



AMDG
PALM SUNDAY OF THE
PASSION OF OUR LORD
YEAR B,
28TH MARCH 2021



**‘Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed are you, who have come
in your abundant mercy!’**

OPENING PRAYER

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.

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, the climax of Jesus’s mission. Today we see him enter Jerusalem on a donkey, as the cheering crowd joyfully proclaims ‘Hosanna’, waving palm branches.

As the story of the Passion unfolds in the *Gospel*, the mood soon changes. Viewing Jesus as a threat to their religious authority, the chief priests plot to bring about his end. The crowd now turns on Jesus, shouting ‘Crucify him’. Then we accompany Jesus in his suffering to his last breath, hearing those desolate words, ‘My God, my God why have you deserted me?’

We respond with these same words to the *Psalms*, which describes the humiliation that Jesus will suffer in order to save us. In the last verse, however, the mood changes from dejection to praise and glory.

Though the *First Reading* also touches on suffering, the servant takes strength from God’s presence with him, even in the worst circumstances.

Paul urges the Philippians to be more Christ-like in their behaviour. Jesus came amongst us in humility as a servant, showing his great unconditional love for us by dying on the cross. (*Second Reading*)

As we accompany Jesus through Holy Week, no matter what trials we may be facing, let’s pray for confidence in God’s presence, that we may be strengthened by it and filled with hope as we look forward to Easter.

SECOND READING PHILIPPIANS 2: 6–11

His state was divine;
yet Christ Jesus did not cling
to his equality with God,
but emptied himself
to assume the condition of a slave,
and became as we are;
and being as all people are, he was humbler yet
even to accepting death, death on a cross.
But God raised him high
and gave him the name which is above all other names
so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld,
should bend the knee at the name of Jesus
and that every tongue should acclaim
Jesus Christ as Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

I prepare to pray, taking time to become still, confident that God is already here waiting patiently for me. I make myself comfortable, perhaps with a lighted candle. Taking a couple of deep breaths, I set aside any busy-ness from the day.

I notice how I am feeling. What do I hope for during this time?

I invite the Holy Spirit to guide me and open my heart and mind more widely to God's word.

When ready, I read St Paul's letter prayerfully, pausing at any word or phrase that draws me.

I reread it as many times as I am drawn, allowing it to soak in.

I let these words inspire me. I wonder at the intensity of Jesus's love for his Father, and God's unconditional love for me and for others.

By letting go of everything, Jesus saved me through his death and resurrection. How might I like to respond?

Maybe I reflect on how much generosity I show in my attitude and behaviour towards others and the world around me.

Just as Jesus placed himself in his Father's hands, I ponder whether I can humbly place myself completely in God's hands.

What might I need to let go of to attain that freedom?

As I slowly bring my prayer to a close, I speak with the Lord, freely from my heart, asking for whatever grace I feel I need to help me.

Glory be ...

GOSPEL MARK 15 (abridged)

They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull.

It was the third hour when they crucified him. The inscription giving the charge against him read: 'The King of the Jews'. And they crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said, 'Aha! So you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself: come down from the cross!' The chief priests and the scribes mocked him among themselves in the same way. Even those who were crucified with him taunted him. When the sixth hour came, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood by heard this, they said, 'Listen, he is calling on Elijah'. Someone ran and soaked a sponge in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink saying, 'Wait and see if Elijah will come to take him down'. But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

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 settle myself, perhaps in front of a cross, and slowly read the passage.

Perhaps in my mind's eye I place myself at Golgotha ... maybe as a follower of Jesus ... a persecutor ... a robber, or the Roman centurion? I watch what happens; I notice the place, the smells, the people; I sense the atmosphere. I listen to what they are saying and perhaps speak with one of them.

Can I accompany Jesus myself?

Knowing how much he experienced the mental agony of loneliness, rejection, physical suffering and death, how might I respond?

Maybe I ponder what caused the centurion to recognise Jesus as God's son. How easy is it for me to declare my faith as he did?

I tell Jesus how I am feeling.

I listen to what he might be saying to me, or just sit quietly with him.

I ask Jesus for the grace of inner strength, to help me walk in his footsteps more closely in my own life. I close my prayer with the 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.

First Reading

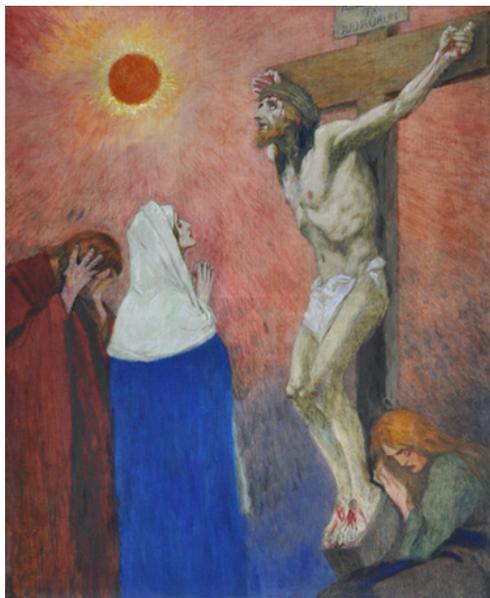
O Lord, do not leave me alone;
my strength, make haste to help me.

Psalm

Every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. *Second Reading*

This week's texts if you want to explore further:

Isaiah 50: 4-7; Psalm 21 (22); Philippians 2: 6-11; Mark 14: 1 - 15: 47



Gebhard Fugel, Jesus dies on the cross (1936)
(WikimediaCommons.org)

Lord,
teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you
as you deserve:
to give and not
to count the cost;
... to labour and not
to ask for reward,
save that of knowing
that I am doing your will.

*Prayer for generosity,
attrib. St Ignatius of Loyola*



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