

## **Palm Sunday Dramatic Narration**

**Adapted from Matthew 26:14-27:60 (NRSV) by McKennon Shea**

*(Start by standing in front clinking coins together.)*

Judas went to the chief priests and said to them, “What can you offer me in return for betraying Jesus to you?” The chief priests gave him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on Judas began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

*(Move to behind the altar)*

That evening, Jesus was with his disciples, and while they were eating he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples became distressed and began asking Jesus, “Surely not I, Lord!” Jesus answered, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.” Judas said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” He replied, “You have said so.”

*(Lift up bread)*

Then, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, gave it to his disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

*(Lift up cup, place back front and center of altar)*

When the supper was over, he took the cup, blessed it, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Following dinner, they sang a hymn, then went out to the Mount of Olives.

*(Move to steps in front of the altar)*

Jesus then said to them, “You will all become deserters because of me this night.”

Peter said to him, “Even if everyone else becomes deserters because of you, I will never desert you.”

Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.”

Peter said to him, “Even though I must die with you, I will never deny you.”

*(At steps in front of the altar)*

Then Jesus went with the disciples to Gethsemane, and told his disciples, “Stay here while I go over there to pray.”

He took Peter, and James and John with him and he told them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; stay here with me, and do not fall asleep.”

*(Move to kneel in center. Fix gaze on cup which is prominent on front of altar. Lots of emotion in this prayer.)*

Jesus went on further, and threw himself to the ground and prayed, “My Father if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”

*(Move back to left side to speak to disciples)*

He then came back to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

*(Walk out among the crowd)*

While he was speaking, Judas arrived, and with him was a large crowd carrying swords and clubs, all sent by the chief priests and the elders. Judas walked up to Jesus, greeted him saying “Greetings Rabbi!” and kissed him on the cheek, letting the crowd know whom to arrest.

Jesus replied, “Friend *(pause)*, do what you are here to do.”

Then the crowd came and arrested Jesus. Suddenly, one of Jesus’ disciples drew his sword, swung it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

*(Pick up sword, swing it up. Slowly lower it.)*

Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.”

Jesus then said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit?”

Then his disciples deserted him.

*(Walk slowly backwards, place sword on rail. Proceed up to pulpit.)*

Jesus was led up to Caiaphas the high priest, where all the scribes and elders had gathered. They were all looking for false testimony against Jesus so they might put him to death, and a man came forward saying, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days!’” All looked to Jesus for a response, but he remained silent. The high priest said, “I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God!”

Jesus said, “You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

The high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy! What is your verdict?"

All who were present shouted, "He deserves death!"

*(Lift up cloth and rip it down, repeating "He...deserves...death." Drape it over the pulpit. Walk towards lectern for Peter section.)*

*(For Peter section, point out people in congregation. Then walk slowly backwards at "Then Peter remembered..." toward the altar steps.)*

During this time, Peter had been observing from the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean!" But Peter denied this saying, "I do not know what you are talking about!" When he went outside the courtyard, another servant saw him and said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth!" Again Peter denied this saying, "I do not know the man." A little later, others came up to Peter and said, "Certainly you are one of them, for your accent betrays you!" Peter cursed them and swore, "No! No! No!" At that moment, the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said, "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

*(Take coins from altar, speak from center.)*

The next morning, Jesus was handed over to Pilate the governor. When Judas heard of this, he repented and brought the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They responded, "What is that to us. See to it yourself." Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself.

*(Take the silver coins in hand while talking, then when finished, drop them in cascade on the steps. Walk down to floor and bury face in hands. Speak next section from front center.)*

Now Jesus stood before Pilate, and Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" To this he replied, "You say so," but to the accusations of the chief priests and elders, he remained completely silent. This silence amazed the governor.

*(Have chain in hand, hold it up for noise during the crowd's shouts.)*

Now it was customary during this time of the year for the governor to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone they wanted. At this time, there was a notorious prisoner named Barabbas there, and Pilate asked the crowd, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

The crowd cried out, "Barabbas!"

Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

The crowd cried out, "Let him be crucified!"

Pilate responded, "Why? What evil has he done?" But the crowd shouted even more, "Let him be crucified!"

*(Move behind altar. Have bowl of water. Lift and let water slowly drop from "He took...see to it yourselves.")*

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, and that a riot was forming, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood, see to it yourselves." Then the crowd responded by crying out, "His blood be on us and on our children!" And Pilate released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

*(Have crown of thorns, place on head when that part is spoken.)*

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus, stripped him of his clothes, placed on him a scarlet robe. They twisted thorns to form a crown and placed it upon his head. As they beat him and spat on him they shouted, "Hail, King of the Jews!" When they had finished, they gave him back his clothes, placed a wooden cross upon his shoulders, and led him up to be crucified.

*(Place crown of thorns on altar. Lift up cup from altar.)*

When they came to Golgotha, they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And there they crucified Jesus, and placed a sign above his head that read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

*(Place cup inside of thorns on altar. Speak with back to congregation.)*

From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness covered the land.

*(Lay prostrate on ground with arms out. Speak from that position.)*

About three, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" Which means, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

*(Hold up cloth, tear during "from top to bottom.")*

At that moment the earth shook and the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

*(Speak from front center.)*

After seeing this, the centurion keeping watch over Jesus and those with him were terrified, and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

*(Walk down from altar, and speak from ground level.)*

When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.

*(As soon as last word is spoken, two helpers will come forward, wrap me in a sheet, carry me into the crypt, and slam the door.)*