

Special Bulletin for PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD 5 APRIL 2020

PALM SUNDAY 2020



It is a strange feeling to think of starting Holy Week in the current COVID19 situation. But we can also thank God that he has provided us with the ability to make sense out of the unusual situation.

Isolation is the rule we are forced to live by. This Holy Week start with meditations on how our Saviour, Jesus, was isolated and tortured. Yet Jesus showed a path different to that of the world and validated it with his life. It is the human tendency to seek human glory through personal achievements, money status and power. But Jesus is different. When his disciple cut off the ear of a policeman who came to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane, he ordered the disciple to put the sword back into its scabbard and healed the ear. Jesus is here to manifest the love of the Father in Heaven, not violence for personal glory.

The trial of Jesus in front of Pilate the Governor is not just a story of a crowd pleasing human ruler. Pilate wants the people to make a choice between Barabbas and Jesus. Barabbas literally means 'son of the father' - presumably Father in Heaven. Even though he bears such a beautiful name, by his choice his life shows anything but the love of the Father in Heaven. The Gospel describes him as a criminal. He is the figure of those who are initiated to be children of God through baptism, but have abandoned the Christian ways to an irreligious, self-gratifying way of living. Whereas Jesus means 'God saves.' And, Jesus is the figure of trust in God's love. Jesus never looks for his personal glory. He is here to show the Glory of the Father in Heaven. When you read the narrative of Pilate's call to choose between Barabbas and Jesus, personally you should be reflecting on whether you are a figure of God's love or only a Christian by name and not by the way you live. Though this year you cannot come together in your parish church during this time for the penitential acts of Stations of the Cross, Sacrament of Confession, and other sacraments, make a good examination of conscience to see whether you have chosen Barabbas or Jesus in your life. Make an act of contrition like Peter, who wept over his denial of Jesus as his master. Peter remembered the words of Jesus, who commented on his life by predicting that Peter will deny him three times. You too read the Bible and let the Word of God interpret your life. Then you ask for God's forgiveness. Then you too will be restored to the company of the Disciples of Christ, just as Peter was restored to the fold of the Apostles.

Having prepared like this, Peter was able to experience the Resurrected Christ. With proper preparation, you too will be able to meet the Resurrected Christ at Easter, in spite of the doors of the church being shut.

I will be celebrating liturgies, without the participation of a congregation, during this Holy Week. But all the liturgies will be live streamed. You are invited to join them through electronic media. You can pray for spiritual Communion at those liturgies. I will be praying for my parish and for all those



Palm Sunday

Since we cannot have the customary blessing of the palms and solemn procession we need to be innovative in preparing reminders of the Lord's Passion. I suggest that you decorate your front door or gate with some palm leaves, reminding yourself and others of this Palm Sunday. The doors of your parish Church is also decorated with Palms this weekend.

Live Streaming of Holy Week Liturgies

Holy Week Liturgies are celebrated without congregation in the Church. But you can spiritually participate in them. To enable you to do it, Holy Week Liturgies are live streamed. Open the Parish Website and click on the link to watch Masses on YouTube - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCedFcfdv_ILEHVNmQrpWeVA/videos. Thanks to Greg Facer for helping with the technology and equipment. You are also welcome to email the parish office your prayer intentions and Mass Intentions. The Schedule of Masses and other Liturgies as follows:

- ◇ April 3 Friday 5 PM – Mass
- ◇ April 4 Saturday 8 AM
- ◇ April 5 Palm Sunday 10 AM
- ◇ April 6-8 (Monday to Wednesday) 8 AM
- ◇ April 9 Holy Thursday 7.30 PM
- ◇ April 10 Good Friday 3 PM – Passion Service
- ◇ April 11 Saturday Easter Vigil 7 PM
- ◇ April 12 Easter Sunday 10 AM

Church is Lit

Though the Church is ungathered and the doors the building are closed, Jesus remains the light of the world and our lives. Masses are celebrated in the church each day. To remind us of Jesus as the hope and light of the world lights in our parish church are turned on in the night.

Online Resources for Daily Mass & Prayer & Corona Virus Updates

- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCedFcfdv_ILEHVNmQrpWeVA/videos
- <https://shalomworld.org/specialevent/daily-mass> (Vatican Mass)
- <http://bit.ly/MassOnDemand> (Sydney Mass at St Francis Xavier Lavender Bay, Sydney)
- <https://www.stmaryscathedral.org.au/> (Mass Live Stream at St Mary's Cathedral)
- <https://www.facebook.com/anthonyfisherop/videos/2879218758821564/> (Lord's Prayer at midday for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic with His Grace Archbishop Anthony Fisher)
- <https://www.sydneycatholic.org/coronavirus-updates/> (Coronavirus Updates)
- <https://www.ourcatholicprayers.com/spiritual-communion.html> (Spiritual Communion)

Confession

Some parishioners have been enquiring about confessions during the Holy Week, you can ring up the Parish Office on 9644 7787 and make an appointment to come for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Jesuit Refugee Service

'JRS' Australia are working hard to ensure that we can meet the critical needs of the refugees and asylum seekers that we serve in the absence of any federal government support. If you are able to donate food or essential items (see attached flyer) please contact Amelia.Savage@jrs.org.au or ring (02) 9098 9336 or consider making a donation to their emergency cash appeal: <https://www.jrs.org.au/donate-now/>.

COVID19 HELP TEAM

In this time of pandemic, caring for the frail and the elderly, especially those who are isolated, is challenging. CatholicCare is working to roll out a volunteer program to help the needy access groceries, cooked meals, medicine and other necessities at this difficult time. Sister Cecilia Joseph OP, from the parish convent has volunteered to coordinate the team from the parish end. She will liaise with CatholicCare and the parish volunteers. Some parishioners already have expressed their willingness to join the team. If you are willing to volunteer, please email the parish office with your name and contact detail. CatholicCare also has a dedicated phone service, CCareline – Phone 13 18 19 for the needy to contact.



Let's Go Further, Together. You can donate by visiting www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion or phoning 1800 024 413.

ANTIPHONS & READINGS

Entrance Antiphon Cf. Jn 12: 1, 12-13; Ps 23: 9-10

Six days before the Passover, when the Lord came into the city of Jerusalem, the children ran to meet him; in their hands they carried palm branches and with a loud voice cried out:

* Hosanna in the highest! Blessed are you, who have come in your abundant mercy!

O gates, lift high your heads; grow higher, ancient doors. Let him enter, the king of glory! Who is this king of glory? He, the Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory.

* Hosanna in the highest! Blessed are you, who have come in your abundant mercy!

First Reading

Is 50:4-7

The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue. So that I may know how to reply to the wearied he provides me with speech. Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple. The Lord has opened my ear. For my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle. 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 shamed.

Responsorial Psalm:

Ps 21:8-9. 17-20. 23-24. R. v.2

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

All who see me deride me. They curl their lips, they toss their heads. 'He trusted in the Lord, let him save him; let him release him if this is his friend.' **R**

Many dogs have surrounded me, a band of the wicked beset me. They tear holes in my hands and my feet. I can count every one of my bones. **R**

They divide my clothing among them. They cast lots for my robe. O Lord, do not leave me alone, my strength, make haste to help me! **R**

I will tell of your name to my brethren and praise you where they are assembled. 'You who fear the Lord give him praise; all sons of Jacob, give him glory. Revere him, Israel's sons.' **R**

Second Reading

Phil 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, and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel Acclamation Phil 2:8-9

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

Christ became obedient for us even to death dying on the cross. Therefore God raised him on high and gave him a name above all other names. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, king of endless glory!

Gospel

Mt 27:11-54



The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate, the governor, and the governor put to him this question, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' Jesus replied, 'It is you who say it.' But when

he was accused by the chief priests and the elders he refused to answer at all. Pilate then said to him, 'Do you not hear how many charges they have brought against you?' But to the governor's complete amazement, he offered no reply to any of the charges.

At festival time it was the governor's practice to release a prisoner for the people, anyone they chose. Now there was at that time a notorious prisoner whose name was Barabbas. So when the crowd gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Which do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?' For Pilate knew it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over.

Now as he was seated in the chair of judgement, his wife sent him a message, 'Have nothing to do with that man; I have been upset all day by a dream I had about him.'

The chief priests and the elders, however, had persuaded the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. So when the governor spoke and asked them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' they said

‘Barabbas’. ‘But in that case,’ Pilate said to them ‘what am I to do with Jesus who is called Christ?’ They all said, ‘Let him be crucified!’ ‘Why?’ he asked ‘What harm has he done?’ But they shouted all the louder, ‘Let him be crucified!’

Then Pilate saw that he was making no impression, that in fact 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. It is your concern.’ And the people, to a man, shouted back, ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’ Then he released Barabbas for them. He ordered Jesus to be first scourged and then handed over to be crucified. The governor’s soldiers took Jesus with them into the Praetorium and collected the whole cohort around him. Then they stripped him and made him wear a scarlet cloak, and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head and placed a reed in his right hand. To make fun of him they knelt to him saying, ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ And they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head with it. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the cloak and dressed him in his own clothes and led him away to crucify him. On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, and enlisted him to carry his cross. 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.

Above his head was placed the charge against him; it read: ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.’ At the same time two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said ‘So you would destroy the Temple and

rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself! If you are God’s son, come down from the cross!’ The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way. ‘He saved others,’ they said ‘he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He put his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he wants him. For he did say, “I am the son of God.”’ Even the robbers who were crucified with him taunted him in the same way.

From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you deserted me?’ When some of those who stood there heard this, they said, ‘The man is calling on Elijah,’ and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he dipped in vinegar and putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. ‘Wait!’ said the rest of them ‘and see if Elijah will come to save him.’ But Jesus again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.

At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead, and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people. Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said, ‘In truth this was a son of God.’

Full Version: Mt 26:14 – 27:66

Communion Antiphon Mt 26:42

Father, if this chalice cannot pass without my drinking it, your will be done.

Next Week’s Readings for the Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord

1st Reading: Acts 10:34. 37-43

2nd Reading: Col 3:1-4

Gospel: Jn 20:1-9

INTENTIONS for Fr Thomas to include in his Private Mass

Sick: Joyce McDonald, Sr Tomsy

Recently Deceased: Fr Ray Farrell, Monica Smith, Anka Broz, Cenon Alinson, Herbert Vogel

Deceased: Fr Mark Spora, Anavea & Pakalesio, Petelo F Sili, Malia Selek, Makalita Pongi, Alan Ramsay, James Ong, Charlie Portelli, Carmen Portelli, Betty Portelli, Bert Portelli, Tony Spiteri, Carmen Spiteri, George Spiteri, Kath Coyne, Mamerto Bolonia Sr, Fatima Bolonia, Gloria

Bolonia, Astrid Bolonia, Marylou Geronca, Winnie Guillena

Deceased Members and Friends of: O’Dwyer & Erwin Families

Other Intentions: For all those affected by the Corona Virus.

Contact the Parish Office to include your intentions in the Mass by Fr Thomas.

REFLECTIONS ON MATTHEW 27:11-54

Scriptural context – Passion Narratives

Towards the end of the 19th Century, the German scholar, Martin Kähler, described the gospels as ‘passion narratives with lengthy introductions’. Over time, this description was more commonly applied to the gospel of Mark, but it is quite true of all four gospels. The passion elements are the climax of each gospel narrative and were probably written first to establish the unique interpretation of each of the gospel communities. The remainder of the gospel was written to ‘set the scene’ for the culmination of the message in the passion. Reading the four accounts of the passion reveal the unique styles and themes of the different gospel writers.

Different View – The Blame Game

This Passion narrative has been used in the past as justification for persecution of Jews. The text has the people of Jerusalem calling out, ‘his blood be on us and on our children!’ This has been interpreted (poorly) as reason to condemn all subsequent generations of Jews for the death of Jesus. However, this gospel was written in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. The gospel writer sought some explanation for this disaster in the story of Jesus’ life and death: it is the children of the crowd at Jesus’ death who suffered in the fall of Jerusalem.

Gospel Focus – Uniquely Matthew

The passion narrative in the gospel of Matthew follows the gospel of Mark very closely. However, unlike in other sections of the gospel the Matthew writer has not just inserted sections from the Mark account. Rather, the material is reworked and given a unique Matthean ‘flavour’. In addition, the Matthew account includes five events that are not found in the Mark account: Judas hanging himself (27:3-10); Pilate's wife's dream (27:19); Pilate's washing his hands (27:24-25); extraordinary events at the time of Jesus' death (27:51b-53); sealing and guarding the tomb (28:62-66).

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; blessed is the King of Israel

From the discourse "On the Palm Branches" by Saint Andrew of Crete (AD 650-740)

Let us go together to meet Christ on the Mount of Olives. Today he returns from Bethany and proceeds of his own free will towards his holy and blessed passion, to consummate the mystery of our salvation. He who came down from heaven to raise us from the depths of sin, to raise us with himself, we are told in Scripture, above every sovereignty, authority and power, and every other name that can be named, now comes of his own free will to make his journey to Jerusalem. He comes without pomp or ostentation. As the psalmist says: He will not dispute or raise his voice to make it heard in the streets. He will be meek and humble, and he will make his entry in simplicity.

Let us run to accompany him as he hastens towards his passion, and imitate those who met him then, not by covering his path with garments, olive branches or palms, but by doing all we can to prostrate ourselves before him by being humble and by trying to live as he would wish. Then we shall be able to receive the Word at his coming, and God, whom no limits can contain, will be within us.

In his humility Christ entered the dark regions of our fallen world and he is glad that he became so humble for our sake, glad that he came and lived among us and shared in our nature in order to raise us up again to himself. And even though we are told that he has now ascended above the highest heavens – the proof, surely, of his power and godhead – his love for man will never rest until he has raised our earthbound nature from glory to glory, and made it one with his own in heaven.

So let us spread before his feet, not garments or soulless olive branches, which delight the eye for a few hours and then wither, but ourselves, clothed in his grace, or rather, clothed completely in him. We who have been baptized into Christ must ourselves be the garments that we spread before him. Now that the crimson stains of our sins have been washed away in the saving waters of baptism and we have become white as pure wool, let us present the conqueror of death, not with mere branches of palms but with the real rewards of his victory. Let our souls take the place of the welcoming branches as we join today in the children's holy song: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the king of Israel.