

## **Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion Lectionary: 35 and 38**

### **At The Mass - Reading 1**

#### **IS 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.

### **Responsorial Psalm**

**PS 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24** R/ (2a) **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**

### **Reading 2**

#### **PHIL 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.

**Gospel MT 26:14-27:66 or MT 27:11-54**

## A Reflection on Palm Sunday: A Panoramic View of The Paschal Mysteries

Today the readings from the living Word of God give us a broad view of the mysteries that we'll contemplate throughout Holy Week but especially during the Paschal Triduum: the triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the short lived adoration of the people, the institution of the Eucharist and the Sacramental Priesthood, the passion and death of the Lord, and the prediction of His Resurrection.

This richness of these readings includes numerous phrases and expressions that have become part of the Sunday liturgy and other devotions. But, most of all, they reveal how each event of the Passion of Christ had been announced by the prophets in the Scriptures and by Christ himself, thus confirming that he was the One "who was to come."

Because we aren't able to come together here at Church this year and the way in which that impacts our celebration today, we did not hear the first Gospel reading from Matthew 21, which offers a stark contrast to the rest of the readings at Mass. I encourage all of you to take time today to reflect on that Gospel account of Jesus' triumphant entry. Then, read again the passion narrative from Matthew 26 and reflect on how quickly the people turned on Jesus. Upon arriving at Jerusalem, Jesus is received with cries of joy and praise by the crowd that had come to believe and to have faith in Him as a prophet from God: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Then in the blink of eye as their lives became threatened, or as Judas decided he knew better the truth of God and turned away. How quickly in hard times and difficult days or even more sadly in merely tough moments, we lose faith. Today is both the celebration of the joy of receiving our savior, the sorrowful reminder of our fallenness and the price of our redemption.

First, Jesus 'Emmanuel' celebrates and transforms the Jewish Passover Feast, leaving us the treasure of the Eucharist, 'God with us'. He calls his Apostles to receive the "living bread that came down out of heaven;" and they remember his promise, "if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." He calls them to continue to do the same, in remembrance of Him as they become what they touch and give what they have received. We are witness to Judas's betrayal. We cringe as we hear Peter's denials. We are reminded of our own betrayals. Peter and the other apostles cannot stay awake with Jesus in prayer, even as he pleads with them to be united and to lift him up during his agony. We are reminded of our own soft commitments, our inability to understand the

mind and ways of God, and how easily we give up, get angry, blame God for our troubles and our failures.

Jesus embraces His 'cup' he embraces the will of His Father, even as he knows that those for whom He gives His life as a ransom, are not worthy. He does so, because he also knows that in this sacrifice, he creates the way to make us worthy; to heal our souls. Today's liturgy combines both a sense of triumph and tragedy of a love so intense that Jesus was ready to sacrifice his own life for it. "Greater love than this no one has than to lay down one's life for one's friends."

What Jesus experiences for us is a manifestation of God's overwhelming love for each one of us. By identifying ourselves with the 'mystery' of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection we ourselves experience a great liberation, a 'Passover' from sin and enslavement to a life of joy and freedom. Our celebration of Holy Week is not just to a deep reflection on our need for redemption, nor of thanks; but of entering into the depths of each of the mysteries, together with Jesus, and rise with Him, reborn, a new creation. It is meant to be real and not merely religious, pious and devotional make-believe.

It is so real, that at the moment of His death, when Jesus "released the spirit". At that moment a power was released into the world; the power of the Love between the Father and the Son which proceeds, as the Holy Spirit. The power which would soon come to fill the Apostles and give birth to the Church. The Holy Spirit that leads us into the Truth of God and empowers us to live no longer for ourselves but for Him who died and rose again for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

So, as we participate in the liturgy of Holy Week, let us not concentrate only on the sufferings of Jesus. Those sufferings have meaning because they lead to resurrection, new life and new joy. The pain and sufferings of our lives when not the consequence of our sins, become, sources of good when they help us to become more like Jesus, when they lead to our own liberation and the liberation of others.

May the Lord allow us to accompany him serenely during these Easter mysteries and may we emerge from them renewed in faith, hope and charity. Amen.