



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

**Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion.  
April 13<sup>th</sup> 2025**

---

**Theme: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."**

## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** Almighty ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Savior 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, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: Luke 23:1-49**

<sup>1</sup> The whole assembly then rose, and they brought him before Pilate. <sup>2</sup> They began their accusation by saying, 'We found this man inciting our people to revolt, opposing payment of the tribute to Caesar, and claiming to be Christ, a king'.

<sup>3</sup> Pilate put to him this question, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' 'It is you who say it' he replied. <sup>4</sup> Pilate then said to the chief priests and the crowd, 'I find no case against this man'. <sup>5</sup> But they persisted, 'He is inflaming the people with his teaching all over Judaea; it has come all the way from Galilee, where he started, down to here'.

<sup>6</sup> When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man were a Galilean; <sup>7</sup> and finding that he came under Herod's jurisdiction he passed him over to Herod who was also in Jerusalem at that time. <sup>8</sup> Herod was delighted to see Jesus; he had heard about him and had been wanting for a long time to set eyes on him; moreover, he was hoping to see some miracle worked by him. <sup>9</sup> So he questioned him at some length; but without getting any reply. <sup>10</sup> Meanwhile the chief priests and the scribes were there, violently pressing their accusations. <sup>11</sup> Then Herod, together with his guards, treated him with contempt and made fun of him; he put a rich cloak on him and sent him back to Pilate. <sup>12</sup> And though Herod and Pilate had been enemies before, they were reconciled that same day.

<sup>13</sup> Pilate then summoned the chief priests and the leading men and the people. <sup>14</sup> 'You brought this man before me' he said 'as a political agitator. Now I have gone into the matter myself in your presence and found no case against the man in respect of all the charges you bring against him. <sup>15</sup> Nor has Herod either, since he has sent him back to us. As you can see, the man has done nothing that deserves death, <sup>16</sup> So I shall have him flogged and then let him go.'

<sup>18</sup> But as one man they howled, 'Away with him! Give us Barabbas!' <sup>19</sup> (This man had been thrown into prison for causing a riot in the city and for murder.) <sup>20</sup> Pilate was anxious to set Jesus free and addressed them again, <sup>21</sup> but they shouted back, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'

<sup>22</sup> And for the third time he spoke to them, 'Why? What harm has this man done? I have found no case against him that deserves death, so I shall have him punished and then

let him go' <sup>23</sup> But they kept on shouting at the top of their voices, demanding that he should be crucified. And their shouts were growing louder. <sup>24</sup> Pilate then gave his verdict: their demand was to be granted. <sup>25</sup> He released the man they asked for, who had been imprisoned for rioting and murder, and handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they pleased. <sup>26</sup> As they were leading him away they seized on a man, Simon from Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and made him shoulder the cross and carry it behind Jesus. <sup>27</sup> Large numbers of people followed him, and of women too, who mourned and lamented for him.

<sup>28</sup> But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children. <sup>29</sup> For the days will surely come when people will say, "Happy are those who are barren, the wombs that have never borne, the breasts that have never suckled!" <sup>30</sup> Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!"; to the hills, "Cover us." <sup>31</sup> For if men use the green wood like this, what will happen when it is dry?'

<sup>32</sup> Now with him they were also leading out two other criminals to be executed. <sup>33</sup> When they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified him there and the two criminals also, one on the right, the other on the left. <sup>34</sup> Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing'. Then they cast lots to share out his clothing. <sup>35</sup> The people stayed there watching him. As for the leaders, they jeered at him. 'He saved others,' they said 'let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.' <sup>36</sup> The soldiers mocked him too, and when they approached to offer vinegar <sup>37</sup> they said, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself'. <sup>38</sup> Above him there was an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews'.

<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals hanging there abused him. 'Are you not the Christ?' he said. 'Save yourself and us as well.' <sup>40</sup> But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, <sup>41</sup> but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong. <sup>42</sup> Jesus,' he said 'remember me when you come into your kingdom.' <sup>43</sup> 'Indeed, I promise you,' he replied 'today you will be with me in paradise.' <sup>44</sup> It was now about the sixth hour and, with the sun eclipsed, a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>45</sup> The veil of the Temple was torn right down the middle;

<sup>46</sup> and when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice, he said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit' With these words he breathed his last. <sup>47</sup> When the centurion saw what had taken place, he gave praise to God and said, 'This was a great and good man'.

<sup>48</sup> And when all the people who had gathered for the spectacle saw what had happened, they went home beating their breasts. <sup>49</sup> All his friends stood at a distance; so also did the women who had accompanied him from Galilee, and they saw all this happen.

<sup>50</sup> Then a member of the council arrived, an upright and virtuous man named Joseph.

<sup>51</sup> He had not consented to what the others had planned and carried out. He came from Arimathaea, a Jewish town, and he lived in the hope of seeing the kingdom of God.

<sup>52</sup> This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

## **Gospel Focus**

The two gospels of Palm Sunday swing dramatically from one extreme to the other. In the first, Jesus enters Jerusalem to cheering crowds. People take off their own cloaks to soften his way. It appears that his triumph is at hand and his reign is about to begin. But he is not there to conquer the occupying Roman forces; he is there to conquer death. And to do so, he will need to go through death, which brings us to his passion narrative we hear later in the same Mass. The path to Jesus' triumph is not a direct one, but he comes to conquer and rule not on human terms but in ways far beyond what we can imagine for ourselves.

## **Gospel Reflection**

Luke, more than the other evangelists, emphasizes Jesus' role as a prophet. He interprets the death of Jesus as a rejection of his prophetic teachings and actions. Like all prophets, Jesus is lauded by those lifted up by his good news, but those whose privileged positions is threatened by him seek to silence and kill him. In the passion narrative, we see Jesus facing deadly opposition and struggling one final time to discern what is the way to obediently bring his prophetic mission to completion. He prepares his disciples for his own death, instructing them at the Last Supper and modeling for them how they are to act as they continue his prophetic mission.

At Gethsemane, Jesus is kneeling upright, not prostrate on the ground, as Matthew and Mark portray him. He is in *agonia*, or agony, which connotes intense struggle, like an athlete, straining every muscle, sweating so profusely it is as if a vein was opened. He can see what the consequence will be if he stays on course. He still has an option to retreat over the Mount of Olives and into the Judean desert. As at other turning points in his life, like his baptism and transfiguration, he feels God's reassuring presence with him, strengthening him for what lies ahead.

Once again, he chooses to be obedient to the prophetic mission entrusted to him, even if the cost is his life. It is in this sense that Paul speaks of Jesus as "obedient even unto death." It is not obedience to a father who wills his son to die-for what parent would ever wish such a fate on their child? Rather, Jesus' obedience is to divine love for all humanity and to the prophetic mission to release all who are bound by sin and suffering, bringing jubilee freedom to all. It is a costly love that impels him.

At the Last Supper, Jesus interprets his impending death, saying to his disciples, "This is my body...given for you." In Luke, this gift is not one act that is thought to atone for sins but rather a lifelong self-surrender in service to the least. It is manifest in acts of healing and forgiveness right up until Jesus' last moments, when his final words are a prayer for God to forgive his executioners and of entrusting himself peacefully into God's hands (using Psalm 31), in contrast to the anguished cry of abandonment of the Markan Jesus (using Psalm 22).

As followers of such a prophet, our own obedience is modelled on his. First, prophetic obedience is enacted by turning one's ear to God morning after morning, to hear how to speak a rousing word to the weary, as Isaiah says. It also entails remembering, as Jesus said at the Last Supper-making present again his bold words and freeing actions of healing and forgiveness. As servant leaders, it also means going, like the Galilean women, to the places of death, keeping watch in solidarity with the crucified peoples of our world and continuing to protest the machinery of death, even as we ourselves risk falling victim to them.

## **Old/New Testament and CCC links**

### **First Reading — Isaiah 50:4-7**

<sup>4</sup> The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. <sup>5</sup> The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. <sup>6</sup> I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. <sup>7</sup> For the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

### **Responsorial Reading — Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6**

**R: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? (R)**

All who see me scoff at me; they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads:  
"He relied on the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, if he loves him." **(R)**

Indeed, many dogs surround me, a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;  
they have pierced my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones. **(R)**

They divide my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.  
But you, O Lord, be not far from me; O my help, hasten to aid me. **(R)**

I will proclaim your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will  
praise you: "You who fear the Lord, praise him; all you descendants of Jacob, give glory  
to him; revere him, all you descendants of Israel!" **(R)**

### **Second Reading – Philippians 2:6-11**

...<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**730.** At last Jesus' hour arrives (Cf. Jn 13:1; 17:1) he commends his spirit into the Father's hands (Cf. Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30) at the very moment when by his death he conquers death, so that, "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," (Rom 6:4) he might immediately give the Holy Spirit by "breathing" on his disciples. (Cf. Jn 20:22) From this hour onward, the mission of Christ and the Spirit becomes the mission of the Church: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." (Jn 20:21; cf. Mt 28:19; Lk 24:47-48; Acts 1:8)

**1011.** In death, God calls man to himself. Therefore the Christian can experience a desire for death like St. Paul's: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ." (*Phil* 1:23) He can transform his own death into an act of obedience and love towards the Father, after the example of Christ (Cf. *Lk* 23:46)

My earthly desire has been crucified; . . . there is living water in me, water that murmurs and says within me: Come to the Father. (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.*, 6,1-2: *Apostolic Fathers*, II/2, 223-224)

I want to see God and, in order to see him, I must die. (St. Teresa of Avila, *Life*, chap. 1)  
I am not dying; I am entering life. (St. Therese of Lisieux, *The Last Conversations*)

**1021.** Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. (Cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10) The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul--a destiny which can be different for some and for others. (Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23)

### **Sharing and Discussion**

1. With whom can we associate in this crucifixion scene? Jesus, the good/bad thief, the people who were watching and mocking Jesus, the soldiers, or his acquaintances and the women who stood at a distance and saw these things. Why?
2. Jesus shows us the way of compassion. Even as he is being nailed to the cross Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." What lesson can we draw from Jesus' response?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul records an early hymn to Christ in his letter to the Philippians, lauding the one who "emptied himself." What spiritual practice helps you to empty yourself so as to make room for Jesus?

### **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Lord God, out of the darkness and destruction of the cross, you made your salvation known through your Son, Christ Jesus. Draw us out of the darkness of sin, unite us to yourself, and perfect our charity as we seek to do your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen.