

## Commentary on the Readings for April 2, 2023

### Passion/Palm Sunday

How could the theme for today's Readings be anything other than the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ? During the final week of Lent, we celebrate the very highs and lows of Jesus' earthly life; and there are several themes, but all of them might be summed up in one word, LOVE. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that we might have life." (John 3:16) We must remember that Jesus did not come into this world just to be crucified; rather, He came to show us how much He and the Father love us, even enough to die for us. This is clearly shown in all of His teachings and actions.

In the **ProceSSIONal Reading**, from the *Gospel of Matthew (21:1-11)*, we hear the story of Jesus sending two disciples off to prepare for the Passover, their final meal together, and then we learn of His triumphal procession into Jerusalem where, a few days later, some of these same people will yell "Crucify Him!" In this reading we call tell that Jesus knew what was just ahead of Him, that with each step He comes closer to death. Still, He is willing to go through with it out of obedience to and love for His Father and for all mankind.

The **First Reading** is from the *Book of the Prophet Isaiah (50:4-70)*. We hear from the Prophet who, like Jesus, was persecuted because the people of Israel did not like what he said. Here he is explaining how he forged ahead even under severe persecution. You might consider Isaiah as being an early version of Jesus who was thought by His own people to be a prophet and yet, they killed Him as they did all the prophets.

The **Responsorial Psalm (22:8-24)** begins with the words "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" These are the words that Jesus cries out on the cross; first because He is human and in anguish, but also because these words were written about Him 200 years before as a prediction of God's suffering servant, a role that Jesus is now fulfilling. The ending of this Psalm is a victory speech predicting the resurrection; thus Jesus could be saying, in so many words, "**Today, this prophesy will be fulfilled in your sight.**"

The **Second Reading**, from *St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians (2:6-11)*, is a poetic summary of the role of Jesus Christ who sets aside His being the Son of God coming to earth and living and dying out of love for His Father and for all mankind, and the honor bestowed on Him for it.

The **Gospel Reading** is a three-part reading from the *Gospel of Matthew (26:14- 66)*. In it, we hear the familiar story of the Last Supper, the betrayal by Judas, the arrest and suffering of Jesus, and finally the crucifixion. Not until Easter Sunday do we hear of the third part of this great event. So listen carefully! Place yourself in the crowd scene. Are you one who is yelling, "Crucify Him" or, are you one who is quietly standing by silently saying, "Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner?"

Thus begins the most solemn week of our liturgical year. Lent will be over soon and the great joy of Easter will be here. Will you be able to look back and say that your Lenten observance or resolution was successful, and that you can truly partake of the Joy of Easter? It's not too late. Begin now! Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

**MFB**