

**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

**DAY ONE**  
**Read Matthew 21:1-9**



The exact site of the biblical village of Bethphage is unknown, but the early Christian tradition places it near Bethany on the Mount of Olives, near a site where today there is a Franciscan church and residences for some sixty Arab-Christian families. The mural above is from the Church of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives.

1. Jesus and the disciples were in Bethany before they journeyed to Jerusalem. Over the centuries, the Mount of Olives has had deep prophetic meaning to both Christians and Jews: To better understand the significance of the way Jesus entered Jerusalem, record one of the following prophecies:

## Ezekiel 11:23

### Zechariah 14:4 (first phrase)

2. As they drew near to Jerusalem, Jesus asked two of the disciples to go into the village of Bethphage. Complete Jesus' request of two of the disciples and note anything you find unusual about it. (verses 1-3)

Immediately you will find an ass tethered, and a colt with her

And if anyone should say anything to you, reply,

3. Matthew tells us that this happened to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9-10 (verse 5). What do you see as the symbolism of Jesus arriving on a donkey rather than a horse?

**NOTE:** Easter week begins on Palm Sunday, the day we celebrate Jesus' joyful entry into Jerusalem. Today's passage (Matthew 21) doesn't mention palms, and parishes in many countries will use branches from their own native trees: willow, for example, or olive. What matters is that they were treating Jesus like a king, who in Mediterranean countries would be welcomed by the waving of palms or branches.

4. As they entered the city there were great crowds who spread their cloaks or palms on the road, crying out "Hosanna to the Son of David..." (verse 9) Look up "hosanna" and record two different definitions. Which of these definitions describes the way you pray the Sanctus during Mass?

5. CONNECTION: When we pray as a community at Mass, our words mean even more as we speak with one voice to God. That's why the words we pray at Mass are chosen with such care and purpose. *Hosanna* is one of those words. We sing *hosanna* each Mass as part of the 'holy, holy, holy' prayer, when we ask Jesus to come and renew us once more in the New Covenant of his Body and Blood. In short, we say *hosanna* because God has answered our one-word prayer with a One Word answer: Jesus. (*Fr. Dominic Buckley, Diocese of Orlando*) Write a prayer using either meaning of hosanna.

## **DAY TWO**

### **Read Matthew 21:10-17**

**NOTE:** Coming down from the Mount of Olives, Jesus probably entered the city through its eastern gate, called the Golden Gate, fulfilling Ezekiel's mystical vision of the new temple: "Then [the angel] brought me to the gate, the gate facing east."

**And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east” (Ezekiel 43:1) ... Closed by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1541, it has remained closed for over four centuries. *Sr. Jane Astell, Notre Dame Magazine, “Entering Jerusalem from the East”***

6. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem must have been extraordinary, as the whole city was shaken, as if by an earthquake. (*Martin*) The crowd asked each other, “Who is this?” How did they describe Jesus and what does this indicate to you? (verse 11)

7. Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all those engaged in buying and selling. He overturned tables and seats and said, “It is written ‘My house shall be a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of thieves.’” (verse 13) Read and record the prophecy in Isaiah 56:7.

**NOTE: Sacrifice was an integral aspect of the Jewish religion of Jesus’ time, and included offerings of foods, or animals, only at the Temple in Jerusalem. The temple area was huge (approximately 35 acres, of which about 25 acres was the Court of the Gentiles, where the commerce was taking place). Sacrifices were offered on an altar in front of the Temple. We can surmise that his action was a limited and symbolic disruption of commerce rather than a complete purging of all selling and buying in the entire Temple area. *Martin***

8. In verses 14-15 Matthew describes a scene pertinent to this gospel: After Jesus cleansed the temple, he healed the blind and lame and the children in the temple area cried out, “Hosanna, to the Son of David.” Why do you think the children’s reaction was exultant while the Jewish leaders’ reaction was indignant?

9. The chief priests and scribes indignantly asked, “Do you hear what they are saying?” What was Jesus’ response (from Psalms 8:2-3) in verse 16 and what did he do next? (verse 17)

10. CONNECTION: Consider Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem, as well as how his actions would have upset the Jewish leadership. God’s plan was for Jesus to enter Jerusalem in Passover week in this triumphant way, coming through the “Golden Gate” rather than arriving quietly. Knowing how this week will end for Jesus, in what way does his triumphant entry add to your understanding of his true kingship?

Read and record Revelation 19:16 and let these thoughts lead you into prayer.

### DAY THREE

Read Matthew 21:18-27

**NOTE:** The next day Jesus returned to Jerusalem and is hungry. He sees a fig tree and approaches it, but it is barren of fruit. The fig harvest in Palestine is in the Fall, and it was near Passover, a springtime feast.

11. As our Commentary notes (pages 106-7) fruitful figs and vines are a symbol of peace and prosperity, but this tree had only leaves. From your reading of verses 18-20, briefly summarize Jesus' encounter with the fig tree.

12. In verses 21-22 we read that the apostles were amazed, not because Jesus cursed the fig tree, but that it withered instantly. Jesus used this encounter as a teaching moment regarding praying with faith. What is the message of this incident for you?

13. Jesus returned to the Temple where the chief priests and elders asked by what authority he was doing "those things" as well as who gave him the authority (verse 23). He said he would answer them if they could answer one question. Complete his question and their confusion from verse 25:

Where was John's baptism from?

They discussed this among themselves and said,

But if we say, 'Of human origin,'

14. Instead of the chief priests and elders trapping Jesus, they were themselves trapped. According to verse 27, what happened?

15. CONNECTION: We too may differ with colleagues, or even friends or family members. A discussion can become heated when sparring with someone who is intent on being right or intent on proving you wrong. As much as we may intend to be loving and patient, emotions may take over. What are some ways to avoid saying something hurtful or saying something you don't really mean?

Read and record Ecclesiastes 7:9 and write a short prayer today asking the Holy Spirit to guide you in moments of conflict.

## DAY FOUR

### Read Matthew 21:28-32

16. The confrontation between Jesus and the chief priests and elders is interrupted by three parables (two in this lesson). Have you ever redirected an argument by bringing up a different topic? If so, share some details, and what may, or may not, have been accomplished by so doing.

17. Jesus then related The Parable of the Two Sons. Briefly summarize the situation as Matthew presents it in verses 28-30.

18. In verse 31 Jesus asked them which son they thought did the father's will, and their answer was "the first." Jesus responded by saying: "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you." (verse 33) What is Christ recognizing in the tax collectors and prostitutes, that he is not seeing in the chief priests and elders who are questioning him?

19. Refer to the Commentary, page 108, and briefly summarize why, in the culture of Jesus' day, the answer to which son did the father's will would not have been simple. Jesus has already called the Jewish leadership hypocrites and this parable shows that one of the sons was as well. How would you have answered Jesus' question and why?

**NOTE: The word hypocrite comes from a Greek word that means "play actor." In Matthew, hypocrite was the designation given (for example) to the scribes or a disciple who is concerned with the faults of another and ignores his own more serious offenses. The Modern Catholic Dictionary offers the following as a Catholic definition of hypocrisy: "A form of lying in which a person pretends to have virtues or moral qualities that are not possessed." Its motive is pride.**

20. CONNECTION: Jesus was directing this parable to religious leaders about their hypocrisy, those who did not practice what they preached. Like the first son, "Those who initially refuse to say yes to Jesus and the will of God can still change their minds." (*Commentary*) How do you see verse 32 as hopeful?

Read and record Jeremiah 29:11 and write a prayer of hope.

## **DAY FIVE**

**Read Matthew 21:33-46**

21. Jesus then shared The Parable of the Tenants. (verses 34-40) He tells the story of a landowner who carefully prepared a vineyard and then leased it to evil tenants who, when vintage time came, sent his servants to collect the harvest. The evil tenants beat or killed the landowner's servants and eventually killed the heir, his son. Identify who you think each of these represent:

The vineyard –

The watchtower –

The landowner –

The servants –

The heir-

The evil tenants –

22. Jesus asked the chief priests and elders what they think the landowner would do. What was their answer and by so doing, in what way did they condemn themselves? (verse 41)

23. Refer to the Commentary, page 109, and briefly note one or two ways in which you think this allegorical parable corresponds to the details of Jesus' passion.

24. In verses 43-46 Jesus speaks directly to the chief priests and Pharisees and tells them that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them and given to others who will produce "fruit." (verse 46) How did the Jewish leadership react?

**NOTE: Verse 44 is in brackets because it is excluded from many manuscripts.**

25. CONNECTION: When Jesus says that the kingdom will be given to those who produce "fruit" he was also speaking to us today, as we too must bear "fruit" for God by making a difference in the world in which we live. Share a way in which you reach out to others, in hope of bearing good fruit.

Write a prayer today asking St. Mother Teresa to help you do “small things with great love” to produce good fruit for God.

#### FINAL QUESTION of the WEEK

*“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes.” Matthew 21:42*

This verse is the foundation of The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study. Describe how Jesus is the foundation in your life.

Read pages 104-109 in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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