

**WEEK:**

Palm Sunday (April 5, 2020)

**THEME:**

The Way of the Cross

**MASS READINGS:****FIRST READING:**

Isaiah 50:4-7

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM:**

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

**SECOND READING:**

Philippians 2:6-11

**GOSPEL:**

Matthew 26:14-27:66 or  
27:11-54

**KEY WORDS:**

Conviction, Sacrifice, Fulfillment, Execution, Abandon, Institution

**KEY THEMES:**

1. The Kingdom rarely comes in the manner or form we are expecting.
2. In Christianity, death precedes true life.
3. Surrender is ongoing, it usually occurs in stages rather than all at once.
4. Christ does what we cannot. He came to us to get us to Him; He was born to die.

**THE ASCENT****Welcome and Introduction (5 min)**

Welcome all of the teens to the discipleship group and invite them to share one “high point” and one “low point” from their week. If there are new teens, invite them to introduce themselves.

**A Witness (10 min)**

In lieu of a traditional gather game, utilize this time to really dive into and encounter the Gospel reading with the teens. Use the following to set up the context of the Gospel:

*Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Picture yourself in a large crowd with the following scene before you: two men on trial — one, a peace-filled teacher, one, a convicted criminal. The judge yells out, “Who would you want me to release?” Many are arguing about who is more deserving of release, but the outstanding cry is “release the criminal.” You know this criminal to be guilty and the teacher to be good and holy, but doubt starts to creep in. Do you join the crowd, or do you remain silent?*

Give the teens a few moments to make this decision in silence and then transition into a discussion about the choice they made.

**LECTIO****Opening Prayer**

Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice. We are imperfect, yet you continue to love us every day. Instill in us an authentic appreciation for the love you have shown us through your death on the cross. Help us love one another as you have loved us. May we, with the help of your grace, always choose love over hate. Amen.

**Our Voice (10 min)**

Use the following questions to prepare the group for the topic of the session:

- What did you experience when you had to decide if you were going to yell out to release the criminal?
- Do people ever do or say something just because it is the “popular opinion”? Why? Is there a specific example of this you see in our culture?

### **Reflection: The Way of the Cross (5 min)**

Play the *Summit* reflection video, “Palm Sunday,” found online at [lifeteen.com](http://lifeteen.com). The video can also be found on the Life Teen YouTube channel under the Summit Teaching Videos playlist. Use this video to provide a thematic overview to the session before entering into God’s Word.

### **God’s Voice (10 min)**

Read Matthew 27:11-54 aloud and then invite a teen to read the passage aloud. Encourage the teens to actively listen. After the second read-through, invite the teens to open their Bibles and silently read the passage a third time. Allow time to pause and reflect between read-throughs.

## **MEDITATIO**

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### **Reflecting on God’s Voice (10 min)**

Invite the teens to take a few minutes to silently reflect and journal on the following questions:

- Have you ever been accused of something you did not do, or have you ever accused someone of something they did not do? What happened? How did it make you feel when you realized the truth?
- Although Jesus was innocent of the crime He was convicted of, He still chose to die for us — for you, specifically. What does that say about Jesus and His love for you?

## **ORATIO**

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### **Discussing God’s Voice (30 min)**

Following the silent reflection, guide the teens in a time of discussion. The following questions are a great starting

point for the discussion, but be open to where the Holy Spirit may guide it:

- What do you think was going through Jesus’ mind as He made the long, grueling walk to His death? How do you think He felt?
- What kind of mockery did Jesus encounter as He carried His cross to Calvary? Why did people mock Him?
- Have you seen or experienced this same kind of mockery in your life? How did you respond? Why do people resort to this behavior?
- Is there anything that makes you uncomfortable about this Gospel proclamation? Why?
- Is it difficult for people to accept this ultimate act of love as an act Jesus did specifically for them? Why or why not? What holds people (perhaps you) back from accepting this truth?

## **CONTEMPLATIO**

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### **Worthy of His Love (10 min)**

Read the following quote (attributed to St. Augustine of Hippo) aloud: “If you were the only person on Earth, Christ would have still suffered and died for you.” Then, have the teens journal about the fact that Jesus chose to die specifically for them. Have them write down any ways that they struggle to believe this fact. Once they have reflected on these struggles, have them write a prayer of thanksgiving, thanking Jesus for His sacrifice. Invite the teens to share their prayers with the group.

### **Closing Challenge**

Encourage the teens to experience the fullness of Easter by making it a goal to participate in all of the Triduum celebrations: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.