



build. plant. grow.  
*the word this week*



lent



lectionary  
reading

## Cycle C

### Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Lectionary #37

#### Reading I: Isaiah 50: 4-7

Today's passage from Isaiah is the third of four poems referred to as the *Servant Songs*. Many scholars believe that the **servant** represents an ideal figure who embodies what is expected of those who are in a covenant with the Lord. The **servant** listens and responds to the Lord and strives to accomplish God's saving purpose. While those devoted to God's **service** will experience rejection, mental and physical abuse, and sometimes even death, they are given God's words and skills to proclaim God's message to everyone. Even in the midst of abuse, the **servant** never moves from total trust in God, who has given the mission of salvation, because they know that they will ultimately enjoy divine recognition.

#### Reading 2: Philippians 2: 6-11

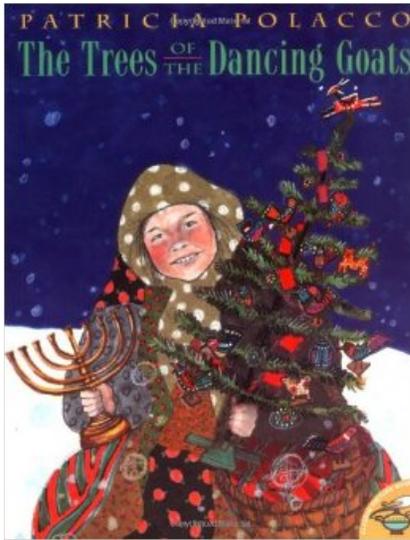
This passage is actually considered to be a hymn that existed before this passage from the Philippians. It is an expression of the mystery of Christ and his role as God's **servant**. Saint Paul includes this in his letter to the Philippians while he is imprisoned for his **service** to Jesus and the Church. The passage encourages the Philippians and us to see Jesus as the model of **service**. Saint Paul is clear that this means *emptying ourselves* so that we may take on the person of Christ and imitate him in our lives of **service**.

#### Gospel: Luke 22: 14- 23: 56

Today's passage from Saint Luke, like most of Saint Luke's Gospel, presents Jesus as the sacrificial offering. This Gospel was written at a time when the majority of Christians were previously Gentiles, and the Church needed to understand Christ in ways that supported their present and future lives as disciples. During the final meal that Jesus shares with his apostles, he tells them that their leadership of the Church should be that of **servant** leadership. He defines their roles as totally different from what they have seen and experienced, saying: *Let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant.*



children's  
story



### *The Trees of the Dancing Goats*

Written by Patricia Polacco

Illustrated by Patricia Polacco

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character  
education  
activity

**A sacrifice to be real must cost, must hurt, must empty ourselves. The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace.**  
-Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta

## *The Trees of the Dancing Goats*

Trisha loves the eight days of Hanukkah when her mom stays home from work, her Babushka (grandma) makes delicious potato latkes, and her Grandpa carves wonderful animals out of wood as gifts for Trisha and her brother. In the middle of her family's preparation for the Festival of Light, Trisha visits her closest neighbors, expecting to find them decorating their homes for Christmas. Instead, they are all bedridden with scarlet fever. Although Trisha's family is spared from the epidemic, they find it hard to enjoy their Hanukkah feast when they know that their neighbors won't be able to celebrate their holiday. Then Grandpa has an inspiration: they will cut down trees, decorate them and secretly deliver them to their neighbors! *But what will we decorate them with?* Babushka asks. Although it is a sacrifice, Trisha realizes that Grandpa's carved animals are the perfect decorations. Soon, her living room is filled with trees, but that is just the beginning of the miracles. **Service**, sacrifice, and true friendship are the dominant themes of this wonderful story.

## **Palm Leaf Cross**

Step One: Explain to the students that the Cross has always been a symbol of Christ's sacrifice for all of humanity and that we often see crosses all around us: on the top of churches and some schools, worn around people's necks, on rosaries, and other places. Tell the students that today we will be making a cross out of the palm leaves that are used for the celebration of Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.

Step Two: Provide the following materials for each student:

- Palm leaf strips about 24 inches long and 1/2 inch wide
- Download the directions for making the cross by going to [www.sundayschoolnetwork.com/palm.html](http://www.sundayschoolnetwork.com/palm.html)

Step Three: Invite the students to talk about the effort that it took them to make their crosses. Reflect with them about how being attentive to the creation of one's cross takes effort and time, similar to carrying our own crosses in life.

**Above all the grace and gifts that Christ gives to his beloved is that of overcoming self.  
-Saint Francis of Assisi**



**case study**

**Look.  
Feel.  
Know.  
Act.**

## **What could you do today?**

Think about some of the things (**services**) that you might be able to do at home or in your neighborhood that would involve some sacrifice on your part. Make a list of those things and share them with your parents. Ask them for their advice as to whether what you have chosen to do is something you are capable of carrying out. In some cases, it might be a good idea to find a **service** that you can do together as a family.

## **Look Feel Know Act**

Choose an individual from history or someone from the present day who is well-known. Look at the many ways that they achieved recognition because of some sacrifice and **service** they have been involved in. You may need to ask your parents or teacher to help you identify someone; once you have done this, read about them and notice what they have done to **serve** others and the common good. Pay attention to how they describe their acts of **service** and what they have received through their actions. Undoubtedly, you will see that these people claim to have received much more than they gave, which is usually one of the wonderful things that happens when we involve ourselves in **service**, especially when doing **service** involves making a sacrifice. Spend time thinking about a great **service** that you would like to accomplish in your life and make a list of what things you will need to study and what gifts you have that will help you achieve this good.

The sacrificial giving that is present in the readings for this Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion are essential to helping a child begin to understand the sacrifices that are a part of **serv**ing others. This relationship between sacrifice and service is illustrated through the actions of Trisha and her family in the story of *The Trees of the Dancing Goats*. Reflecting on this story provides a great opportunity to help students see the great importance of appreciating and celebrating the religious traditions of others and how helping others allows us to grow and experience the true gifts of life: relationships with and among others.

*(Invite the students to place the palm leaf cross on their desk as they say this prayer before the cross.)*

**Lord God, I place the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, before me as the greatest symbol of faith, hope, and love. Help me to always know that you are with me in the midst of any difficulty I may experience in life. I pray that I may always have the courage to help others with their crosses and to ask for help in carrying my own cross. I trust that you are with me in every cross that I encounter. Amen.**



**closing  
tool**



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