

## ***Palm Sunday: Dramatic Reading***

*Introduce the crowd leader to the congregation and the concept of the congregation vigorously repeating his lines three times. The congregation needs to understand their part: they repeat the lines of the rabble-rouser three times ... with feeling. Get a good enthusiastic crowd leader who has the spirit of an agitator. The crowd leader prowls in front of the congregation in order to stir them up. Members of the congregation do not have scripts but repeat the words and passion of the rabble-rouser.*

**NARRATOR:** The Roman soldiers with their commanding officer and the Jewish guards arrested Jesus, tied him up, and took him first to Annas. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was High Priest that year. Annas questioned Jesus and Jesus answered,

**JESUS:** "I have always spoken publicly to everyone; all my teaching was done in the synagogues and in the Temple, where all the people come together. I have never said anything in secret. Why, then, do you question me? Question the people who heard me. Ask them what I told them -- they know what I said."

**NARRATOR:** When Jesus said this, one of the guards slapped him and said,

**GUARD:** "How dare you talk like that to the High Priest?"

**JESUS:** "If I have said anything wrong, tell everyone here what it was. But if I am right in what I have said, why do you hit me?"

**NARRATOR:** Then Annas sent him, still tied up, to Caiaphas the High Priest where all the chief priests, the elders, and the teachers of the Law were gathering. Peter followed from a distance and went into the courtyard of the High Priest's house. There he sat down with the guards, keeping himself warm by the fire. The chief priests and the whole Council tried to find some evidence against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they could not find any. Many witnesses told lies against Jesus, but their stories did not agree. Then some men stood up and told this lie against Jesus,

**SOME MEN:** "We heard him say, 'I will tear down this Temple which men have made, and after three days, I will build one that is not made by men.'"

**NARRATOR:** Not even they, however, could make their stories agree. Caiaphas the High Priest stood up in front of them all and questioned Jesus.

**HIGH PRIEST:** "Have you no answer to the accusation they bring against you?"

**NARRATOR:** But Jesus kept quiet and would not say a word. Again, the High Priest questioned him,

**HIGH PRIEST:** "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed God?"

**JESUS:** "I am, and you will all see the Son of Man seated at the right side of the Almighty and coming with the clouds of heaven!"

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**NARRATOR:** The High Priest tore his robes and said,

**HIGH PRIEST:** "We don't need any more witnesses! You heard his blasphemy. People, what is your decision?"

**CROWD LEADER (Matt):** Guilty! (shouting at the top of his lungs)

**CROWD:** Guilty. Guilty. Guilty. (shouting their responses, and imitating the crowd leader)

**NARRATOR:** Some of them began to spit on Jesus, and they blindfolded him, hit him, and taunted him, saying:

**CROWD LEADER:** "Guess who hit you?" (in a cadence)

**CROWD:** "Guess who hit you?" "Guess who hit you?" "Guess who hit you?"

**NARRATOR:** And the guards took him and slapped him. Early in the morning the chief priests met hurriedly with the elders, the teachers of the Law, and the whole Council, and made their plans. They put Jesus in chains, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. And the crowd began,

**CROWD LEADER:** He's no king!

**CROWD:** He's no king! He's no king! He's no king!

**PILATE:** "Are you King of the Jews?"

**JESUS:** "You have said so"

**NARRATOR:** And Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds,

**PILATE:** "I find no crime in this man."

**NARRATOR:** But the crowds were urgent saying,

**CROWD LEADER:** Trouble maker

**CROWD:** Trouble maker Trouble maker Trouble maker

**NARRATOR:** When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was from Galilee. And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign or miracle done by him. So he questioned him at some length; but he made no answer.

The chief priests and religious leaders stood by, angrily accusing him. And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; and dressed him in a scarlet robe, before sending him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been arguing with each other. Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them,

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**PILATE:** "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him; neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Nothing deserving death has been done by him; I will therefore whip him and release him."

**NARRATOR:** But the crowd all cried out together:

**CROWD LEADER:** Give us Barabbas! (chants)

**CROWD:** "Give us Barabbas! Give us Barabbas! Give us Barabbas!"

**NARRATOR:** Barabbas was a man who had been thrown into prison for starting a riot and committing murder. Pilate addressed them once more, wanting to release Jesus; but the crowd shouted out:

**CROWD LEADER:** Crucify him!

**CROWD:** "Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!"

**NARRATOR:** A third time he said to them,

**PILATE:** "Why.... why ....what evil has he done? I have found in him no crime deserving death; I will have him whipped and release him."

**NARRATOR:** But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries:

**CROWD LEADER:** Crucify!

**CROWD:** "Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!"

**NARRATOR:** And their voices carried on. So Pilate gave sentence that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for rioting and murder, whom they asked for; but Jesus he gave over to the crowds demand. And as they led him away, they stopped a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed him a great crowd of people, and of women who wailed in grief.

Two others, also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. And Jesus said,

**JESUS:** "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

**NARRATOR:** And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching; but the rulers teased him saying,

**CROWD LEADER:** Save yourself!

**CROWD:** Save yourself! Save yourself! Save yourself!

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**NARRATOR:** The soldiers also mocked him coming up and offering him vinegar, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." One of the criminals who was hanged taunted him, saying,

**CRIMINAL:** "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

**NARRATOR:** But the other shouted back, saying,

**OTHER CRIMINAL:** "Do you not fear God? You and I are under the same condemnation! And rightly so; we are receiving what we deserve; but this man has done nothing wrong."

**NARRATOR:** And that criminal said,

**OTHER CRIMINAL:** "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power."

**JESUS:** "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

**NARRATOR:** It was now about 12 o'clock noon, and there was darkness over the whole land until 3 o'clock, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said,

**JESUS:** "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!"

**NARRATOR:** And having said this, he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said,

**CENTURION:** "Certainly, this man was innocent!"

**NARRATOR:** And the crowd which had gathered to see the sight of Jesus' execution, when they saw what had taken place, returned home quietly and sadly. And all his friends and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.

### *Silence*

Now most of you will know that this is not the end of the story, because 3 days later God raised Jesus from the dead he came back to life and that is what we will be celebrating on Easter day. But as we walk towards Easter it is really important that we take time to think about who this Jesus is AND who we are. He was the servant king - God came to earth - God in human clothes to save us and make us friends with God.

Who are we? Are we in the crowd celebrating but surface level, not really getting involved or finding out more and at the slightest thing forgetting what we have heard and seen, or are we like the Pharisees maybe reading the Bible saying and doing all the right things but holding God at arms length and not wanting to give ourselves totally to Him. Or are we like the disciples walking closely with Jesus, still with questions but with hope and trust in our hearts that whatever things seem like now Jesus has the final victory. He has won over death and he will win in our lives too.