

Sunday Message

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

THE WORD

Year A • 29 March 2026 • Psalter Week 2

THE TRIUMPH OF GOOD

MATTHEW 26:14 - 27:66



Today we listen to one of the great passion narratives. In the course of the passion, Jesus confronts all manner of sin – betrayal, desertion, violence, lies, abuse of power, cruelty. And he takes away this sin precisely by his obedience and his love. It is the triumph of love over evil.

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. Opinion writers and the sophisticated may be inclined to sneer at these old-fashioned concepts, but the forces of darkness are genuine and powerful. We need only look at the genocide in Gaza and the war in Ukraine for proof of evil at work.

Think of those who suffer violence at the hands of a partner, or the exploitation of migrants by greedy people traffickers, or drug barons whose lives of luxury are built on the broken lives of those on whom they push drugs, or racists stoking hate online and on the streets. Think of how women and minority groups continue to be discriminated against in many places throughout the world. Evil is happening. Evil exists. Evil is a thing. Holy Week is an annual reminder that the forces of darkness are still very strong, and that for countless people every day is a long Good Friday.

Evil exists but so also does good. And so much good is being done; a superabundance of goodness has been poured out in response to the suffering in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and elsewhere. Think of the way people help a family member or neighbour in distress, or care for a loved one broken by illness or old age, or put themselves out in the cause of justice and right.

The wonderful truth about this week is that we Christians journey through it 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.

Whenever people of faith decide to confront evil at its source, and do so with inner freedom, Jesus is once more entering Jerusalem, says theologian Michel de Verteuil. We stand in solidarity with all who suffer. ■

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's how we are called to live.

Jesus didn't die for a nebulous mass called humanity. He died for each one of us individually.

PRAY

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

DO

There are many ways you can return to Matthew's account of the Passion this week. Reading it meditatively and unhurriedly might be the best way to do it. Or you might ask yourself how you would have performed if you had been one of the characters in the crucifixion drama. It will be pretty easy to see yourself as one of the good characters such as Pilate's wife or the centurion. But how would you rate as a Peter? A Judas? A high priest? Where would you have stood on that fateful day when Jesus was tried and crucified? Where do you stand today?

REFLECT

One of my favourite pieces of music is the Triumphal March in Giuseppe Verdi's 1871 opera, *Aida*, where Radames leads the Egyptian army on its return following their victory over the Ethiopians. The elaborate parade, featuring soldiers and dancers, is noted for its powerful orchestration and its use of brass instruments, especially trumpets. It's no surprise its association with victory makes this piece of classical music a popular choice for sporting events, graduation ceremonies and national celebrations throughout the world.

It's hard to imagine a greater contrast between Verdi's Triumphal March and Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Passion (Palm) Sunday. The crowds cheer Jesus as they do Radames, but there are no trumpets and marching bands to lead Jesus into

the city, no ostentatious display of wealth, grandeur or power.

Instead, Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey. In choosing this most humble form of transport, Jesus is making a deliberate statement. He is identifying with the poor, the lowly, the abject outcast. He is standing alongside the suffering and forgotten. He is challenging the religious and political authorities who lord it over people. It has been the consistent message of Jesus' public ministry. He chose the sick over the healthy, the weak over the powerful, the poor over the rich, sinners over the pious. He washed feet. He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. It was a radical reversal of the world's way of seeing things.

We don't need to be news junkies to know that we live in a cut-throat, grotesquely

unequal world; a Darwinian jungle that champions rugged individualism, survival of the fittest, vaulting ambition; a 'me first' battlefield with little room for idealism, solidarity or tenderness. To get on in life, one must be aggressive, uncompromising, driven. To be successful, one must be selfish, arrogant, ruthless.

Humility is the opposite of 'me first'. It's the ability to stand in another's shoes; to consider experiences that are not our own, to revolve our actions around others rather than ourselves. It is being least, being servant, being little, being grateful. Christian ambition is the opposite of worldly ambition.

We don't have to sell our car and buy a donkey to follow the example of Jesus. We just need to put God and our neighbour before narrow self-interest. ■

THE PROCESSION OR SOLEMN ENTRANCE

ANTIPHON during procession

*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

*As the Lord entered the holy city, the children of the
Hebrews proclaimed the resurrection of life. Waving
their branches of palm, they cried: Hosanna in the Highest.*

*When the people heard that Jesus was coming to
Jerusalem, they went out to meet him. Waving their
branches of palm, they cried: Hosanna in the Highest.*

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 God has given me
the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.
Morning by morning he awakens;
he awakens my ear
to hear as those who are taught.
The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious;
I turned not backwards.
I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.
But the Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like a flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 22(21):8-9. 17-18a. 19-20. 23-24. R. 2a

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

1. 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, for in him he delights.' R.
2. For dogs have surrounded me;
a band of the wicked besets me.
They tear holes in my hands and my feet;
I can count every one of my bones. R.
3. They divide my clothing among them,
they cast lots for my robe.
But you, O LORD, do not stay afar off;
my strength, make haste to help me! R.
4. I will tell of your name to my kin,
and praise you in the midst of the assembly;
'You who fear the LORD, give him praise;
all descendants of Jacob, give him glory;
revere him, all you descendants of Israel.' R

SECOND READING Philippians 2:6-11

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians.
Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God,
did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,
being born in the likeness of men.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.
Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL Philippians 2:8-9

R: *Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.*

Christ became for us obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

R: *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.

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.*