

March 25, 2018

Passion (Palm) Sunday

Readings can be obtained from: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/032518.cfm>

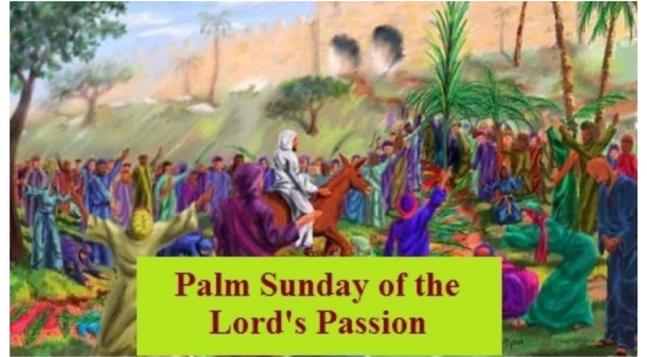
Since March 25, 2018 falls during Holy Week, the Solemnity of the Annunciation (which is usually celebrated on March 25) is transferred to after Octave of Easter and this year will be on Monday, April 9.

Readings: Gospel of the Palms: Mark 11: 1-10 or John 12: 12-16;
Isaiah 50: 4-7; Psalm 22: 8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24;
Philippians 2: 6-11; Mark 14: 1 – 15: 47

Today we begin Holy Week. In our readings today we are taken through the events of the next eight days. It begins with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The glory at the end of the eight days is alluded in Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians.

The readings are quite powerful in what they say about Who Jesus is and why He came to earth. It reminds us of His mission and His dedication to announcing the GOoD News of GOD's love for us.

The first Gospel (Mk 11: 1-10 or John 12: 12-16) is the description of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Jesus prepares to enter The City – Jerusalem ("the place of peace"), the place where GOD has chosen to dwell and makes the divine presence known. It is this city which welcomes Jesus. The crowds cry out with joy and praise as Jesus enters. They praise Jesus as the descendant of David who comes in the name of the Lord GOD. The people are ecstatic that Jesus is coming to The City for the feast of Passover. They have yearned for His arrival, but were afraid that He would not come because of the tension between Jesus and the religious leaders. The crowds cut down branches from trees and wave the branches as Jesus passes by. They put their cloaks on the pathway just as today we roll out the red carpet for stars. "Hosanna! Hosanna!" they scream as they welcome Jesus into The City – the very place where He will experience His Hour of Glory in His death – and resurrection.



<http://www.jesusismyredpill.com/Palm%20Sunday%20of%20the%20Lords%20Passion2.jpg>

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Isaiah 50:4–11. This third Servant Song contrasts Israel's sin with the Servant's obedience.

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/4e/00/33/4e00335e492bae34e5cf81df6838389--in-need-third.jpg>

In the first reading of the regular Liturgy of the Word, the tone switches as we hear one of the "Suffering Servant Songs" of Isaiah. Isaiah speaks to the exiles in Babylon. He tells of One Who will suffer for the sake of the people. Scholars are not sure if the "suffering servant" was an individual or the people of Israel as a whole who experience persecution during their time in exile. The Christian church has seen the pre-figuration of Jesus in these passages from Isaiah. The lines of Isaiah are paralleled in the suffering of Jesus: "GOD has given me a well-trained tongue. . .to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. . .I have not rebelled, have not turned back. . .I gave my back to those who beat me. . .my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. . .The Lord GOD is my help." How true these words will be for Jesus later this week as He refrains for His preaching to the weary and willingly faces scourging, belittlement, and death. Yet, through it all Jesus calls on His **Abba** as the source of His strength.

Psalm 22 begins with words which we use as our refrain: "My GOD, My GOD, why have You abandoned me." Jesus will quote these words as He dies on the cross. The psalm continues as it describes the suffering of an individual: the ridicule by people who belittle the relationship that the Suffering One has with GOD; the piercing of the hands and feet, the casting of lots for the garments of the One being punished. The psalm ends with trust being ultimately placed in GOD. It speaks about the glory of the LORD being proclaimed by the one who has suffered.

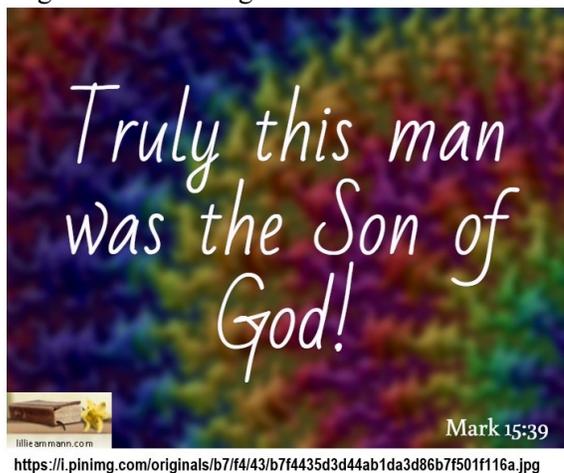
In the passage from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, he uses an early Christian profession of faith in Who Jesus is. He inspires his readers (including us) to put on the mind of Jesus the Christ – the One Who was willing to let go of His equality with GOD, in order to humble Himself to share in our humanity. And humbling Himself, Jesus went all the way to death – and the worst death of all – death on the cross. Yet, in being faithful to doing the will of His **Abba**-Father, Jesus is glorified and given the name above all other names: Jesus is the LORD. He is one with the **Abba** and worthy of praise as GOD the Son. This reminds us of the essence of the paschal mysteries we celebrate this week: Jesus' coming among us, suffering and dying on the cross, and being glorified by GOD, His **Abba**.

PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11

- Paul probably quoting an early Christian hymn
- Oldest Surviving Christian Hymn (? 50 AD or earlier)
- A poem of high Christology (emphasis on Christ's divinity)
- Revelation of God in OT fulfilled in Jesus Christ

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The Gospel relates the events of this week, from Judas' making a pack with the religious leaders to hand over Jesus, to the Last Supper, to the agony in the garden, to the fake trial, to His passion – condemnation, scourging, crowning with thorns, crucifixion, death, and burial. We need to read the passion story over and over again this week. We should take time to realize all that Jesus did in order to bring the GOoD News to us. The four gospels share only a glimpse of the full suffering and pain that Jesus experienced. So also the resurrection accounts will only give us a small idea of the magnificence of the glorified Risen Lord Jesus.



Books have been written, movies have been made, about the passion of Jesus, describing the physical and emotional pain Jesus suffered. Yet, rather than my adding words or your reading how much Jesus suffered, it behooves us to spend time this week slowly and reflectively re-reading the passion as related to us in the four Gospels.¹ Each gives us another perspective on the key events of the mystery of our salvation.

A key line in the Gospel is the words of the Roman soldier after the death of Jesus: “Truly, this man was the Son of GOD!” This should be our profession of faith this week, and always. Let us proclaim it by living as the daughters and sons of GOD, the sisters and brothers of the Lord Jesus. Let us live lives that show we accept the salvation and redemption for which Jesus poured out His blood. Let us be transformed through the suffering, death, *and* resurrection of Jesus so others will know that we believe that Jesus truly is the Son of GOD, our Savior.

The personal question/action for today: When I think of the events of Holy Week, what thoughts come to mind? How do I make this week the holiest week of the year? How can I share the GOoD News of the paschal mysteries to those with whom I come in contact?

Blessed are You, LORD GOD, ever loving. Through Your GOoDness, You allowed Your Son to leave His place beside You in the glory of heaven. He chose to respond to Your plan to make known the fullness of the relationship You want with us. He humbled Himself to take on our humanity and limit Himself by our human nature. He was willing to come as a servant, a suffering servant, so that we would experience Your desire for us to live full lives. He accepted death, even death on the cross, in order to reveal Your love for us. For this reason You have glorified Him with the name above all other names: Jesus the LORD. Give us the wisdom to take the time to reflect on the saving events of this Holy Week. May we be willing to profess our faith in the relationship which Jesus died to bring us. We continue to give glory to You, to Your Son, Jesus our Savior, and to Holy Spirit, for You are our one and only GOD, for ever and ever. Amen.

Song of the Day: *Enter Triumphant* (Palm Sunday Song): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWv4WKGkg30>
Everything I do I do it for You - Passion of Christ: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Y2EGVfSIWo>

Video of the Day: *Bishop Barron on Palm Sunday:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpVbF1k0h-o>
What is Palm Sunday: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atqM9T312Ok>

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¹Matthew 26: 14 – 27:66; Mark 14: 1 – 15:47; Luke 22:1 – 23:56; John 13:1 – 19:42 (John's account is longer because it includes Jesus' discourse to (and His prayer for) His disciples during the Last Supper).