

Commentary on the Readings for March 24, 2024

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

How could the theme for this Sunday's Readings be anything other than the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ? During this 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 didn't 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.

In the **ProceSSIONAL Reading** from the *Gospel of Mark (11:1-10)*, we hear the story of Jesus sending two disciples off to prepare for their final meal together, the Passover. Then we learn of His triumphant procession into Jerusalem where a few days later some of these same people will yell "Crucify Him!" In this story, we can tell that Jesus knows what is 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 of, His Father and of all mankind.

The **First Reading**, from the *Prophet Isaiah (50:4-7)*, we hear from the prophet who, like Jesus, was persecuted because the people didn't 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.

The **Responsorial Psalm (22:8-24)** begins with the words, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" These are the same words that Jesus cries out from the cross; first because He is human and in anguish, but also because these words were written about Him more than 200 years before as a prophecy of God's suffering servant, a role that Jesus is now fulfilling. The end of this psalm is a victory claim in anticipation of the victory of the Resurrection.

The **Second Reading**, from the Paul's *Letter to the Philippians (2:6 — 11)*, is a poetic summary of the role of Jesus Christ (the Son of God, coming to earth, living and dying out of love for His Father and for all mankind) and the honor bestowed on Him by the Father: that of being called or recognized by all as "*LORD*" and equal to God.

The **Gospel Reading** for Palm Sunday is a three-part reading from the *Gospel of Mark (14:1-15:47)*. In it, we hear the familiar story of the Last Supper, the betrayal of Judas, the arrest and suffering of Jesus and finally the crucifixion. Not until Easter Sunday do we hear the third part of this great triune event. So listen carefully! Put yourself into 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 Day of Easter will be here. Will you be able to look back and say that your Lenten Journey was

successful so that you can truly partake of the Joy of Easter? It's not too late! Begin today!
Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

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