

THE PASSION

March 21st, 2005

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Invite persons present to pause for a few moments of silent recollection and to offer any special intentions.) Jesus is the focal point of our faith. When we enter a Catholic home, school or church, we find a crucifix prominently displayed. This symbol not only centers our attention on Jesus, but reminds us of God's great love for us. As baptized members of Christ's body the Church, we are challenged to enter into the paschal mystery of Jesus and so offer our lives to God in love and dedication.

As we enter Holy Week, this Sunday's gospel reading of the Passion echoes in our ears. How do we enter into this story? As we look at the present state of our life, which character do we identify with the most?

Narrator: One of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said,

Judas (All): What will you give me if I betray him to you?

Jesus: Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.

Disciples (All): Surely not I, Lord?

Jesus: You will all become deserters because of me this night.

Peter (All): Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you.

Jesus: Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.

Peter (All): Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.

Narrator: Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane ... Judas, one of the twelve, arrived
At once he came up to Jesus and said,

Judas (All): Greetings, Rabbi!

Narrator: and kissed him. Jesus said to him,

Jesus: Friend, do what you are here to do.

Bystander: Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.

Narrator: Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath,

Peter (All): I do not know the man!

Narrator: At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said ... and he went out and wept bitterly.

High Priest: He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?

Elders (All): *He deserves death.*

Pilate: Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?

Crowd (All): *Let him be crucified!*

Pilate: Why, what evil has he done?

Crowd (All): *Let him be crucified!*

Pilate: I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.

Narrator: Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying,

Crowd (All): *You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

Jesus: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Narrator: Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

Centurion (All): *Truly this man was God's Son!*

Leader: As we contemplate the suffering and death of Jesus during these next six days, let our understanding of his ultimate sacrifice deepen.

All: Lord Jesus, may our lives reflect your obedience and love so that we may enter fully into the mystery of your glorious resurrection. Amen.