

# PASSION PARALLEL

*by Mary Ann Smith*



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# **Passion Parallel**

A colophonic Tenebrae service

by Mary Ann Smith

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**Reader**  
(Pastor or other)

### Colophonic characters:

**Money Bag**

**Club**

**Ring of Keys**

**Basin and Pitcher**

**Scourge**

**Crown of Thorns**

**Coat**

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

In the publishing world, a “colophon” is the publisher’s emblem or trademark. Likewise, this program uses the idea of colophons to express a prop that is so central to the character’s identity that it becomes a trademark of sorts — a “burden” that must be placed at the altar. Each contemporary character’s colophon corresponds to a biblical character.

**Props:** Seven candles in candleholders, placed on or near the altar. There is a larger candle on the altar (the “Christ candle”). The seven colophons are: money bag with coins, club (or a toy sword may be used), ring of keys, basin and pitcher, scourge (whip; may be made of a dowel with leather strips attached with sharp tips of foil affixed to the ends), crown of thorns (may be made of grapevine, available in craft stores), and a coat.

### Hymns:

“Go to Dark Gethsemane,” all verses

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” verses 1 and 2

“Ah, Holy Jesus,” verses 1-2, verses 3-4 (later)

“I Lay My Sins on Jesus,” verse 1

“Deep Were His Wounds,” all verses

“O Sacred Head, Now Wounded,” verses 1-2

“Were You There?” verses 1-3

You will need an accompanist. Either the congregation or your church choir may sing the hymns.

**Staging:** Character carrying his or her colophon “burden” enters as the Scripture passage concludes. As indicated in the script, he or she lays colophon “burden” at the base of the altar or railing, snuffs out a candle, kneels or stands with head bowed until the end of the specified hymn, then leaves.

(Option — All seven persons could remain at the altar railing and leave together, empty-handed, after the last hymn.)

**Lighting Effects:** The sanctuary should be dark, with lights only on the altar and cross, if possible. The candles are lit when the service begins.

1           *(The seven candles and the larger Christ candle are all lit. The*  
 2           *READER is at the pulpit or a lectern.)*

3

4   **HYMN: “Go to Dark Gethsemane,” all verses.**

5

6   **READER: Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon, a**  
 7           man who had suffered from a dreaded skin disease.  
 8           While Jesus was eating, a woman came to him with an  
 9           alabaster jar filled with an expensive perfume, which  
 10           she poured on his head. The disciples saw this and  
 11           became angry. “Why all this waste?” they asked. “This  
 12           perfume could have been sold for a large amount and  
 13           the money given to the poor!” Jesus knew what they  
 14           were saying, and so he said to them, “Why are you  
 15           bothering this woman? It is a fine and beautiful thing  
 16           that she has done for me. You will always have poor  
 17           people with you, but you will not always have me. What  
 18           she did was to pour this perfume on my body to get me  
 19           ready for burial. Now, I assure you that wherever this  
 20           gospel is preached all over the world, what she has done  
 21           will be told in memory of her.” Then one of the twelve  
 22           disciples — the one named Judas Iscariot — went to the  
 23           chief priests and asked, “What will you give me if I  
 24           betray Jesus to you?” They counted out thirty silver  
 25           coins and gave them to him. *(MONEY BAG enters with bag*  
 26           *of coins.)* From then on Judas was looking for a good  
 27           chance to hand Jesus over to them *(Matthew 26: 6-16).*

28   **MONEY BAG: Stop! Why do you point your finger at this**  
 29           man named Judas? Do you think he was the only one  
 30           who preferred silver to the call of Christ? Then call me  
 31           “Judas,” too — for in my need to succeed, I’ve let money  
 32           and power direct all my actions. I’ve climbed over  
 33           people on my way to the top. “Everything has its price,”  
 34           they say, so I’ve looked the other way and paid off  
 35           where I should. Shrewd management, it’s called ...Ú but

1 I've also managed to go bankrupt where my faith and  
 2 principles are concerned. I wish I had known I was  
 3 trading my hope for salvation, my birthright from God  
 4 for a handful of tarnished silver. (*Pauses and faces the*  
 5 *cross or altar, kneeling and looking up.*)

6 Oh, Lord. My greed and selfishness are heavy. Take  
 7 this burden of betrayal from me and ... forgive. (*Places*  
 8 *money bag at altar, snuffs out candle, kneels or stands in front*  
 9 *of altar, head bowed, as hymn is sung, then leaves.*)

10

11 **HYMN:** "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," verses 1 and 2.

12

13 **READER:** Jesus was still speaking when Judas, one of the  
 14 twelve disciples, arrived. With him was a large crowd  
 15 armed with swords and clubs and sent by the chief  
 16 priests and the elders. The traitor had given the crowd  
 17 a signal: "The man I kiss is the one you want. Arrest  
 18 him!" Judas went straight to Jesus and said, "Peace be  
 19 with you, Teacher," and kissed him. Jesus answered,  
 20 "Be quick about it, friend!" Then they came up, arrested  
 21 Jesus, and held him tight. One of those who were with  
 22 Jesus drew his sword and struck at the High Priest's  
 23 slave, cutting off his ear. "Put your sword back in its  
 24 place," Jesus said to him. "All who take the sword will  
 25 die by the sword. Don't you know that I could call on my  
 26 Father for help, and at once he would send me more  
 27 than twelve armies of angels? But in that case, how  
 28 could the Scriptures come true which say that this is  
 29 what must happen?" (*CLUB enters with weapon.*) Then  
 30 Jesus spoke to the crowd. "Did you have to come with  
 31 swords and clubs to capture me?" (Matthew 26:47-55).

32 **CLUB:** Out of my way! Which way did they go? I thought the  
 33 crowd came this way. Well, I'll find them. They're my  
 34 kind of people. When something's wrong, we don't just  
 35 stand around and talk. We're *action!* And if it has to get

1           violent, so what? That's the only way to stand up for  
2           what you believe these days.

3   **READER:** What *do* you and your crowd stand for?

4   **CLUB:** Human rights, economic justice, things like that. And  
5           we'll take on any leader, group, or nation that gets in  
6           our way!

7   **READER:** But what about the rights of innocent people who  
8           get caught in the crossfire? Have you ever thought  
9           about that?

10 **CLUB:** *(Pause. He gradually calms down.)* Things happen so fast  
11           in my crowd ... no one has much time to think. Violence  
12           is contagious ... compulsive, once you're caught up in it.  
13           *(Looks at the cross.)* I probably would have been one of the  
14           mob that came to take Jesus. I wonder how many of  
15           them knew what they were doing ... what they stood  
16           for? *(Pauses, then faces the cross or altar, kneeling and looking*  
17           *up.)*

18           Save me, Lord, from the force of this weapon before  
19           my soul dies in violence, too. *(Lays weapon at the altar,*  
20           *snuffs out candle, and kneels or stands with head bowed until*  
21           *hymn is sung, then leaves.)*

22

23 **HYMN:** "Ah, Holy Jesus," verses 1-2.

24

25 **READER:** Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard when  
26           one of the High Priest's servant women came to him and  
27           said, "You, too, were with Jesus of Galilee." But he  
28           denied it in front of them all. "I don't know what you  
29           are talking about," he answered, and went on out to the  
30           entrance of the courtyard. Another servant woman saw  
31           him and said to the men there, "He was with Jesus of  
32           Nazareth." Again Peter denied it and answered, "I  
33           swear that I don't know that man!" After a little while  
34           the men standing there came to Peter. "Of course you  
35           are one of them," they said. "After all, the way you

1 speak gives you away!” Then Peter said, “I swear that I  
 2 am telling the truth! May God punish me if I am not! I  
 3 do not know that man! (*RING OF KEYS enters with keys.*)  
 4 Just then a rooster crowed and Peter remembered what  
 5 Jesus had told him: “Before the rooster crows, you will  
 6 say three times that you do not know me.” He went out  
 7 and wept bitterly (Matthew 26: 69-75).

8 **RING OF KEYS:** Please stop there ... I’ve heard no rooster  
 9 crow, but I’ve denied Christ as surely as Peter.

10 **READER:** What makes you think you have ... and why do  
 11 you carry such a large ring of keys?

12 **RING OF KEYS:** I suppose I’m what you might call a  
 13 “conservative.” I like everything in its place — in order  
 14 — with as little disturbance as possible. I’m an  
 15 organizer. So when it comes to my faith, I fit it in where  
 16 I think best. Certainly in my worship and spiritual  
 17 study life, Christ has been most welcome. But it’s  
 18 always been embarrassing to include him in the office  
 19 crowd or with our bridge foursome. It’s always seemed  
 20 reasonable to lock him out of these compartments of my  
 21 life ... anywhere he might upset the status quo. Oh, he’s  
 22 never tried to force his way in! But I know he’s waiting  
 23 at the very doors where I’ve denied him entrance. (*Faces*  
 24 *cross or altar, kneels, and looks up.*)

25 Lord, I’m tired of living a divided life — tired of  
 26 guarding keyholes. By denying you, I’ve denied myself  
 27 the inner strength of your presence. By locking you out,  
 28 I’ve locked myself in. (*Lays key ring at the altar, snuffs out*  
 29 *candle, kneels or stands, head bowed, until hymn is sung, then*  
 30 *leaves.*)

31

32 **HYMN:** “Ah, Holy Jesus,” verses 3-4.

33

34 **READER:** At every Passover Festival the Roman governor  
 35 was in the habit of setting free any one prisoner the

1 crowd asked for. At that time there was a well-known  
 2 prisoner named Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd  
 3 gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want  
 4 me to set free for you? Jesus Barabbas or Jesus called  
 5 the Messiah?” He knew very well that the Jewish  
 6 authorities had handed Jesus over to him because they  
 7 were jealous. While Pilate was sitting in the judgment  
 8 hall, his wife sent him a message: “Have nothing to do  
 9 with that innocent man, because in a dream last night I  
 10 suffered much on account of him.” The chief priests and  
 11 the elders persuaded the crowd to ask Pilate to set  
 12 Barabbas free and have Jesus put to death. But Pilate  
 13 asked the crowd, “Which one of these two do you want  
 14 me to set free for you?” “Barabbas!” they answered.  
 15 “What, then shall I do with Jesus called the Messiah?”  
 16 Pilate asked them. “Crucify him!” they all answered.  
 17 But Pilate asked, “What crime has he committed?” Then  
 18 they started shouting at the top of their voices: “Crucify  
 19 him!” (*BASIN AND PITCHER enters with props.*) When  
 20 Pilate saw that it was no use to go on, but that a riot  
 21 might break out, he took some water, washed his hands  
 22 in front of the crowd, and said, “I am not responsible for  
 23 the death of this man! This is your doing!” (Matthew  
 24 27:15-24).

25 **BASIN AND PITCHER:** I don’t know why I should have to  
 26 carry this. After all, it wasn’t *my* fault that Pilate turned  
 27 Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified. And I’m not sure  
 28 we ought to blame Pilate, either: he just *happened* to be  
 29 in charge when the whole affair came up ... Well, who’s  
 30 to blame for anything, really? (*Begins to pace while*  
 31 *talking.*)

32 I did my *best* to see that the kids got to Sunday school  
 33 ... and when I picked them up at ten forty-five,  
 34 sometimes we even stayed for church. I *tried*, but they  
 35 just don’t seem interested anymore. And, remember

1           that last election? I *knew* which candidate would have  
 2           been best for our town, but ... the man seemed strong  
 3           enough to carry the election without *my* vote ... and,  
 4           besides, I was busy. (*Pauses, contemplates the cross,*  
 5           *continues.*) ... Too busy “washing my hands” of  
 6           responsibilities. ... Too busy evading issues that hold  
 7           *me accountable.* (*Pauses. Faces cross or altar, kneels, and*  
 8           *looks up.*)

9           Oh, Lord, take these from me before this water of  
 10          indifference dilutes my life entirely. (*Places basin and*  
 11          *pitcher at altar, snuffs out candle, kneels or stands in front of*  
 12          *the altar, head bowed during the hymn, then leaves.*)

13

14       HYMN: “I Lay My Sins on Jesus,” verse 1.

15

16       READER: The whole crowd answered, “Let the  
 17          responsibility for his death fall on us and on our  
 18          children!” (*SCOURGE enters with whip.*) Then Pilate set  
 19          Barabbas free for them; and after he had Jesus  
 20          whipped, he handed him over to be crucified (Matthew  
 21          27:25-26).

22       SCOURGE: (*Cracks the whip.*) How did I ever get *this* in my  
 23          hand?! Why, I could never hurt anyone. I even hate to  
 24          spank the children! Look at the hard tips on the ends of  
 25          these thongs! They’re not enough to kill a person, but ...  
 26          that steady torture on one’s back ... Oh, how our Lord  
 27          must have suffered! (*Looks down at whip in hand, then looks*  
 28          *up.*)

29          How can I stand here and talk about his physical  
 30          pain when I lash out against him every time I take his  
 31          name in vain? (*Begins to pace the floor.*) ... Every time my  
 32          temper opens scars across his back. ... Or when I say, “I  
 33          just don’t care.” That is the cruelest cut of all. (*Holds up*  
 34          *the scourge.*) *How can I get rid of this?*

35          Take this scourge from me, Lord. I didn’t realize



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