

Jesus' Final Days

Catechist Background Information

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Roughly half of the Gospel of Mark is devoted to the last week of Jesus' life. There is increasing tension between Jesus and the religious authorities in the days leading up to his death. Jesus enters Jerusalem in an effort to share his message with the people of the Jews' spiritual capital. He enters the city riding a colt. The inhabitants of Jerusalem lay their cloaks on the ground and wave palm branches, cheering loudly as if honoring a military hero. As the Pharisees look on with much concern, they become incensed by the outpouring of support Jesus receives. They even ask Jesus to silence the chanting crowd.

In the garden at Gethsemane, Jesus confides in Peter, James, and John that he is filled with anxiety. Jesus cries out to his Father to remove his suffering yet affirms his commitment to the will of God by his words: "Yet not what I want, but what you want" (Mk 14:36). The humanity of Jesus is never made more apparent than at this very moment. How disappointed Jesus must be when he asks the disciples to remain awake with him in his hour of need and he finds them asleep.

Courage in Christ requires a spiritual vigilance that Jesus' friends cannot muster that night in the garden. Courageous Catholics ask Jesus to nourish them through the Eucharist, prayer, and supportive friendships.

The original ending of Mark has only one story about the women finding Jesus' empty tomb. (A longer ending of the Gospel has several added stories about Jesus appearing to the disciples.)

Jesus' Predictions about His Death in the Gospel of Mark

- o Mk 8: 31-33 The First Prediction of the Passion
- o Mk 9: 30-32 The Second Prediction of the Passion
- o Mk 10: 32-34 The Third Prediction of the Passion

Questions:

- o Where was Jesus at the time of the prediction?
- o Who was with Jesus and to whom was he speaking?
- o Does Jesus also predict his resurrection?
- o How did they feel about what he said, and how did they respond?

Jesus, Person of Courage, in the Gospel of Mark

- o Mk 11: 1-11 Triumphant entry into Jerusalem
- o Mk 14: 32-52 Gethsemane (The Agony in the Garden)
- o Mk 14: 53-65 Jesus before the Council
- o Mk 14: 66-72 Peter's Denial
- o Mk 15: 6-15 Sentenced to Death

Jesus and his Suffering in the Gospel of Mark

- o Mk 15: 16-20 Jesus Is Whipped
- o Mk 15: 21 Simon of Cyrene
- o Mk 15: 22-27 Jesus Is Crucified
- o Mk 15: 29-32 Jesus Is Taunted
- o Mk 15: 33-41 Jesus Dies on the Cross
- o Mk 15: 42-47 Burial