



AMDG
PALM SUNDAY OF THE
PASSION OF OUR LORD
YEAR B
25TH MARCH 2018



**Oh Lord, do not leave me alone,
my strength, make haste to help me.**

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty, every-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.

We have journeyed with Christ through Lent, from the silence of the wilderness, to the dawning realisation that his whole life has been a preparation for the events that will unfold on Good Friday.

This Sunday, we see the contrast of Jesus's joyful yet humble procession into Jerusalem. We witness how the same crowd turn against his message of love and compassion and now call for his death. (*Gospel*)

The *First Reading* from Isaiah is a prophecy of the suffering servant. It tells of the willingness with which Jesus enters into his Passion, confident that the Lord will give him strength.

The *Psalms* continue to describe the insults and humiliation that Jesus took upon himself in order to set us free from sin. The response draws on the words that Jesus cried out as his earthly life drew to a close.

In the *Second Reading*, St Paul reveals the hidden truth of Christ. Jesus embraced the frailty and mortality of humanity, so that we could be drawn into the circle of the Trinity, and acclaim with the whole of creation that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

Let us pray for each other as we enter into this Holy Week, that we will each make time to sit in silence with Jesus.

Let us be willing to journey with Jesus through his Passion, death and Resurrection.

We may choose to be with him when he is anointed with oil in Bethany, as he eats the Passover meal with his friends, as he prays in earnest in Gethsemane, and during his arrest and betrayal; or we may walk alongside him as he carries the cross, and then stand with him at its foot as he gives up his spirit.

FIRST READING ISAIAH 50: 4–7

The Lord God has given me a disciple's tongue.
So that I may know how to rely to the wearied,
he provides me with speech.
Each morning he wakes me to hear,
to listen like a disciple.
The Lord God 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 God 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 ashamed.

Aware of how I am feeling, I come to prayer just as I am, and place myself before God.

I let my mind find stillness, and imagine God looking upon me with love and kindness.

I now look upon Jesus with compassion and tenderness myself, as I ponder the trials and Passion that Jesus entered into for my sake.

I slowly read the passage, allowing the words to form images in my mind.
I pause on phrases or words that touch me.

I stay with those words or images, and ask God to lead me deeper into the mystery of the Passion of Jesus.

I may choose to bring to my prayer times of my own suffering and humiliation, or perhaps pray for those who face persecution today.

Returning to the text once more, I find a phrase that I might like to pray as a mantra throughout this Holy Week.

I share with Jesus why these words are important to me.

I finish my prayer as I began, looking with warmth and compassion on the image of Jesus facing his Passion.

I find my own words of thanks to God, and close my prayer by saying
Glory be ...

GOSPEL: MARK 15 (abridged)

First thing in the morning, the whole Sanhedrin had their plan ready. They had Jesus bound and took him away and handed him over to Pilate, who questioned him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” And the chief priests brought many accusations against him. Pilate questioned him again, “Have you no reply at all? See how many accusations they are bringing against you!” But to Pilate’s amazement, Jesus made no further reply. At festival time Pilate used to release a prisoner for them, anyone they asked for. He asked, “Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?” The chief priests, however, had incited the crowd to demand that Pilate should release Barabbas for them instead. “But in that case”, Pilate said, “what am I to do with the man you call king of the Jews?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” “Why?” Pilate asked them, “what harm has he done?” But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!” So Pilate, anxious to placate the crowd, released Barabbas for them and, having ordered Jesus to be scourged, handed him over to be crucified. The soldiers led Jesus away to the Praetorium, and called the cohort together. They dressed him in purple, twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on him. They began saluting him, “Hail king of the Jews!” Then they led him out to crucify him. And they crucified two robbers with him.

When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you deserted me?” Then he gave a loud cry and breathed his last. The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he had died, and he said, “In truth this man was a son of God.”

I pray before a crucifix or an image of the cross.

I slowly read this excerpt from the Passion.

I allow myself to enter into the Passion as a bystander or as a character from the Gospel. I accompany Jesus through his accusation, scourging, humiliation and abandonment.

What do I notice?

Can I stay with Jesus? Can I relate to his sense of abandonment?

What words of comfort could I offer?

What is my response to this outpouring of courageous compassion that culminated in the cross?

Like the Roman soldier at the foot of the cross, I close my prayer with my own declaration of faith. Then I make a slow, reverent sign of the cross.

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

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. *First Reading*

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” *Psalm*

His state was divine, yet Jesus did not cling to his equality
with God, but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave. *Second Reading*

This week's texts if you want to reflect further

Isaiah 50: 4–7; Psalm 21 (22); Philippians 2: 6–11; Mark 15: 1–39



Jean-Georges Cornelius, *Jésus sur la croix*,
Musée du Hiéron, Paray le Moniale



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