



Sunday of the Passion of the Lord (Palm Sunday)

† Sunday 25th March 2018

In England and Wales

Cycle of Prayer – Candidates for the Sacraments, Wanderers, Penitents

Keynote: The majesty of Jesus the King; the journey of his royal people

Prophet Isaiah 50: 4-7

The disciples of Jesus see this passage as being fulfilled in Jesus, identifying the figure of the 'suffering servant' with the Lord, 'for my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn my back to those who struck me... I did not cover my face against insult and spittle'. Although the prophet Isaiah endured ridicule and suffering he can say, 'The Lord comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults.' This confident faith in God is in contrast to the psalm that follows.

Responsorial Psalm 21 (22) – The prayer of the Suffering Servant

Letter of Paul to the Philippians 2: 6-11

'His state was divine, yet Christ Jesus did not cling to his equality with God...' Scholars recognise this text as being an early Christian hymn or song. Paul quotes the hymn in support of his invitation to the disciples that they should follow in the way of Jesus. The hymn speaks of that way, the abasement of Jesus, his humiliation, and then of his triumphant exaltation. '(He) emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave... being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death.' The 'obedience' of Jesus 'even to accepting death, death on a cross,' brings triumph and resurrection, and, 'God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names.' So Jesus Christ is acclaimed as, 'Lord to the glory of God the Father.'

Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark 14: 1 - 15: 47

Mark with his attention to sharp details brings the events of the Passion alive. From the setting of the Last Supper meal with the disciples, through the betrayal and the arrest of Jesus in the garden outside the city, we follow the final journey of Jesus into captivity, attend the trial before the Roman Governor, and then witness Jesus' crucifixion, death and the sorrow of burial. 'When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land... and at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani – My God, my God, why have you, deserted me?' ...But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.' Of the witnesses we are told: 'The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he died, and he said, "In truth this man was a son of God."' Like the women mentioned at the end, Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Jesus, we can watch and 'take note of where he is laid.' So we like them return later to wash the body and anoint the corpse for final burial.

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Note: There are three elements in the liturgy on this day: palms, passion and Eucharist. The procession by the clergy and people into the church with palms and other branches, focuses on the events that mark the beginning of this *The Great Week*. To witness the triumph of Jesus' entrance into the fabled City of Jerusalem, when the populace sang their joyful 'hosannas' of welcome. But later, within hours, the passion story unfolds, revealing the same crowd that shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Of this we are at the same time witnesses and perpetrators.

Sacred Triduum – Maundy Thursday (Thursday 29th March), Good Friday (Friday 30th March) and Great Vigil of Easter (Saturday 31st March / Sunday 1st April).