

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community
PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Cycle B - March 28, 2021



OPENING PRAYER

Guide: *Create a clean heart in me, O God.*

All: **Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.**

Leader: Remember that your compassion, O Lord, and your love are from old.

All: **Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Commemoration of the entry of the Lord into Jerusalem.

(This Gospel is read at the doors of the temple, when the palms are blessed before the entrance procession)

GOSPEL [Mark 11 (1-11)]

When Jesus and his disciples drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately on entering it, you will find a colt tethered on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone should say to you, 'Why are you doing this?' reply, 'The Master has need of it and will send it back here at once.'" So they went off and found a colt tethered at a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. Some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They answered them just as Jesus had told them to, and they permitted them to do it.

So they brought the colt to Jesus and put their cloaks over it. And he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come! Hosanna in the highest!"

THIS REFLECTION IS MADE ON THE ENTRANCE GOSPEL, NOT ON THE PASSION

- (1) What does the glorious entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem mean to you?
- (2) Some of those who received Jesus Christ with praise did not support him in his misfortune. Who remained by his side, and who abandoned him?
- (3) Compare the two pains of Jesus Christ: the physical, for the punishment of his body, with the moral, for the betrayal of his friends
- (4) How far can your loyalty go to a friend? Would you be concerned that they associate you with someone whom society considers despicable, if that person is your friend, or a relative?

FIRST READING [Isaiah 50 (4-7)]

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.

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.

- (1) Try to remember people who spoke in the name of God and who when confronted with injustice... "hardened their faces like a rock", as the reading says
- (2) Participants may state an injustice that scandalizes you.
- (3) After sharing the answers to the previous question, propose what can be done to correct these situations of injustice?
- (4) The Suffering Servant refuses to accept the infamies invented against him, but on the other hand he does not seek revenge for what they do to him. What does this mean for you? What can we learn from this gesture?

SECOND READING [Philippians 2 (6-11)]

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.

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.

- (1) What do you think of Jesus Christ's decision to renounce all rights when he could have invoked his divine condition to avoid the enormous suffering that he had to undergo?
- (2) Was the Passion of Jesus Christ an imposition of the Father or, on the contrary, voluntarily accepted?
- (3) What lessons for our spiritual growth can we extract from the reflection of this reading?

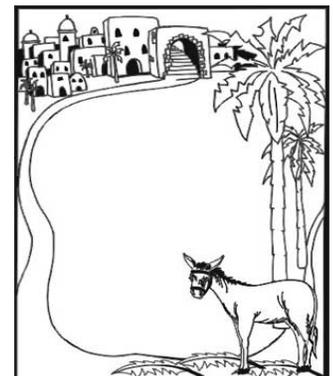
GOSPEL [Passion of our Lord, Jesus Christ according St. Mark -14, 1-72; 15, 1-47]
(Not included here)

GUIDE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE READINGS

Jesus and his companions arrived at Bethany from Jericho, where the supper mentioned by John took place. The next day they left for Jerusalem. They gave sight to Bethphage, near the Mount of Olives; mount that was presented by Jewish eschatology as the place where the Messiah would appear (Zec 14,4) and where the resurrection of the dead would take place. The statement of the rabbis is curious: if Israel was pure, the Messiah would come on the clouds (according to Dan 7,13); if not, on a donkey (Zac 9,9). They overlook "the village opposite", which is probably Bethphage, a place where pilgrims underwent purification rites before entering the holy city.

The pilgrims who gathered in the city for the festivities usually went on foot. The entrance of Jesus will be unusual. The end of the path, which will take him to the cross in a few days, begins with a gesture of the Lord. Until now he has never said in public that he is the Lord, and has only accepted from his disciples and from some outcasts

(The Samaritan woman, the man born blind, the blind from Jericho ...) an explicit confession of his messianism . But he now consciously prepares a messianic public manifestation, intended for the believers. He sends two of his



disciples, whose names are not mentioned, with a very precise order. Jesus is in need of a donkey. Warriors ride horses. The donkey was the ride of the poor and the people of peace. By choosing this type of animal, he intends to highlight the peaceful, primarily spiritual and interior meaning of his action. He is not the warrior king who comes to conquer by force or a political liberator surrounded by chariots, but the Messiah of peace, who brings salvation. Such is the king of Israel dear to God.

The observation about the colt "that no one has ridden yet" is important. He underlines the dignity of Jesus, who uses an animal that has not yet been used either as a saddle or as a pack animal. According to Old Testament texts, everything that is used in the service of God could not be used before. It is also striking that Jesus designates himself as "the Lord" and that he wants to freely dispose of the donkey of an unknown villager. Suffice it to say: "The Lord needs it." A few days later he will be humiliated and crucified, he will be at the mercy of human cruelty; but now we are warned that the man who will be mistreated and killed is actually "the Lord", the one who can dispose of all things.

The use of palms was associated with the annual commemoration of the Maccabean triumph, which signified the liberation of Jerusalem (1 Mac 13.50-52; 2 Mac 10.1-8). By mentioning the branches, John wants to express that the crowd saw in Jesus the one who, uniting in himself the spiritual and temporal power, would bring to fruition the desired liberation in the style of what happened in the times of the Maccabees. The palm branch is the symbol of victory, and it was worn in triumphal processions (1 Mac 13.51; Ap 7.9). It alludes to the bouquet that was picked up and waved at the camp festival, made up of a bouquet of palm, another of willow, and another of myrtle. The crowd longs for the life that exists in Jesus and that he has shown by reviving Lazarus. But a mistake is latent in their cheers: they expect a king to take power and do justice. They do not understand Jesus' program, his intentions: he gives life to man from within, giving them the strength of the Spirit. They, on the other hand, await it from the outside, of the reform - political and without personal commitment - made by a just king. It is the mentality that Jesus will try to correct, silently, riding the donkey. He wants to disprove any pretense of violence and worldly royalty that the crowd might expect of him. The crowd goes with Jesus, but without abandoning their own ideals. An ambiguous situation that prepares the next disappointment, when they find out that he meekly agrees to go to the sacrifice, without giving the fight.

It was when they were near Jerusalem that enthusiasm began to overflow, as those who came with him and those who left the city gathered (Jn 12: 12-13). Everything is overflowing with sovereignty, everything is significant. Although Jesus comes seated on a humble horse, he is Lord. They proclaim it with the shouts and acclamations of him all his companions of him. But one has the impression that the invocations are directed to another messiah, not the one who rides the donkey. There may be beautiful prayers, splendid ceremonies and parties, but done wrong because they are addressed to "another". It is possible that Jesus seldom felt alone in the midst of that shouting. Whoever separates the Christian faith from the concrete history of Jesus - including his passion, death and resurrection - will have invented a religion that may be highly praiseworthy, but that will no longer be that of God's Messiah. Jesus Christ was very clear in his teachings, in his examples and demands. Nobody has the right to "invent" another Jesus Christ, other than the only one who existed and still lives...

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*