

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion – a liturgy for worship at home

Introduction

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, during Lent we have been preparing by works of love and self-sacrifice for the celebration of our Lord's death and resurrection. Today we come together to begin this solemn celebration in union with the Church throughout the world. Christ enters his own city to complete his work as our Saviour, to suffer, to die and to rise again. Let us go with him in faith and love, so that, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life.

Whether or not you have a palm cross, the following may be said as a prayer of dedication for what the cross represents.

God our Saviour, whose Son Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as Messiah to suffer and to die; let these palms be for us signs of his victory and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our king, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark (11: 1 – 11)

Glory to you, O Lord

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethpage and Bethany close by the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go to the village facing you, and as you enter it you will at once find a tethered colt that no one has yet ridden. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing that?" say, "The Lord need it and will send it back here at once."'

They went off and found a colt tethered near a door in the open street and they untied it. Some of the bystanders said, 'What are you doing, untying that colt?' They gave the answer Jesus had told them, and the men let them go. Then they took the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on its back, and he mounted it.

Many people spread their clothes on the road, and others greenery which they had cut in the fields. And those who went ahead and behind kept crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the

coming kingdom of David our father! Hosanna in the highest heavens! He entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple, and when he had surveyed it all, as it was late by now, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

The Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you, O Christ.

In spirit let us go forth into Jerusalem, praising Jesus our Messiah:

*All glory, laud and honour
to thee, redeemer, king,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.*

Thou art the king of Israel,
thou David's royal son,
who in the Lord's name comest,
the king and blessed one. *Refrain*

The company of angels
are praising thee on high,
and mortal men and all things
created make reply. *Refrain*

Thou art the king of Israel,
thou David's royal son,
who in the Lord's name comest,
the king and blessed one. *Refrain*

The company of angels
are praising thee on high,
and mortal men and all things
created make reply. *Refrain*

The people of the Hebrews
with palms before thee went;
our praise and prayer and anthems
before thee we present. *Refrain*

To thee before thy passion
they sang their hymns of praise;
to thee now high exalted
our melody we raise. *Refrain*

Thou didst accept their praises;
accept the prayers we bring,
who in all good delightest,
thou good and gracious king. *Refrain*

Theodulph of Orleans (9th Century), translated: John Mason Neale

Let us pray for a closer union with Christ in his suffering and in his glory.

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Today's readings

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

(50: 4 – 9a)

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.
The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.
The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to
shame;
he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me.
It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?
All of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

For the word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.

*Psalm 31: 9 – 12 & 14 – 16 with the refrain:
Into your hands I commend my spirit*

Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye is consumed with sorrow,
my soul and my body also.
For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails me
because of my affliction, and my bones are consumed.

Into your hands I commend my spirit.

I am forgotten like one that is dead, out of mind; I have become like a broken
vessel.

For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is on every side; they
scheme together against me, and plot to take my life.

Into your hands I commend my spirit.

But my trust is in you, O Lord. I have said, 'You are my God.
My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from
those who persecute me.
Make your face to shine on your servant, and save me for your mercy's sake.'

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the
beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

Into your hands I commend my spirit.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians (2: 5 – 11)

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited, but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.

Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

For the word of the Lord: Thanks be to God.

Acclamation to greet the Passion Gospel

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Christ humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark (15: 1 – 39)
(the full version of the Passion reading begins at chapter 14: 1)

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, “Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.” But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, “Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” They shouted back, “Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him!” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. *(Pause)*

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and

Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where the body was laid.

This is the Passion of the Lord

Silence is kept for a while

Homily

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was a carefully planned event. He gives detailed instructions to his disciples to prepare for his procession into the city. That procession recalls two previous events in Israel's history. The first is the prophecy of Zechariah who tells the people to rejoice for their king will come to them, triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a donkey, a king who will command peace to the nations. The second event recalled is a triumphal military entry when the Jewish leader Simon Maccabeus entered the city accompanied by people with palm branches and singing songs of praise following their victory against the Greek Empire which secured a brief period of independence for Israel in the year 141BC. The Romans put an end to that in 63BC. Jesus' demonstration may well have had an element of satire or mockery against military liberators and conquerors. On the other side of the city Pilate would no doubt be marching in from the coast with his legions and armoury to shore up the Roman garrison and ensure good order during the tense days of the Passover celebration.

Jesus certainly didn't come to Jerusalem as a military liberator, as many expected the Messiah to be. He does not storm the Roman garrison or Herod's palace. Instead he goes to the temple, and there he carries out another planned symbolic action. He effectively shuts the temple down, prevents its normal functioning. He is not condemning the business, the buying and selling,

the sacrificing – that was all perfectly legitimate temple practice. What he is demonstrating is that God is a God of justice and righteousness. And when worship substitutes for justice, when the temple system collaborates with the injustice of the conquerors, then God rejects the temple. God always rejects religion that is used to support imperial violence and injustice.

In the violence of the Romans, and the zealots represented by the likes of Barabbas, in the self-serving hypocrisy of the religious elites, in the fury of the crowd that shouted ‘Crucify him,’ we find the characters that are represented in every era of human history, including, sadly, still today. Jesus’ death on the cross is a sign of God’s judgement on those people. In the Passion story we find that God is present in the sacrificial victim, in Jesus who has allowed himself to be handed over to death. He refuses to save himself so that he might save the world.

The Gospel of Mark begins with the words, ‘The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.’ And as Jesus’ life ends, that remarkable statement about Jesus’ status is repeated, but from a most unlikely source. A Roman centurion says, ‘Truly, this man was the Son of God.’ He is the first human being in the Gospel to call Jesus Son of God. Neither Jesus himself or his followers called him by that title in Mark’s account. It comes from the lips of a representative of the regime that killed Jesus. In Roman theology, the Son of God was Caesar, the emperor. He was also Lord, the Saviour of the world, the bringer of peace on earth. But this Roman officer at the cross declares that the tortured, crucified, executed Jew is the real Son of God. To say this is to say that Caesar is not. In this remarkable concluding scene Mark gives us an image of the Roman Empire testifying against itself.

Empires, domination, aggression, along with hatred, bigotry, racism, xenophobia, and also collaboration or complicity with such forces is always to live in opposition to God. It is godlessness of the first order. It is such forces that Jesus confronted in life and death. On that cross Jesus demonstrated God’s judgement on them most vividly.

Just thinking about all this can leave us quite drained. But that has to be a positive experience. We are being divinely drained. Paul tells us that Jesus emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. As followers of Jesus we too are called to empty ourselves, to be willing sacrifices of empathy with the suffering of our loving Saviour. This will help us to empathize with all this world’s innocent victims, help us to pour out the ointment of love on weary heads and

feet, to love people better for the sake of Jesus. We often feel drained by life's circumstances and emotions, but is that so costly? For in this way we truly follow the Jesus way, the way of the one who emptied himself. In following his way we may hope to discover the way to joy, to freedom, to life.

A few moments of silent reflection are recommended.

The Profession of Faith, either the following or one of the traditional creeds:

We believe in God the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord God, our heavenly Father, you raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to be Lord of all. Hear us as we pray in his name for the needs of this world and for our own concerns.

Father we pray for your Church during this Holy Week that, imitating Christ's obedience and humility, she may bring news of the salvation of God to all people. We pray for the Christians of Israel and Palestine and for the people of other faiths with whom they share that Holy Land, that they may all work sincerely for peace, justice and unity. We pray for blessings on Archbishop Justin, Bishops Robert and David, Archdeacon David and our brothers and sisters of other traditions. May they and we honour your Holy word in all that is done.

Lord, in your mercy ...hear our prayer

Father we pray for our church of St. Francis here in Tenerife; for John and Rosemary, and those too who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep the church functioning and in good order. We pray for our charity shop in Los Gigantes and for the volunteers, asking that you would continue to bless their work.

Help us to reach out in love to those who do not know you. We ask your blessing on the charities and causes we support, the Association of St. Juan,

Happy-To-Help, the Orders of Nuns in Vilaflor and Santiago del Teide, the Adeje School for the disabled and our link Diocese of Peru.

Lord, in your mercy ...hear our prayer

Father we pray for the communities, churches and each family that is represented here today. May love and honour for one another abound in the same measure that you have blessed us. We pray for those in the world who do not know earthly riches or peace.

Let us pray for the nations of this world and for their leaders that a desire for peace, justice and freedom will prove stronger than a desire for power with injustice and oppression. May those who have power in the world to facilitate change be given strength, wisdom and courage in their work. We ask your blessing on Queen Elizabeth, and on King Felipe of Spain.

Lord, in your mercy ...hear our prayer

Father we pray for those who are suffering illness of mind, body or spirit that they may be brought the healing, peace and strength which you alone can give. We pray for all carers, hospital staff and hospice workers that they will be given strength for their daily tasks in caring for others. We pray for a swift end to the Pandemic. In a moment of silence we name those we know and love who need your touch including Margaret Rainton, Petrina Thompson and Carol Hart.

Lord, in your mercy ...hear our prayer

Father we pray for those whose time with us is short, be with them and comfort them, may they know the joy of the presence of the Lord.

For the bereaved, that their hearts may be lightened and their joy restored, in faith that all will be reunited in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy ...hear our prayer.

We pray that through our prayers and our lives you will reach out to all people and bring ever nearer the day when every tongue on earth will indeed proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus prayed to the Father for strength to do his will. We join him in his prayer of trust:

Our Father.....

You may wish to offer this or an alternative prayer of spiritual communion, and/or in silence just sit in the peace of the ever-present Lord for a while.

Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.
May your body and blood be my food and drink.
May your passion and death be my strength and life.
Jesus, with you by my side enough has been given.
May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross.
Let me not run from the love which you offer
but hold me safe from the forces of evil.
On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.
Keep calling to me until that day comes
when, with your saints, I may praise you for ever. Amen.

Concluding Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant, and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation: give us the mind to follow you and to proclaim you as Lord and King, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Blessing

May the Father, who so loved the world that he gave his only Son, bring you by faith to his eternal life. Amen

May Christ, who accepted the cup of sacrifice in obedience to the Father's will, keep you steadfast as you walk with him the way of his cross. Amen.

May the Spirit, who strengthens us to suffer with Christ that we may share his glory, set your minds on life and peace. Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you, and with those you love and pray for, today and always. Amen.

Let us walk with one another the way of Jesus our Lord. Thanks be to God.

