

# Sunday Message

PALM SUNDAY OF THE  
PASSION OF THE LORD

THE WORD

Year A • 2 April 2023 • Psalter Week 2

## A LIGHT NO DARKNESS COULD OVERCOME

Matthew 26:14-27:66



The account of the passion and death of Jesus can seem like an extra-long Gospel we have to listen to during every Holy Week. An ordeal to endure. But this is a profound story, rich in detail and meaning. An excellent way to listen to it is to make it personal, to imagine ourselves caught up in the events of those dramatic days.

We can do this in two ways this year.

First, to connect what happened to Jesus in his time and what is happening today. In his book *Let Us Dream*, Pope Francis writes about good and bad spirits. The battle between the voices of good and evil is real, he says. The sophisticated may be inclined to sneer at these old-fashioned concepts, but the forces of darkness are genuine and very powerful. We need only look at the human rights abuses during the war in Ukraine for proof of evil at work. Evil is a thing. Evil exists. You could say that with the world still reeling from war in Europe, darkness has fallen over the earth, just like the darkness that fell over Jerusalem the day Jesus hung on the cross.

The story of Holy Week is a cosmic drama – a life and death confrontation between good and evil, darkness and light, despair and hope. Evil exists but so also does good. And so much good is being done; a superabundance of goodness is being poured out in response to the suffering in Ukraine. Think of how so many people opened their hearts, homes, and wallets – a wonderful overflowing of compassion and love.

We Christians journey through this week knowing that good and light and hope have triumphed over evil and darkness and despair, and we are people of goodness and light and hope. As you listen to the passion story, pray that your life will always reflect these Godly values.

Second, the Gospel writers tell the story of Holy Week as if it's a magnificent drama you might see on stage. The story unfolds with a colourful cast of characters – heroes and anti-heroes. The Gospel writers invite us to apply the drama to each of us individually. Imagine you are present in Jerusalem as the week's events play out. What do you think you would have done? What role might you have played? What character might you have been?

Do you identify with the women, the faithful few, who stuck with Jesus right to the end? Do you identify with weak Peter, the awestruck centurion, or the dutiful Simon of Cyrene? Or with the mob, people easily led and manipulated?

We want to think we would have been among the tiny few who followed Jesus to the foot of the cross. But would we?

The journey to Jerusalem is all about discipleship. Enter into the story as you listen to it now and on Good Friday. Take your place. Who are you this seismic week? ■

## REFLECT

Matthew describes how Pilate publicly washed his hands to disassociate himself from the execution of an innocent man.

Another form of washing also plays a major role in the drama of Holy Week. The washing of the feet is re-enacted every Holy Thursday during the Mass of the Lord's Supper.

Ten years ago, just a few days after his election to the papacy, Pope Francis made headlines when he washed the feet of twelve young people at a juvenile detention centre outside Rome. They included women and non-Christians – something new for a pope to do.

Pope Francis wanted to make a very clear point: as Christians, we are called to wash feet, and we cannot be selective in whose feet we wash. Foot-washing is about service; it is about bending low before another as a servant. That's what Jesus did at the Last Supper and on the cross of Calvary.

It's what we are called to do, too. ■

## SAY

**"Lord, by your cross and resurrection you have set me free. You are the saviour of the world."**

## LEARN

The passion and death of Christ is proof of God's love for us

Jesus ended up on a cross because of the kind of life he lived. It is the kind of life we also are called to live

Jesus did not die for a misty mass called humanity. He suffered and died for each one of us individually

## DO

Don't treat this as if it were any ordinary week. Make a conscious effort to journey with Jesus through these days.

## PRAY

Think of those who have suffered because of their commitment to justice, truth, and love. Thank God for them.

**1. THE SOLEMN ENTRANCE****ANTIPHON**

Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel.

Hosanna in the highest.

**ANTIPHON 2 during procession**

The children of the Hebrews spread their garments on the road, crying out and saying: Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

**2. THE SIMPLE ENTRANCE****ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Six days before the Passover, when the Lord came into the city of Jerusalem, the children ran to meet him; in their hands they carried palm branches and with a loud voice cried out: Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you, who have come in your abundant mercy!

O gates, lift high your heads; grow higher, ancient doors.

Let him enter, the king of glory!

Who is this king of glory?

He, the Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you, who have come in your abundant mercy!

**COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Saviour to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering and so merit a share in his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

**FIRST READING**

Isaiah 50:4-7

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue.  
So that I may know how to reply to the wearied, he provides me with speech.  
Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple.  
The Lord has opened my ear.  
For my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn away.  
I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle.  
The Lord comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults.  
So, too, I set my face like flint; I know I shall not be shamed.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM**

Psalm 21

Response:

**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**

- All who see me deride me.  
They curl their lips, they toss their heads.

"He trusted in the Lord, let him save him; let him release him if this is his friend." (R.)

- Many dogs have surrounded me, a band of the wicked beset me. They tear holes in my hands and my feet. I can count every one of my bones. (R.)
- They divide my clothing among them. They cast lots for my robe. O Lord, do not leave me alone, my strength, make haste to help me! (R.)
- I will tell of your name to my brethren and praise you where they are assembled. "You who fear the Lord give him praise; all sons of Jacob, give him glory. Revere him, Israel's sons." (R.)

**SECOND READING** Philippians 2:6-11

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians.

His state was divine, yet Christ Jesus did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**  
**Christ was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.**  
**But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all names.**  
**Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!**

**GOSPEL**

Matthew 26:14-27:66

The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

**I believe in God,**  
**the Father almighty,**  
**Creator of heaven and earth,**  
**and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**  
*(all bow during the next two lines)*  
**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**  
**born of the Virgin Mary,**  
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,**  
**was crucified, died and was buried;**  
**he descended into hell;**  
**on the third day he rose again from the dead;**  
**he ascended into heaven,**  
**and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;**  
**from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**  
**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**  
**the holy catholic Church,**

**the communion of saints,**  
**the forgiveness of sins,**  
**the resurrection of the body,**  
**and life everlasting.**  
**Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Through the Passion of your Only Begotten Son, O Lord, may our reconciliation with you be near at hand, so that, though we do not merit it by our own deeds, yet by this sacrifice made once for all, we may feel already the effects of your mercy.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**Father, if this chalice cannot pass without my drinking it, your will be done.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Nourished with these sacred gifts, we humbly beseech you, O Lord, that, just as through the death of your Son you have brought us to hope for what we believe, so by his Resurrection you may lead us to where you call.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

We thank you Father for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus your Son. As this bread which we have broken was once scattered on the hillside and was gathered and became one again, so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*(The Didache, 2nd century)*