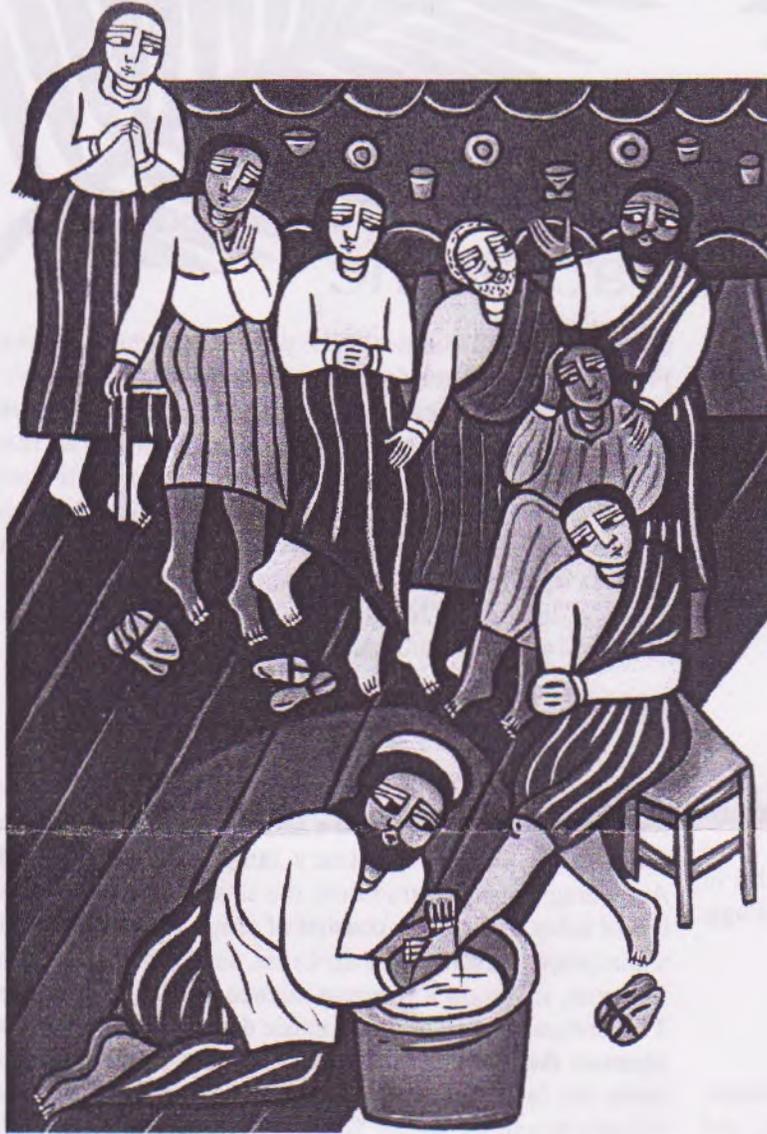


Passion Sunday and Holy Week



A Psalm of Lamentation

Where are you hidden, O God?
In thick clouds of grim news?
Why do you seem so aloof to us?
From your lofty viewpoint,
what are you thinking
as your Son is crucified?
Rise up, God, with
brassy bolts of justice!
Our need, a hollow pit;
desperation, our only door to you.
Protect the abused and abandoned,
all who suffer Christ's Passion today.
We ask this through the same Christ
our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, April 17, 2011 Last Gestures

Today's Readings: Matthew 21:1–11; Isaiah 50:4–7; Philippians 2:6–11; Matthew 26:14—27:66. In his final hours, Jesus' concern is neither with the sinfulness that will pin him to the cross, nor the imminent brutality, but with a last gesture of concern for his friends. Today's Gospel begins with his careful preparations for the Passover meal. His final gifts to the disciples are nurturing bread, inspiring wine, and songs of praise.

One of the most heartbreaking lines in the account of Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane is "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me" (Matthew 26:38). We know how miserably his friends failed him then,

but what about ourselves in similar situations? Do we stand with the grieving, those who suffer Christ's Passion today?

As the disciples sleep, Jesus agrees to his Father's plan, despite what it will cost him. He recognizes, as we should, that God is infinitely wiser than the limited human mind. With any of life's most challenging passages (marriage, parenthood, a career, dying), we have no idea what we're getting into. We grow into that awareness. During his Passion, Jesus is neither child nor slave, but a conscious adult, who agrees in love to whatever the Father asks.

Take some quiet time and reflect on Jesus' innocence and willingness. How can we begin to build a level of trust and inner peace that would sustain us through great suffering?



This Week at Home

Monday, April 18

Entering the Story

Read the Passion story we heard yesterday (Matthew 26:14—27:66), imagining yourself as a character in it: Peter, Judas, Pilate, the serving girl, Simon of Cyrene, Mary Magdalene, or Joseph of Arimathea. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? Saint Ignatius Loyola introduced this style of prayer in the sixteenth century, asking people to enter imaginatively into the Gospel stories. Today's Readings: Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11.

Tuesday, April 19

A Psalm from the Depths

The Hebrew psalms of lamentation have a unique combination of mourning, rage, and praise, of "wow" and "ow." Read Psalm 42, 43, or 44. Then try writing your own psalm of lamentation, like the opening prayer. Today's Readings: Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38.

Wednesday, April 20

Converging Calendars

As Christians are observing the holiest time of their liturgical year, the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday/Easter Sunday), often our Jewish sisters and brothers are observing Passover. The entire Jewish calendar is lunar—marked by the moon. So their holy days occur at different dates each year. Many Christian observances are set by a solar calendar and occur on the same date each year. But the holiest days revolve around Easter, which is set by the moon, because these days are so closely related to the Jewish Passover. This year, Passover began last night at sunset and will continue until Monday, April 25. Today's Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Matthew 26:14-25.

Thursday, April 21

Holy Thursday

Now we begin the Triduum, "The Three Days," each marked from sunset to sunset, during which we celebrate our most

holy and beautiful liturgies of the year: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday/Easter Sunday. Tonight we celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper, recalling the first Eucharist. But the Gospel about the Last Supper that we read tonight is different from the one we hear in the Eucharistic Prayer. In this version, Jesus teaches his disciples that Eucharist must result in loving service. They must wash feet. In what ways have you "washed feet" and been a servant? Today's Readings: (Mass of the Lord's Supper) Exodus 12:1-8; 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15.

Friday, April 22

Good Friday

Yesterday after Mass, church altars were stripped of cloths, the Eucharist was removed to a side altar, candlesticks were taken away, and the sanctuary lamp was extinguished. According to ancient tradition, the sacraments aren't celebrated today. The service consists of scripture readings, penitential prayer, Veneration of the Cross, and Holy Communion. At home, maintain a reverent silence, turning off radios, TVs, computers, and personal music devices. Children could illustrate the Stations of the Cross, hang the drawings, and invite the family to pray the stations using their pictures. Today's Readings: Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1—19:42.

Saturday, April 23

Holy Saturday

We spend this day prayerfully also, eating little in joyful anticipation, as we prepare for the family feasting tomorrow and the beautiful Easter liturgies. The Church lavishes care on the great Easter Vigil: the Easter fire outside in the dark, the lighting of the Paschal candle, the candlelight procession into the church, the wonderful stories of our history, the joyful announcement, "He is Risen!" with many alleluias, the Baptisms, and the Eucharist. Don't miss it! Today's Readings: 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; Matthew 28:1-10.



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 Keeping the Seasons

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