

- Philippians 2:5-11 is a fragment of one of the earliest Christian hymns. Where do you see the extremes of “exploitation” and “emptying” at work in your life – misusing the Earth or other people? Hoarding wealth or talent? What would you like to “empty” from yourself this week? Where and how might you offer humble service?

- Bring Holy Week into your home. Decorate your entryway with fresh greens on Sunday through Wednesday of this week. On Thursday, set the table with your best linen, candles, and an extra place setting for Jesus. Hang a mourning wreath or put a black bow on your front door on Friday and Saturday to indicate that yours is a house of grief and loss. Sunday, before dawn, put out a pot of spring flowers or change the wreath to a floral wreath. Light candles at the breakfast table.

- What particular aspects of the Passion narrative touch you most deeply this year? Imagine yourself as part of the story, make a drawing, or write a prayer or psalm about that part of the passage.

## Lent 6: Tree

### Matthew 26:14—27:66

Additional passages:

Matthew 21:1-11; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11

*I am not afraid of the pen, or the scaffold, or the sword.*

*I will tell the truth wherever I please.*

– Mary Harris “Mother” Jones

### Gather & Center

Prepare the worship table, covering the purple drape with a translucent black cloth. Fill the bowl with dead twigs. Around the bowl, you might arrange wilted branches, reminiscent of the palms lying by the roadside. When everyone is gathered, light the candle and start the Lent 6 segment of the video, praying together the following hymn text by Honorius Fortunatus. Pause as directed or whenever you wish to take time for discussion.

Since the first tree brought earth sorrow,  
grieving God then chose the way:  
chose the tree to bear the Savior,  
chose the manger poor to lay;  
thus the plan of our salvation:  
God for all our sin would pay.

### Enter & Engage

Matthew 26:14—27:66 is a lengthy passage. Rather than reading it in its entirety, follow the suggestions on the video and read it section by section. Pause the video for discussion as you wish.

## Ask Yourself

Use these questions and suggestions to invite discussion, prayer, and reflection.

1. *The Last Week* by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan helps us see the crowds in Matthew 21:1-11 from a fresh perspective. If you are looking for a book to accompany you through Holy Week, consider this one.
2. Read Isaiah 50:4-9a. God is always providing prophets to the nations. Who do you think might be prophet-teachers in this time and place? Who is speaking uncomfortable prophetic words to our generation? Who is listening? How do you judge the validity of a prophetic word you hear?
3. Read Matthew 27:3-10. Have you ever done something in anger or fear or even with the best intentions, only to have it turn into a disaster? How did you feel? How did you recover from the experience? Would you do things differently if you could do it over? Why or why not?

4. In Matthew 26:36-46 Jesus brings his disciples with him to keep company while he awaits arrest. If you were facing a time of similar anxiety, who did you want beside you as the event drew near? Who would support you? Who might need to cope by going away or falling asleep? Has someone else ever depended on you? What are your thoughts and feelings about any of those times in light of this passage?

## Ponder & Pray

Gather near the worship table. Take a twig and think about a death you have experienced – the death of a person or a relationship; an opportunity, dream, or skill. Allow time for sharing. Spend a moment in silence as you prepare to take leave of the image *Judas' Betrayal*. Then pray in unison the following hymn verse, written by Honorius Fortunatus:

Faithful cross, thou sign of triumph,  
now for us the noblest tree,  
none in foliage, none in blossom,  
none in fruit thy peer may be;  
symbol of the world's redemption,  
for the weight that hung on thee.

## Another Step

Spend some time this week sitting attentively with *Judas' Betrayal* as guide and companion. Read the lections assigned for this Passion Sunday (see p. 1).