

# Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord



## On the Threshold of Holy Week

Gracious God,

you who gave your  
only Son to save us,  
help us to understand  
and appreciate that gift  
as we enter Holy Week.

In the words of Saint Paul, we pray:

“Let us run with perseverance  
the race that is set before us,  
looking to Jesus . . .

who for the sake of the joy  
that was set before him  
endured the cross . . . .”

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
your Son, who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

*(Quotation from Hebrews 12:1c-2ac)*

## Sunday, April 1, 2012 The Passion according to Mark

Today's Readings: Mark 11:1-10 or John 12:12-16; Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24 (2a); Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47. Once again we hear the Passion—this year in Mark's stark terms. A few phrases could summarize the whole narrative: “She has done what she could” (14:8); “One of you will betray me” (14:18); “Take; this is my body” (14:22); “You will deny me” (14:30); “[Judas] said, ‘Rabbi!’ and kissed him” (14:45); “Some began to spit on him” (14:65); “They shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him!’” (15:14); “Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last” (15:37); and “Truly this man was God's Son!” (15:39).

What is different about hearing it this time? Perhaps the way we relate it to our own pain. When wounded or

broken-hearted, it is immensely consoling to follow a Lord who wept, who agonized, who knew human loss and vulnerability directly. Great Lord of the Universe, he could be nailed to a cross and buried like countless others. Contemplating the Passion, Saint John Chrysostom wrote, “Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought.” We might, then, meditate on the high cost of our redemption. We might remember that we needn't go through contortions to earn anything. Jesus has already won salvation for us. We might think about the greatest act of love anyone has ever done for us, then see how his surpasses it. Finally, we might rest in quiet gratitude.



## This Week at Home

### Monday, April 2

#### Anointed by a Heroic Woman

Today's Readings: Isaiah 42:1-7; Psalm 27:1, 2, 3, 13-14 (1a); John 12:1-11. Mary's anointing of Jesus, recounted in John's Gospel account today, foreshadows Jesus' sacrifice—an extravagant kindness that fills the world with fragrance. Judas calls her a fool, but Jesus defends her beautiful deed. How could you follow this compassionate example by ministering to the lonely, the ill, or the grieving during Holy Week? It may mean an invitation to drive someone to Mass, sending a note or e-mail, a phone call, or visit.

### Tuesday, April 3

#### The Stance of Trust

Today's Readings: Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71:1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15 and 17 (15ab); John 13:21-33, 36-38. In John's account of the Gospel, the Beloved Disciple sits next to Jesus at his last meal. This disciple is not named, perhaps because he represents every Christian. As he leans back against Jesus, he shows the stance we should take for prayer: relying on Jesus, trusting him completely. Have you cleared your calendar to build in quiet time for the rest of this week? Create a solitary space, light a candle, and reflect on God's unconditional love and Jesus' complete forgiveness.

### Wednesday, April 4

#### Continuing Betrayals

Today's Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 69:8-10, 21-22, 31 and 33-34 (14c); Matthew 26:14-25. We may condemn Judas for his betrayal of Jesus, yet how often have we turned against those we love? In ways small or large, we have all failed to see or to act as Christ would. Place the palms distributed at church on Sunday in your prayer space or table centerpiece at home as a help in meditating on sin and redemptive suffering this week.

### Thursday, April 5

#### Holy Thursday

Today's Readings: Mass of the Lord's Supper: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18 (Our blessing cup is a communion with the Blood of Christ); 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15. John's story of the Last Supper is different the synoptic Gospel accounts. Instead of the institution of the Eucharist, John gives us a lesson about loving service through foot washing, an earthy form of service. People walked in open sandals on dirt roads, so foot washing brought welcome refreshment. Jesus did the work of women or slaves—considering no human “beneath” him. Some outreach ministries take their cue from this ritual. They wash the feet of the poor and give them new socks. You may wish to contribute your Lenten almsgiving to the parish's collection for the needy at Mass this evening.

### Friday, April 6

#### Good Friday

Today's Readings: Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25 (Luke 23:46); Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1—19:42. In the Gospel according to John, Jesus doesn't wait for Judas to betray him with a kiss; he deliberately offers himself to the soldiers with dignity. He continues to do this in dialogue with Pilate, contrasting the infinite power of selfless love to the limited temporal power of the Roman governor. During the celebration of the Passion, the assembly venerates the cross by touching or kissing it, seeing the connection between Jesus' suffering and their own.

### Saturday, April 7

#### Holy Saturday

Today's Readings: Vigil: Genesis 1:1—2:2 ; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15—15:1; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11; Baruch 3:9-15, 32—4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Mark 16:1-7. At the Easter Vigil tonight, by candlelight, we will hear the great stories of our faith and welcome new Christians into the Catholic community. Be sure to participate in these stirring rituals!



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