



**Sunday of the Passion [Sunday of Palms]**  
**† Sunday 9th April 2017**

Cycle of Prayer: Candidates for the Sacraments, Wanderers and Penitents  
Keynote: The majesty of Jesus the King and the journey of his royal people

**Prophet Isaiah 50: 4-7**

*'The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue... he provides me with speech. Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple.'* So speaks the prophet Isaiah in words in which the disciples of Jesus identify the figure of the 'suffering servant' and the events of the passion and death of Jesus. *'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 endures ridicule and suffering, *'The Lord comes to my help, so that I am untouched by the insults. So, too, I set my face like flint; I know I shall not be ashamed.'*

**Responsorial Psalm 21 [22]** – The confident 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 but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are... accepting death on a cross.'* Scholars recognise that this text is an early Christian hymn or song which has a twofold structure, speaking of the abasement of Jesus, his humiliation, and then of his triumphant exaltation. The 'equality with God' would have bestowed Godlike immunity to death. But Jesus does not cling to this immunity. The 'obedience' of Jesus *'even to accepting death, death on a cross,'* brings 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.'*

**Gospel according to Matthew 26: 14- 27: 66**

The narrative opens in the setting of the last meal at Passover, *'after psalms had been sung they left for the Mount of Olives... Jesus came with them to a small estate called Gethsemane,'* where Jesus spent some time in prayer. Then, *'Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared, and with a large number of men armed with swords and clubs... The one I kiss'* said Judas, *'he is the man. Take him in charge.'* Jesus is led away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the leaders were assembled. Some disciples, including Peter follow discretely curious to know the outcome. After interrogation by the high priest a conclusion is reached. *'He has blasphemed,'* says the high priest, *'what need of witnesses have we now? What is your opinion?'* They answered, *'he deserves to die.'* So when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders met in council to bring about the death of Jesus. They had him bound, and led away to hand him over to Pilate, the Governor. Now Pilate the Roman Governor interrogates Jesus himself, but finding no cause to punish him, the Governor is almost reluctant to get involved, but the crowd are shouting *'Crucify him! Crucify him!'* The Governor, Pilate, saw he was making no impression and that *'a riot was imminent, so he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood."* Then Jesus is led away by the Roman soldiers, *'and when they had finished making fun of him, they... dressed him in his own clothes and led him away to crucify him ...When they had reached a place called Golgotha, that is, the place of the skull, they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall, which he tasted but refused to drink. When they had finished crucifying him they shared out his clothing by casting lots and then sat down and stayed there keeping guard over him.'* After some hours suffering the taunts of the crowd, and enduring the extreme agony of the cross, Jesus cries out in a loud voice, and gives up his spirit. *'Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said, "in truth this was a son of God."* When it was evening, there came a rich man of Arimathea called Joseph, who had become a disciple of Jesus... who *'took the body and wrapped it in a clean shroud and put it in his own new tomb... rolled a large stone across the entrance and went away.'*

Note: There are three elements in the ceremony on this day: the Procession with palms, the reading of the Passion and the Eucharist. The procession with palms and other branches, by the clergy and people into the church allows all to focus on the events that mark the beginning of this Great Week. To witness for themselves the triumph of Jesus' entrance into the fabled City of Jerusalem, when the populace sang their joyful 'hosannas' of welcome. The procession allows us to express our personal willingness to follow in the footsteps of Jesus our saviour. It can be a useful experience to assume the role and person of one of the biblical characters to heighten the feeling of what it was like to be there on the day, to experience the roller coaster of feelings and emotion as the glad joyful people welcome the Messiah Saviour. But later in the passion story, the same crowd that shouted, *"Crucify him! Crucify him!"*

The **Sacred Triduum** follows later in the week and the faithful are invited to take part in the celebration of the Last Supper, the Passion and Death of the Lord, and the Resurrection:

**Maundy Thursday**

**Good Friday**

**Vigil of Easter**