

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion —April 5, 2020

First Reading — Isaiah 50:4-7

⁴The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. ⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. ⁶I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. ⁷For the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24.

R. (2a) My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

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."

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Indeed, many dogs surround me,
a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;
They have pierced my hands and my feet;
I can count all my bones.

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

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.

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

I will proclaim your name to my brethren;
in the midst of the assembly I will praise you:

"You who fear the LORD, praise him;
all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him;
revere him, all you descendants of Israel!"

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Second Reading — Philippians 2:6-11

... ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel Reading — Matthew 26:14-27:66

¹⁴Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. ¹⁷Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" ¹⁸He said, "Go into the city to a certain one, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" ¹⁹And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. ²⁰When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples; ²¹and as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." ²²And they were very sorrowful, and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" ²³He

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answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me, will betray me. ²⁴The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." ²⁵Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Is it I, Master?" He said to him, "You have said so." ²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." ³⁰ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ³¹Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' ³²But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ³³Peter declared to him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." ³⁴Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." ³⁵Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said all the disciples. ³⁶Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray." ³⁷And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." ³⁹And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." ⁴⁰And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ⁴²Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done." ⁴³ And again he came and found them sleeping, for

their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." ⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him." ⁴⁹And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Hail, Master!" And he kissed him. ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, "Friend, why are you here?" Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" ⁵⁵At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. ⁵⁶But all this has taken place, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook him and fled. ⁵⁷Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. ⁵⁸But Peter followed him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. ⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, ⁶⁰but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.'" ⁶²And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶³But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you

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by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy.”⁶⁶ What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”⁶⁷ Then they spat in his face, and struck him; and some slapped him,⁶⁸ saying, “Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?”⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a maid came up to him, and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.”⁷⁰ But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you mean.”⁷¹ And when he went out to the porch, another maid saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.”⁷² And again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.”⁷³ After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.”⁷⁴ Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know the man.” And immediately the cock crowed.⁷⁵ And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.^{27:1} When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death;² and they bound him and led him away and delivered him to Pilate the governor.³ When Judas, his betrayer, saw that he was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,⁴ saying, “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.”⁵ And throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself.⁶ But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money.”⁷ So they took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in.⁸ Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.⁹ Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah,

saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel,¹⁰ and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.”¹¹ Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You have said so.”¹² But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer.¹³ Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?”¹⁴ But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge; so that the governor wondered greatly.¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted.¹⁶ And they had then a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas.¹⁷ So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?”¹⁸ For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.¹⁹ Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream.”²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.²¹ The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.”²² Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified.”²³ And he said, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified.”²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this righteous man’s blood; see to it yourselves.”²⁵ And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”²⁶ Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the praetorium, and they gathered the whole battalion before him.²⁸ And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him,²⁹ and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”³⁰ And they

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spat upon him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him. ³²As they went out, they came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; this man they compelled to carry his cross. ³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull), ³⁴they offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots; ³⁶then they sat down and kept watch over him there. ³⁷And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." ³⁸Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴²"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. ⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" ⁴⁷And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "This man is calling Elijah." ⁴⁸And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." ⁵⁰And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; ⁵²the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection

they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" ⁵⁵There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him; ⁵⁶among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. ⁵⁷When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, ⁶⁰and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed. ⁶¹Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulchre. ⁶²Next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴Therefore order the sepulchre to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." ⁶⁶So they went and made the sepulchre secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading — Isaiah 50:4-7

1. What attitudes do you see in this prophecy of Christ that we should embrace?

Second Reading — Philippians 2:6-11

2. How did Jesus express humility through his life and death?
3. What do the expressions, “every knee shall bow” and “every tongue confess” really mean?

Gospel Reading — Matthew 26:14-27:66

4. How were you moved through this account of Jesus’ last days?
5. What are the three most profound truths of these passages?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.