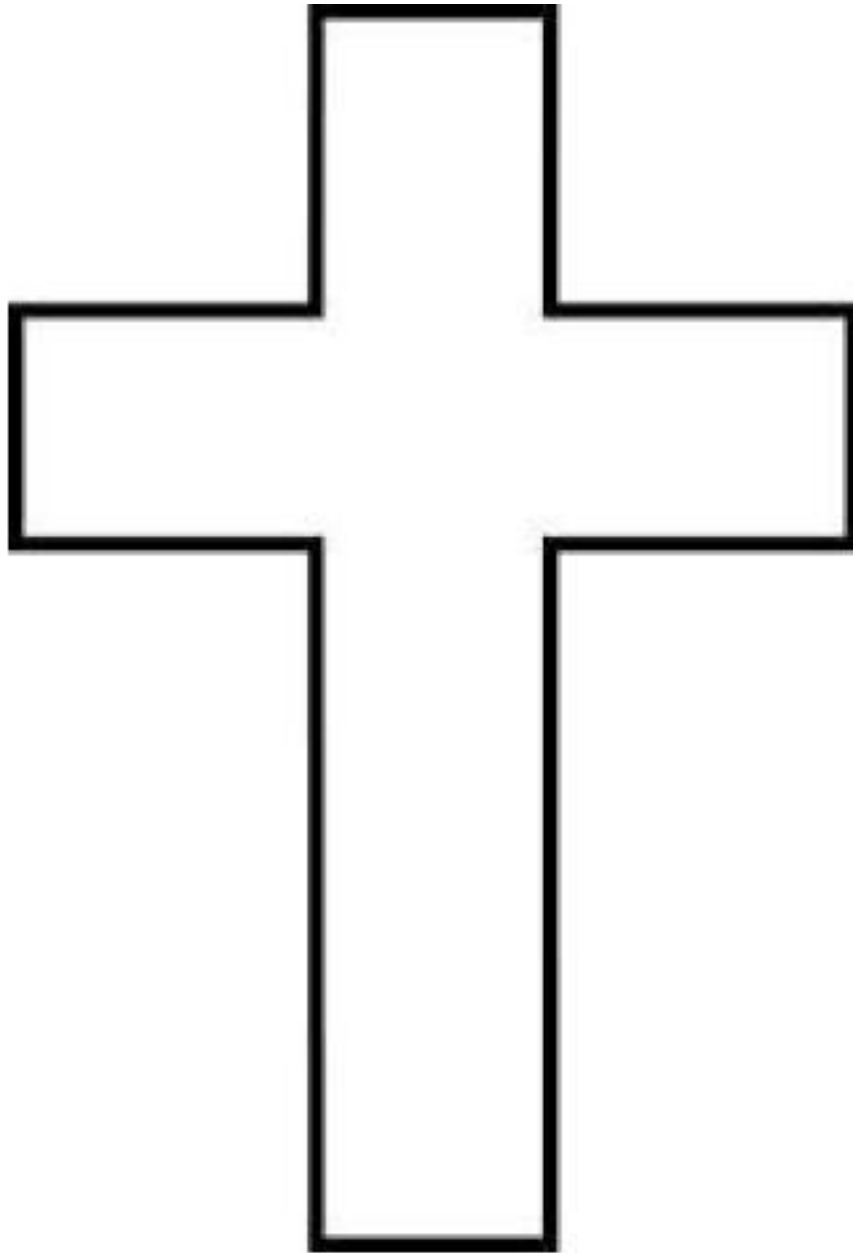
**Leader:** God, our strength and hope, you heal the hurting and the broken-hearted, bless us and those for whom we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All:** **Amen**

The children re-join the assembly before the prayers over the gifts.

# *Passion (Palm) Sunday, Year A*

5-7 year olds

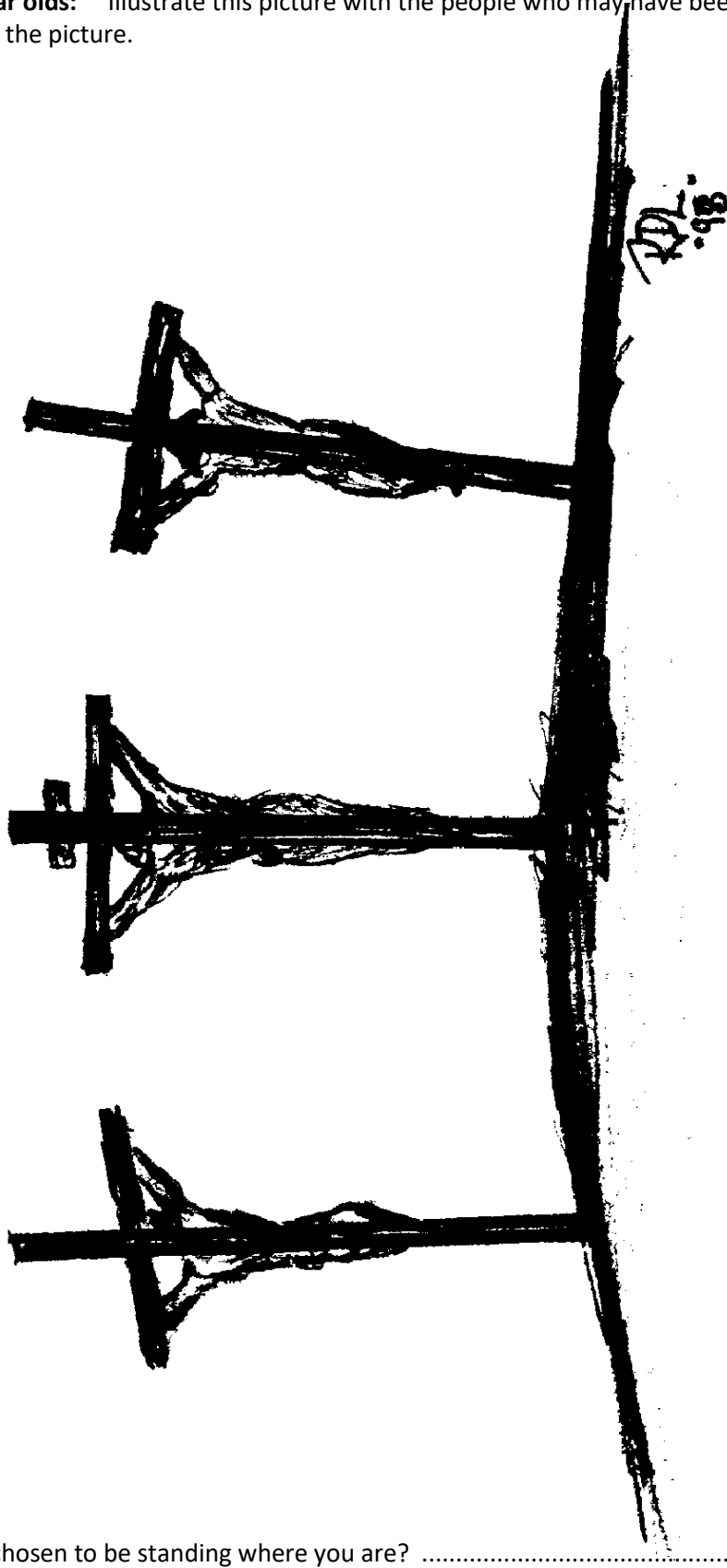


Thank you Jesus for loving us so much.  
Help us to show our love for you  
by the way we live our lives.

Write a promise of something kind you will do to show your love for Jesus.



**8 to 12 year olds:** Illustrate this picture with the people who may have been there that day. Draw yourself in the picture.



Why have you chosen to be standing where you are? .....

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What are you thinking? .....

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