

# Sunday, April 5, 2020

## Palm Sunday

### Mass Readings:

Procession Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11

1st Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7

Responsorial: Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24

2nd Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

Gospel: Matthew 26:14-27:66 (or Matthew 27:11-54)

### Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading from Isaiah opens with these words: *The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting.* It ends with these words: *The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.*
  - In what ways are the opening words a powerful prophecy on Jesus' faithfulness and obedience, and a graphic description of his passion?
  - Knowing these words graphically describe what Jesus had to endure for your sins, what should be our response to this great act of love? How does it affect how you live your life? How should it?
  - When you are in the midst of difficult circumstances, or suffering, are you able to say, *I have set my face like flint, knowing that I will not be put to shame?* Do you believe that, *The Lord God is my help, therefore, I am not disgraced?* When was this true and when was it a struggle for you?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these words: *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."... They have pierced my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones. 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. I will proclaim your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise you.*
  - In what ways is the responsorial psalm also a powerful prophetic word on Jesus' suffering, his death on the Cross, and his resurrection?
  - What is the importance of knowing that almost every aspect of Jesus' life, including his virgin birth, mission, death on the cross, and resurrection is prophesied in the Old Testament? Is it important to you?
3. The second reading opens with these words: *Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* It closes with these words: *Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
  - This reading provides a wonderful witness to Jesus' divinity and exaltation, as well as his humility. Why do you think St. Paul contrasts these truths? In what way are they related?
  - How do you rate yourself on Jesus' attributes of humility? What can you do to reflect more of his humility?
4. The Gospel reading provides us with a narrative of Jesus' passion and death on the Cross. Here are some of the words that Jesus spoke: *My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will. yet, not as I will, but as you will. All this has come to pass that the writings of the prophets may be fulfilled. From now on you will see 'the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power' and 'coming on the clouds of heaven.'* *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*
  - Take some time to reflect on each of the above words of Jesus from his passion and death. What do these words convey to you? What impact do they have on you?
  - Why do you think Jesus cried out the words above from the Cross? In what ways, do they give us a glimpse of what he saved us from by his death, that is, how Jesus took upon himself the penalty for our sins?
  - During Holy week, what steps can you take to spend additional time with Jesus -- watching with him, praying with him, meditating on his journey to the cross, and going deeper in understanding Jesus passion and death?

Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for the victory of the Cross and for setting you free from the power of sin and death. Use the prayer below as the starting point.

*"Lord Jesus, I am overwhelmed by the love you poured out for me in your passion and death. Thank you, Lord for redeeming me and rescuing me from the power of sin and death. All praise and glory to you, Lord."*