

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD



SUNDAY REFLECTION

From the start of the gospel of Mark, Jesus experiences rejection from all sides, a rejection of the true nature of His work, malicious plotting by His opponents, and slanderous accusations against His ministry. The writer (Donald Senior) says that the shadow of the cross “falls across the entire span of Jesus’ ministry.” In fact there are so many indications of the suffering that Jesus must endure to be faithful to His mission that another writer says that right from the start Mark’s gospel is ‘a restless rush to the passion.’ Jesus journeys to Jerusalem aware that He will meet opposition. By His second day in the city they are plotting His destruction, and by the end of the day they are plotting His death (Mk. 14:1-2), while Judas is ready to betray Him (Mk. 14:10-11).

The two parts of Judas’ betrayal enclose the only gesture of compassion that Jesus receives in Jerusalem and that comes from a complete stranger – the woman who anoints Him for death (Mk. 14:3-9). Jesus spends the next day preparing for the Passover meal, and begins the meal by affirming that one of His own will betray Him, that Peter will disown Him, and that His disciples will abandon Him. Once the meal is concluded Jesus goes to Gethsemane, a garden where He probably had been spending the nights. This night He prays, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death’ (Mk. 14:34). While, no doubt, He hoped for commitment from His

disciples they all desert Him in His time of need, and in agony, abandonment and loneliness, Jesus re-dedicating Himself to His Father's mission and turns to the trials ahead (Mk. 14:36). Mark's use of titles for Jesus during His trials gives him the opportunity to synthesize his teachings on who Jesus is. When before the Sanhedrin the high priest asks Jesus whether He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One, and Jesus then refers to Himself as 'I AM' and the Son of Man, the high priest cannot let go unnoticed this culmination of titles and so must condemn Him. However, since blasphemy was not an issue that interested Pilate, the title that now emerges is King of the Jews. Thus, Mark skillfully presents Jesus as fulfilling the expectations of humanity as symbolized in these powerful titles. But at this very time of acclaim Peter is denying Jesus and rejection by His closest friends is complete. Jesus is now abandoned in death.

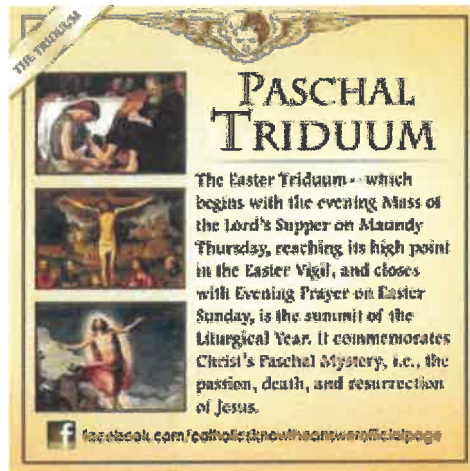
Jesus journeys alone to His death, refuses the rug that could alleviate His pain, and is crucified by the Roman soldiers as a common criminal. Although disciples had fought to be on either side of Him in His Kingdom, their place is taken by two common thieves. As He hangs on the cross Jesus is mocked by the priests, scribes, and crowds, and rejected even by His fellow prisoners (Mk. 15:32). Alone in pain, Jesus receives no comfort from His friends, followers, or mothers. This is a time of darkness not only for Jesus but for the whole world (Mk. 15:33). It culminates with Jesus' cry 'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?' (Mk. 15:34) then Jesus dies.

It is strange that in the moment of death Jesus is recognized not by a friend, nor by a follower, but by a Roman centurion who proclaims 'Truly this man was the Son of God' (Mk. 15:39). This is the mature Markan confession that links the crucified one to God. This was what the disciples had never recognized and had fought against all the time of the ministry – the suffering servant is the Son of God.

This passion narrative is a powerful presentation of Jesus who endures pain in His ministry, anguish in His last days, and is abandoned in death. Let this day be one of gratitude and awe before the love of God expressed in such powerful ways.



STEWARDSHIP: Good stewards strive to conform their lives to that of Christ - emptying themselves of all pride and putting themselves at the service of others.



THE EASTER TRIDUUM

Entering into the Paschal Mystery

The entire liturgical year is a great and ongoing proclamation by the Church of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Through this yearly cycle, the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, “the various aspects of the one Paschal mystery unfold” (CCC 1171). The Easter triduum holds a special place in the liturgical year because it marks the culmination of the yearly celebration in proclaiming the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Latin word *triduum* refers to a period of three days and has long been used to describe various three-day observances that prepared for a feast day through liturgy, prayer, and fasting. But it is most often used to describe the three days prior to the great feast of Easter: holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday and the Easter Vigil. The General Norms for the Liturgical Year state that the Easter Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, “reaches its high point in the Easter Vigil, and closes with evening prayer on Easter Sunday” (par 19).

Just as Sunday is the high point of the week, Easter is the high point of the year. The meaning of the great feast is revealed and anticipated throughout the Triduum, which brings the people of God into contact – through liturgy, symbol, and sacrament – with the central events of the life of Christ: the Last Supper, His trial and crucifixion, His time in the tomb, and His Resurrection from the dead. In this way, “the mystery of the Resurrection, in which Christ crushed death, permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to Him” (CCC 1169). During these three days of contemplation and anticipation the liturgies emphasize the sacrificial death of Christ on the Cross, and the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, by which the faithful enter into the life-giving Passion of Christ and grow in hope of eternal life in Him.



HOLY THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 APR '21

Ex. 12:1-8, 11-14: God's people of old celebrate the Passover at a feast in the Lord's honor.

1 Cor. 11:23-26: St. Paul describes the Last Supper and explains that the Eucharist is a memorial of the Lord.

Jn. 13:1-15: During the Last Supper Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and commanded us to wash each other's feet, so that we can offer the Eucharist in love and unity.

The Triduum begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, which commemorates when the Eucharist was instituted at the Last Supper by Jesus. The traditional English name for the day, "Maundy Thursday", comes from the Latin phrase *Mandatum novum* – "a new command (or mandate) – which comes from Christ's words: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn. 13:34). The Gospel reading for the liturgy is from the first part of the same chapter and depicts Jesus washing the feet of the disciples, an act of servitude (commonly done by slaves or servants in ancient cultures) and great humility.

Earlier on Holy Thursday (or earlier in the week) the bishop celebrates the Chrism Mass, which focuses on the ordained priesthood and the public renewal by priests of their promises to faithfully fulfill their office. In the evening liturgy, the priest, who is *persona Christi*, will wash the feet of several parishioners, oftentimes catechumens and candidates who will be entering into full communion with the Church at Easter Vigil. In this way the many connections between the Eucharist, salvation, self-sacrifice, and service to others are brought together.

These realities are further anticipated in Jesus' remark about the approaching betrayal by Judas: "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over, so you are clean, but not all." The sacrificial nature of the Eucharist is brought out in the Old Testament reading, from Exodus 12, which recounts the first Passover and God's command for the people of Israel, enslaved in Egypt, to kill a perfect lamb, eat it, and then spread its blood over the door as a sign of fidelity to the one, true God. Likewise, the reading from Paul's epistle to the Christians in Corinth (1 Co. 11) repeats the words given by the Son of God to His apostles at the Last Supper: "This is My body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me" and "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Thus, in this memorial of Jesus' last meal with His disciples, the faithful are reminded of the everlasting value of that meal, the gift of the priesthood, the grave dangers of turning away

from God, the necessity of the approaching Cross, and the abiding love that the Lord has for His people.

HOLY THURSDAY REFLECTION

The extraordinary blessings of this Easter Triduum are ritually celebrated today, when Jesus shares a meal with His disciples and tells them that this is an anticipation of His self-gift in death. Actually,, it is considered to be more than an anticipation since Jesus indicates to His apostles, especially 9in His conversation with Peter, that what He does in the washing of feet is to perform a prophecy in act. Like the prophets of old many of whom gave their prophecies in actions rather than words, Jesus solemnly prophecies that He will give His life in love for others. Only the future would give the full meaning of His actions.

However, the readings do not end with what Jesus does for humanity. Rather He goes on to say, 'I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done' (Jn. 13:15). Delightfully, Jesus adds two verses later, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.' So, Jesus not only insists as Paul tells us in the second reading, that we should celebrate the Eucharist in memory of the Lord, but He also tells us that we should dedicate ourselves in service to others as He demonstrated in the Gospel reading. The new covenant in Jesus' blood is not only the wonderful gift of redemption and passing over to new life, but it is a covenant that we make to be dedicated to the same lifestyle. 'If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought tow ash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you' (Jn. 13:14-15).

Of course, this commitment to love is followed by Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial – warnings to all disciples to be alert and ever self-questioning of the quality of their following of Jesus along this life of selfless service unto death. Let us use this Easter Triduum as both a celebration of gratitude to Jesus for what He has done for us, and also as an opportunity for us individually and as a parish community to rededicate ourselves to the service and love of others.



GOOD FRIDAY FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

2 APR '21

Is. 52:1-53:12: This is the fourth of the Servant Songs of the prophet Isaiah in which he prophecies the sufferings and death that the innocent Messiah will endure on behalf of His sinful people. It is a description of the sufferings of Jesus, our Servant of God and our Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Heb. 4:14-16; 5:7-9: Once a year the Jewish high priest entered the holy of holies in the temple to seek forgiveness for the sins of the people. This reading points out that Jesus, our true high priest, not only entered the temple on our behalf but although innocent He gave His life on our behalf. 'He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross' (Phil. 2:9).

Jn. 18:1-19:42: This is the passion of Jesus as described by John. In this account, the high priest can truly say, 'It was expedient that one man should die for the people' (Jn. 18:14). Elsewhere, with a profoundness that goes beyond the text, Pilate says to the world, 'Behold your King (Jn. 19:14). This account presents Jesus' determination to do all that is necessary to bring us peace and freedom from sin and death. Let us listen with profound gratitude and love.

GOOD FRIDAY REFLECTION

None of the Gospel Passion Narratives emphasizes the physical sufferings of Jesus. That is not to say that the scourging, the crowning with thorns and the pains of the crucifixion were not real. The most important point is what brought Jesus to this moment: it was His utter dedication to the mission entrusted to Him by God, His obedience to the will of the Father. In doing so, the innocent one takes upon Himself the guilt of humanity. He accepts overwhelming suffering as described in the first reading because of this love for His Father as well as for sinful humanity. This death is not an accident, rather Jesus is in control throughout. It is not that Jesus wants death but He does want to show His love for humanity. However, the world of darkness and death will always oppose the spread of love in the world, and death becomes a consequence, a negative by-product of Jesus' love (Jn. 15:18-19). Jesus' redemptive death is really redemptive love. Following on His death we experience two wonderful events – the gift of the Holy Spirit and the formation of Christian community.

Today's liturgy offers us the opportunity to pause in grateful wonder at the love of God for the world and for each of us individually. 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life' (Jn. 3:16). Jesus can say of the Father, 'St he Father has loved Me so have I loved you; abide in My love' (Jn. 15:9). Today we have seen the depth of Jesus' love. 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends ...' (Jn. 15:13=14). So, Jesus' death is the great sign of His faithfulness to His Father, His love for the world, the fullest revelation of the nature of God as love, and the challenge to each of us to live out this love in our dealings with others.



EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT

3 APR '21

Gn. 1:1-2:2: God's relationship with human beings begins in God's creating by word then entrusting them to look after creation as God would.

Ex. 14:15-15:1: The Lord dramatically saves the people of Israel from their Egyptian pursuers

Is. 55:1-11: Through the prophet, the Lord offers life and forgiveness to all those who will listen and heed the call.

Rom. 6:3-11: Christ has broken the power of death by His resurrection: we share in that resurrection life through Baptism.

Mk. 16:1-7: Mary Magdalene and other women learn from an angelic figure that the tomb is empty because Jesus is risen.

READINGS EASTER SUNDAY

4 APR '21

Acts 10:34, 37-43: Peter announces the Good News about Jesus to the Roman centurion Cornelius and the members of his household.

Col. 3:1-4: The writer urges the readers to fix their minds on the risen Christ, who is now their life through their being baptized.

1 Cor. 5:6-8: Paul presents the death of Christ in terms of a sacrifice, the Passover: our response should be one of gratitude, shown in a change of our way of living.

Jn. 20:1-9: Mary Magdalene reports her discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus to Peter and the disciple Jesus loved: they run to see for themselves.

Mk. 16:1-7: Amazement is the only possible response as the women discover that the stone has been moved from the entrance of the tomb.

Lk. 24:13-35:

HOLY SATURDAY REFLECTION

From the lighting of the fire and candle we listen to the words of Scripture until the solemn proclamation of the resurrection. The symbols are in tension. Christ's light is present to illuminate our contemplative recalling of God's activity in the world and yet we await the other great moment of Christ's presence in the solemn Alleluia message of Resurrection. The vigil resembles our lives in that we live in the light of our faith in Jesus while still longing for a further in-breaking of the power of resurrection. In the interim we live pondering the word of faith in the Scriptures. But the in-breaking is always a surprise as it was for Mary of Magdala and the other Mary and it leaves us with a challenge of sharing our experience with others.

The exodus story that is central to the vigil offers a scandal for the community in that it demonizes the Egyptians and boasts over their death. It does not present a gentle face of God raising the question of what it might have been like to have celebrated the Paschal vigil in Alexandria Egypt in the early centuries of Christianity. The onward movement of Christian life between a sense of having a certain faith and yet longing for its completion in open communion with the risen Lord takes place in a very ambivalent atmosphere. We do have stories of God, but the God of those stories isn't sanitized and shiny clean. The activities of God seem to share a moral ambiguity of many of our poor human activities. Our resurrection faith gives us the courage to believe that God works for good even in the situations where we cannot see even His 'authorized story' as being limited. God is with us through the in-between times and all their ambiguity.

After the two great moments of symbolic presence in the light and the Gospel we await yet another high point of presence in the Eucharist, where everyday elements become Christ's active presence to strengthen us for our own journey. The dynamic challenge of the Gospel inviting to share the Good News is reiterated in the Eucharist as we equipped for the next stage of the journey of God's people in the world. Having seen the light, heard the word and been fed at the table we go forth to tell the Good News until He comes.

THE CROSS AND THE CRUCIFIX down through the centuries:

Today The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), Section 308 requires that "...either on the altar or near it, there is to be a cross, with the figure of Christ crucified upon it, a cross clearly visible to the assembled people. It is desirable that such a cross should remain near the altar even outside of liturgical celebrations, so as to call to mind for the faithful the saving Passion of the Lord." This was not always the case.

No Christian symbol is more common or speaks more clearly than the cross. It preserves the fundamental belief of Christianity: Jesu died on the cross and was raised from the dead. It is, therefore, a sign of victory even though its basic form images a common method of execution of slaves and criminals in the Roman Empire at the time of Jesus.

For this reason early Christians avoided using either the cross or the crucifix as a symbol of the faith. Another reason for the Church's reluctance to openly represent the cross was that for many Jews and Gentiles, the cross underscored the seemingly irreconcilable contradiction of Christian belief, viz. that a crucified man could also be God. As various early heresies attacked either the divinity or humanity of Christ, the symbol of the cross, which seemed to exacerbate the conflict, was avoided.

The first evidence of a crucifix, a cross with the body of Jesus on it comes from the 5th century. Even the plain cross was seldom displayed in public until the end of the persecutions. The reason for this is understandable. During times of persecution, association with the symbol of the cross could bring identification as a Christian with dire consequences and also possible desecration to the symbol itself. Christians sometimes disguised the cross for this reason. One disguise was to use an anchor, which also served as symbol of hope. Another was to use combined letters from the name of Jesus Christ, especially combinations of the Greek chi (X) and rho (P).

Another reason might lie in the distaste associated with crucifixion among both Jews and pagans and possibly among some Christians.

When the Roman Empire became Christian in the 4th century, the cross became public and very popular. Emperor Constantine credited his military victory in 313 over opposing forces to the image of the cross. Religious freedom came to Christianity through his protection. In 326, his mother, Helen, discovered in Jerusalem the cross on which Jesus was crucified. It became a precious relic, with its wood divided up, and eventually holy splinters found their way throughout the universal church; such as the ones that are displayed here at St. Stephen, Martyr and particularly on the large cross of veneration used on Good Friday.

During the 5th and 6th centuries, the cross became a highly glorified symbol. It was popular to decorate it with precious jewels to represent the victory achieved through the cross and its power. Another motivation may have been a desire to erase the ugliness associated with crucifixion. The cross continued to take on new shapes throughout the centuries.

Emphasis on the suffering Savior in the late Middle Ages led to the popularity of the crucifix over the cross. This has continued to present times.

Despite the frequency of its representation in Christian art and architecture, the cross remains an ambivalent symbol. In its crossbeams meet death and life, sin and salvation, conquest and victory, immanence and transcendence. The cross represents both the basest aspects of the human condition and the most sublime reflection of divinity. As Karl Rahner once explained, “the cross of the Lord is the revelation of what sin really is. The cross of Christ mercilessly reveals what the world hides from itself: that it, as it were, devours the Son of God in the insane blindness of its sin — a sin in which Godless hate is truly set on fire upon contact with the love of God” (*The Content of Faith*, Crossroad Press, New York: 1992). 12:32). — As the dual revelation of the sinfulness of humanity and the love of God, the cross is unparalleled.

DAILY SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

HOLY WEEK OF LENT

29 – 31 MARCH

MONDAY 29 Mar Holy Week

Is. 42:1-7: The Servant of the Lord possesses the Spirit of God to restore right order between God and humanity. His demeanor will be gentle and merciful. Despite His humble bearing, the Creator will act through Him to reconcile all nations and bring healing and freedom. The servant songs of Second Isaiah form the readings for four days in Holy

Week. They have had a profound influence on reflection on the mystery of Jesus' life, death and resurrection from the earliest Christian times.

Jn. 12:1-11: The prospect of Jesus' death is foreshadowed by the anointing, a ritual done for the deceased, but also one which denotes Jesus as Messiah endowed with the Holy Spirit and now entering on the final stage of His divine mission. The people surround Him, some out of curiosity, some with faith, Judas Iscariot biding his time to betray. The divine plan proceeds through the interaction of the differing human characters.

TUESDAY 30 Mar Holy Week

Is. 49:1-6: The second Song points to the destiny of the Lord's Servant, whose life is planned by God from before His birth. He is assured of success although He might seem to falter. The Servant must bring justice to the whole of humanity and be a light to the nations. One does not look at a light but uses its power to perceive the beauty and form of the surroundings and find a path forward. Similarly, the Church is summoned to illuminate the dignity of human life by the quality of Christians' lives. Sometimes, Christians seem to be blinded by looking intently at the structures of their organizations and failing to look outward towards a world that expects hope and life.

Jn. 13:21-33, 36-38: John opened his account of the Last Supper with the majestic words that Jesus, knowing that His hour had come, loved His own to the end. In the perspective of Jesus' glorious journey, the fumbling of the disciples to grasp what is happening forms a striking contrast. Jesus never cuts off table-fellowship. He gives bread even to His betrayer. Darkness falls, but Jesus announces that this is a time of glory Peter makes his bold but empty pledge to follow. The drama underlines how masterful Jesus is and how lost the disciples.

WEDNESDAY 31 Mar Holy Week

Is. 50:4-9: The third Son expresses the steadfast commitment of the Servant to His role. He will continue to teach His disciples despite His suffering. The Lord will deliver Him and strengthen Him. These texts ensure that the community focuses on both terrible tragedy and unshakeable hope. God is always faithful.

Mt. 26:14-25: Matthew's account of Judas alludes to the Old Testament prophet Zechariah's enigmatic description of a shepherd who accepts the task and then abandons it. He exercised his role through staffs called 'grace' and 'union'. They are broken, symbolic of the breaking of the Covenant. The shepherd's wages (compensation for the loss of a slave according to Exodus 21:32) are cast into the temple treasury. Judas had been one of the leaders chosen by Jesus. He gives up his place and his compensation is the price of a slave. Even that remuneration will be lost later. Judas has lost his faith, which is expressed by his addressing Jesus as Rabbi. As in the Johannine account of Tuesday, Jesus continues to offer table-fellowship.

SCHEDULE FOR HOLY WEEK

SATURDAY 27 MARCH - EASTER SUNDAY 4 APRIL

Saturday 27 Mar Lenten Weekday

8:30 a.m. Mass (Lenten Preface II Eucharistic Prayer II

10:00 A.M. RCIA Rehearsal

Noon Baptisms and Confirmation

1:00 p.m.- 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Palm Sunday

Preface & Eucharistic Prayer for Palm Sunday

Distribution of palms

Sunday 28 Mar Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Distribution of palms

7:00 a.m. Mass Preface & Eucharistic Prayer for Palm Sunday

8:30 a.m. Mass Preface & Eucharistic Prayer for Palm Sunday

11:30 a.m. Mass Preface & Eucharistic Prayer for Palm Sunday

Distribution of palms

2:00 p.m. Mass Brig

5:00 p.m. Youth Confessions

Monday 29 Mar Monday of Holy Week Day Off

6:30 a.m. Mass Preface of the Passion II & Eucharistic Prayer II

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Preface of the Passion II & Eucharistic Prayer II

Tuesday 30 Mar Tuesday of Holy Week

6:30 a.m. Mass Preface of the Passion II & Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Preface of the Passion II & Eucharistic Prayer III

Wednesday 31 Mar Wednesday of Holy Week

6:30 a.m. Mass Preface of the Passion II & Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Preface of the Passion II & Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I

SACRED PASCHAL TRIDUUM

THURSDAY 1 APRIL HOLY THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

7:00 P.M. Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

**Proper, Gloria, (bells) Washing of Feet, Proper Preface,
Eucharistic Prayer I, transfer of the Holy Eucharist**

8:30 P.M. Adoration at Altar of Repose in Commons

11:30 p.m. Compline

FRIDAY 2 APRIL FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD GOOD FRIDAY

8:30 A.M. Morning Prayer

12 Noon Tre Ori

3:00 P.M. Stations of the Cross

7:00 P.M. Celebration of the Lord's Passion

Liturgy of the Word, Adoration of the Holy Cross, Holy Communion

SATURDAY 3 APRIL HOLY SATURDAY

- 8:30 A.M. Morning Prayer**
- 12 Noon Blessing of Easter Foods**
- 1:00 P.M. Easter Egg Hunt**
- 8:00 P.M. EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT**

EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

- 6:30 A.M. Sunrise Mass in cemetery garden**
Weather permitting
- 6:30 A.M. Mass in the church (for those registered)**
- 8:30 A.M. Mass**
- 11:30 A.M. Mass**
- 1:00 P.M. Mass**
- Brig Mass**