

■ Palm Sunday (Year A)

Palm Procession - *Matthew 21.4-11*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to Matthew.
The disciples brought the donkey and the foal to Jesus,
as Jesus had instructed them,
and made a saddle from their cloaks,
fulfilling the words
of the prophet Zekariah,
'Your king is coming to you, Jerusalem,
humble, and riding on a donkey,
on the foal of a donkey.'
Many in the crowd
spread their cloaks on the road,
and others cut branches from the trees
and spread those on the road.
The crowds that went in front of him,
and the crowds that followed behind,
shouted out, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes
in the name of the Lord!'
When they entered Jerusalem,
the whole city was in turmoil,
with everyone asking, 'Who is this?'
And the crowds were saying, 'This is
the prophet Jesus,
from Nazareth, in Galilee.'
This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Main Liturgy

First Reading - *Isaiah 50.4-9a*

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.
The Lord God
has taught me wisdom,
so that I may speak
words of comfort
to the weary.
Morning by morning,
the Lord God awakens me,
so that I may learn wisdom
as a servant of the Lord.
When I face
persecution
and violence,
I do not hide my face,
or turn away.
Let my accusers
confront me.
I will set my face
like flint.
For I know
that the Lord God
brings justice,
and I will not
be defeated
or ashamed.
This is the word of the Lord.

Second Reading - *Philippians 2.5-11*

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians.

Let Christ Jesus
be your example.
He did not regard
his equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a servant.
Born in human form,
he humbled himself,
in faithful obedience,
even to death on the cross.
And now, God has highly exalted him,
and has given him the name
that is above every name,
so that
at the name of Jesus,
all shall bow down,
in heaven, on earth, and under the earth,
and declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory
of God the Father.
This is the word of the Lord.

Passion - *Matthew 26.14 - 27.61*

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to Matthew.

Judas Iscariot,
one of the twelve,
went to the chief priests, and said,
'What will you give me
if I betray him to you?'
They paid him
thirty pieces of silver.
And from that moment,
he looked for an opportunity
to betray Jesus to them.

On the first day
of the Passover festival,
the disciples asked Jesus
where they should
make preparations
for the Passover meal.
Jesus told them to go into the city
to a certain man, and say to him,
'The Teacher says, "My time is near;
I will keep the Passover at your house
with my disciples."''
The disciples did
as Jesus had directed them,
and they prepared
the Passover meal.

When it was evening,
Jesus and the twelve
took their places at the table.
While they were eating,
Jesus said, 'Truly, I tell you,
one of you
will betray me.'
The disciples were greatly distressed,
and began to say to him,
one after another, 'Surely, not me, Lord?'
Jesus said, 'One who is
sharing this meal with me
will betray me.
The Son of Man will go,
as it is written.
As for the one who
betrays him,
it would have been better
not to have been born.'
Judas, the betrayer,
said, 'Teacher, am I the one?'
Jesus replied,
'You have said it.'

While they were eating,
Jesus took bread,
and after giving thanks,
he broke it,
and gave it to his disciples,
saying, 'Take, eat;
this is my body.'
Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks,
he gave it
to them,
saying, 'Drink from this cup,
all of you;
for this is my blood
of the covenant,
which is poured out
for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
And I will not
drink
the fruit of the vine
again
until I drink it with you
in my Father's kingdom.'

When they had sung a hymn,
they went out
to the Mount of Olives.
And Jesus said to them,
'You will all fall away
because of me
this night.
As the scripture says,
"I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep
will be scattered."
But after I am raised up,
I will go ahead of you
to Galilee.'

Peter said to Jesus,
'Others may fall away,
but I will not.'
Jesus said to Peter, 'This very night,
before the cock crows,
you will deny me
three times.'
Peter replied, 'Even if I must
die with you,
I will not deny you!'
And all the disciples
said the same.

They went to a place
called Gethsemane.
And Jesus said to his disciples, 'Stay here,
while I go over there
to pray.'
Jesus took with him
Peter, and the brothers James and John.
And he became
sorrowful, and distressed,
saying to them, 'My soul
is consumed with grief, to the point of death.
Stay here, and keep watch.'
And going a little further,
he fell to the ground,
and prayed, 'My Father,
if it is possible,
take this cup from me;
yet not my will,
but yours,
be done.'
Returning to the disciples,
he found them sleeping.
He said to Peter, 'Could you not
watch with me, even one hour?
Stay awake, and pray,
that you may not
have to enter
the time of temptation, testing, and trial;
for the spirit is willing,
but the flesh is weak.'
Again he went away, and prayed, 'My Father,
if this cup cannot pass
unless I drink it,
your will be done.'
And he returned, and again
found them sleeping,
for their eyes were heavy.
So leaving them again,
he went away,
and prayed a third time,
saying the same words.
Then he returned to the disciples,
and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping,
and taking your rest?
The hour has come,
and the Son of Man is betrayed
into the hands of sinners.
Let us be going;
see, my betrayer is at hand.'

While Jesus
was still speaking,
Judas, one of the twelve, arrived,
with a crowd,
with swords and clubs,
from the chief priests,
and the elders of the people.
Judas, the betrayer,
had arranged a signal with them,
saying, 'I will greet him
with a kiss;
then you can arrest him.'
So Judas
now approached Jesus,
saying, 'Greetings, Teacher,'
and kissed him.
Jesus said to Judas, 'My friend, do
what you are
here
to do.'
Then they took hold of Jesus,
and arrested him.

One of the disciples
drew his sword,
and struck
the servant of the high priest,
cutting off
his ear.
But Jesus said,
'Put away your sword;
for all who live
by the sword
will die
by the sword.
I could appeal to my Father,
and he would send
twelve legions
of angels.
But what is written
must be fulfilled,
that it must happen
in this way.'

Then Jesus turned to the crowd,
and said,
'Day after day
I was teaching in the temple,
and you did not arrest me.
And now you come out
with swords and clubs
to arrest me
like an outlaw.
But all this has taken place
that the scriptures
would be fulfilled.'
Then all the disciples
deserted him, and fled.

Those who had arrested Jesus
took him to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest,
where the scribes and the elders had gathered.
Peter followed them
at a distance,
to the courtyard of the high priest,
where he sat with the guards,
to see how this would end.

The chief priests, and the whole council,
were looking for false testimony against Jesus,
so that they could have him
put to death.

But they found none,
even though
many false witnesses
came forward.

Finally, two came forward, who claimed
that Jesus had said
he could destroy
the temple of God,
and rebuild it,
in three days.

The high priest stood up,
and demanded of Jesus, 'How do you respond
to what they are saying?
Have you no answer?'

Jesus remained silent.

Then the high priest said,
'I put you under oath
before the living God.
Tell us now,
whether you are the Messiah,
the Son of God.'

Jesus said to him,
'You have said it.
But I say to you,
that after all this,
you will see
the Son of Man
seated
at the right hand of power,
and returning
on the clouds of heaven.'

Then the high priest
tore at his robes,
and said to the scribes and the elders,
'We need
no more witnesses.

You have heard
his blasphemy.
What is your verdict?'

The scribes and the elders
answered, 'He must die.'

And they spat
in his face,
and struck him.

And some mocked him,
saying, 'If you are a prophet,
tell us who struck you.'

Now Peter was sitting outside,
in the courtyard.
One of the women who worked there
approached Peter,
and said, 'You were with Jesus, from Galilee.'
But Peter denied it,
saying, 'I do not know
what you mean.'
And he moved
to the outer courtyard.
Another woman saw him there, and said,
'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.'
Again Peter denied it, this time with an oath,
saying, 'I do not know the man.'
After a while, those standing there
said to Peter, 'Surely you were with him,
for your accent betrays you.'
Peter began to curse, and again swore,
with an oath, 'I do not know the man.'
At that very moment,
the cock crowed.
And Peter remembered
that Jesus had said to him,
'Before the cock crows,
you will deny me three times.'
And Peter went out,
and wept bitterly.

When morning came,
the chief priests,
and the elders of the people,
again conspired together,
against Jesus,
to bring about his death.
Then they bound Jesus, led him away,
and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

When Judas
saw
that Jesus
was condemned,
he repented,
and brought back
the thirty silver coins
to the chief priests and the elders.
Judas said, 'I have sinned,
by betraying innocent blood.'
The chief priests, and the elders, said,
'What is that to us?
See to it yourself.'
Judas
threw the coins
into the temple.
And he went away
and hanged himself.

Taking the coins,
the chief priests said,
'We cannot put these
into the treasury,
for they are blood money.'
And after discussing this together,
they used them
to buy
The Potter's Field,
as a place
to bury
foreigners.
For this reason,
the place
has been called
The Field of Blood
to this day.
And in this way
the words of the prophet
were fulfilled:
'They took
thirty silver coins,
the price
that had been
set on him,
and gave them
for The Potter's Field,
as the Lord
had directed.'

Now Jesus
stood before Pilate, the governor;
and Pilate asked Jesus, 'Are you
the King of the Jews?'
Jesus replied, 'You have said it.'
Then the chief priests
and the elders
set out their accusations against Jesus.
But Jesus gave no reply.
Pilate said to Jesus, 'Do you not hear
the accusations
they are making against you?'
And still,
Jesus gave no reply.

And a message was sent to Pilate
by his wife:
'Have nothing to do
with this innocent man,
for today I have suffered many things
in a dream, because of him.'

Now at the festival, it was the custom
 of the governor
 to release to the crowd
 a prisoner, of their choosing.
 Pilate was holding a notorious prisoner,
 called Barabbas.
 Pilate asked
 the gathered crowd,
 'Who do you want me to release for you?
 Barabbas?
 Or Jesus, called the Messiah?'
 Pilate recognised
 that it was out of envy
 that the chief priests and the elders
 had arrested Jesus,
 and had brought Jesus to him.
 And now the chief priests and the elders
 persuaded the crowds
 to ask
 for the release of Barabbas,
 and to have
 Jesus
 put to death.
 Pilate asked the crowd again,
 'Which of these two
 shall I release to you?'
 And the crowd
 demanded Barabbas.
 Pilate asked them, 'What then shall I do
 with Jesus, called the Messiah?'
 And the crowd cried out,
 'Crucify him!'
 Pilate asked, 'Why?
 What evil has he done?'
 But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify!'

When Pilate saw that he could do nothing,
 and that a riot was beginning,
 he took water,
 and washed his hands
 in front of the crowd,
 saying, 'I am innocent
 of this man's blood.'
 And the people answered, 'His blood be on us
 and on our children!'
 Pilate released Barabbas for them,
 and had Jesus flogged;
 then handed Jesus over
 to be crucified.

Pilate's soldiers
 took Jesus to the barracks, where
 the whole company of soldiers
 gathered around him.
 They put a red robe on him,
 and twisted some thorns
 into a crown, and put it on his head.
 They put a reed
 in his right hand,
 then knelt before him,
 and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'
 They spat on him,
 and hit him, on the head, with the reed.
 And after they had mocked him,
 they removed the robe from him,
 and led him away
 to crucify him.

As they went out,
 a man from north Africa, called Simon, was there,
 and they made him carry the cross.
 When they came to the place
 called Golgotha, The Place of the Skull,
 they offered Jesus wine to drink,
 mixed with bitter herbs;
 but after tasting it, he would drink no more.
 And when they had crucified him,
 they divided his clothing between them,
 by casting lots.
 Then they sat and kept watch over him.
 Above his head,
 they put the charge against him,
 which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'
 Two thieves
 were crucified with him,
 one on his right, and one on his left.
 Those who passed by
 mocked him,
 shaking their heads,
 and saying, 'You said you could
 destroy the temple,
 and build it in three days -
 so save yourself.

If you are
 the Son of God,
 come down from the cross.'
 The chief priests, the elders,
 and the teachers of the law,
 also mocked him,
 saying, 'He saved others,
 but he cannot save himself.
 If he is the King of Israel,
 let him come down from the cross,
 and we will believe in him.
 He trusts in God;
 he claims to be
 the Son of God;
 let us see
 whether God
 will deliver him now.'
 And those who were crucified with him
 also taunted him.

At midday,
darkness came over the whole land
for three hours.

Then Jesus cried out
with a loud voice,
'My God, my God,
why have you forsaken me?'

Jesus cried out in Aramaic,
addressing God as 'Eli'.

Some of the bystanders
thought he was calling
for Elijah.

One of them
brought a sponge,
filled it with sour wine,
put it on a stick,
and held it up
for Jesus to drink.

But others said, 'Wait,
let us see
whether Elijah
will come to save him.'

Then Jesus
let out
a loud cry
once again,
and yielded up
his spirit.

And the curtain
of the temple sanctuary
was torn in two.

The earth shook,
and rocks
split apart.

Tombs
broke open;
and the bodies of many godly people who had died
were awakened.

After his resurrection,
they came out from their tombs,
and entered the holy city,
and appeared to many.

When the centurion,
and the other soldiers,
guarding Jesus,
saw the earthquake,
and all that had taken place,
they said,
'Truly this was
the Son of God.'

Many women
were also there,
looking on from a distance.

They had followed Jesus
from Galilee,
and had
provided for him.
They included
Mary Magdalene,
Mary the mother of James and Joseph,
and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

When it was evening,
Joseph of Arimathea,
a disciple of Jesus,
went to Pilate,
and asked for the body of Jesus;
and Pilate ordered
that it should be given to him.

So Joseph of Arimathea
took the body of Jesus,
wrapped it
in a clean
linen cloth,
and laid it
in his own
new tomb,
which had been
carved out
from the rock.

He rolled a great stone
across the entrance
of the tomb,
and went away.

And Mary Magdalene,
and the other Mary,
were there,
sitting opposite the tomb.

The Passion of the Lord.