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2 April 2023

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Pastoral Note

When either form of the Commemoration of the Lord's Entry into Jerusalem is celebrated at parish masses (First Form: Procession or Second Form: The Solemn Entrance), the introduction in the Roman Missal would be used. At masses where the Third Form: The Simple Entrance takes place, the introduction in the Roman Missal could still be used with appropriate adaptations. There is no Penitential Act when there is a procession or a solemn entrance.

Introduction

The Sunday liturgy that opens Holy Week is distinct in a number of ways. Most notably it consists of two parts, one which focuses on Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the second featuring an extended reading of the Passion. Further, the Liturgy of the Word is laid out to be more overtly participatory – this draws us to reflect more intensely during these most significant moments of the liturgical year.

When it comes to processions and gatherings we remain in a 'pandemic' mindset. The virus has not dissipated completely, and its effects are ongoing. We remain wary in crowds and even family gatherings.

It is good to be aware that there are different sorts of processions, with our own ANZAC march following in quick succession. The one Jesus embraces is something of a victory procession. The new king, the new ruler, the new heralded one has arrived and processes through the city. The feted one processes, and the crowds accompany. There is some irony in this. The Gospel sets Jesus as active in entering with the intention to make a mark. He plans the event and procures the means of transport. Yet he rides a donkey not a horse, a lowly animal not a stately steed. He arranges for his small team to be with him, a far cry from the local authorities and the nobility.

The crowd however turn the entrance into a procession. They respond to the coming of this particular man to their city, the Holy city, as Passover is commencing. They fete him, respond with cloaks and cries, and journey with him. We still sing their song during the Holy Holy Holy at the Eucharist. Despite this enthusiasm we know things will not turn out well! Soon enough in this liturgy itself we will hear the tale of the passion. Jesus will then walk another pathway with the crowds watching and baying. We quickly learn that despite appearances Jesus has not entered the city as triumphant, but rather, at considerable cost, has taken the humble path of obedience.

And so, the entry procession of Jesus into Jerusalem sets the scene for the week that follows. The master is humble – and soon in humility will wash feet, and then in humility be subjected to degradation and death. The people are alive to the promise, but unable to maintain hope. The disciples form the procession with Jesus, but they are few in number and soon go to ground.

Jesus takes this path willingly. There is power in his command, even to the borrowing of another's donkey. The shouts of hosanna are untested and soon will fall silent, and then will ring out for Barabbas. Even as we participate in the procession, we are reminded of our need for the master who rides a donkey.

Procession Gospel

Matthew 21:1–11

Knowing it is God's will, Jesus comes freely to Jerusalem and is greeted with enthusiasm by the people.

Collect

The Oration

Almighty ever-living God,
who as an example of humility for the human race to follow
caused our Saviour to take flesh and submit to the Cross,
graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering
and so merit a share in his Resurrection.

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
God, for ever and ever.

This Sunday signals an intensification of the Lenten journey. It celebrates the entry of the Lord into Jerusalem and heralds the upcoming Passion. It operates as the climactic Sunday of Lent and as introduction to Holy Week. In this, the collect is extremely interesting. It establishes the paschal mystery as a unified whole: the incarnation, the death and the resurrection are one of a piece. There is no atomisation of the singular mystery of salvation. The incarnation and the cross are intertwined as the ultimate exemplars of the self-emptying of Christ under the will of God. The presupposition is that the way to resurrection is to follow the will of God, the God who holds all power and does not fall under the sway of death. The response of the Saviour to the divine will is patient suffering. Similarly patient suffering is recommended as our response too, especially as the seasonal fast increases in intensity. Further the self-abasement of Christ is an example of humility for all humanity. However, suffering and humility are not the endpoint of the prayer, rather the aim of the whole is participation in the resurrection.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Isaiah 50:4–7

The Lord is portrayed as a servant, one who suffers but does not retaliate, one who is shamed but trusts beyond human commendation, who appears thwarted but remains.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 21(22):8-9, 17-20, 23-24

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

This poignant psalm helps us cry out to God with any abandonment that we carry and sets the scene for the reading of the Passion.

Second Reading

Philippians 2:6–11

In the defeat of death, God exalts Christ Jesus, and shows that nothing can stand between creation and the love of God.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 26:14–27:66 or Matthew 27:11–54

Jesus concludes his life on earth with a cry of lament that lifts into thanksgiving.

Reflection

The prophet Isaiah is used frequently across the final days of Lent and into the Triduum. The servant songs offer a haunting reflection on the actions of Jesus and his inner sense of self. The Lord is portrayed as a servant, one who suffers but does not retaliate, one who is shamed but trusts beyond human commendation, who appears thwarted but remains resolute.

Of great significance here is the choice of psalm. Psalm 22 is a noted lament psalm and carries the two moments of the genre: loud wailing and lamentation, followed by a movement into praise and thanksgiving. This is the psalm placed in today's Gospel by our evangelist Matthew on the lips of Jesus as he is about to die. It is quickly heard from our perspective as an act of pain and desperation, and so it is. But as a Jewish lament psalm it implies a transition, however difficult, wretched and wrenching, into hope and praise. Jesus' cry on the Cross is not simply anguish but also hope and consolation. The liturgy places the psalm here to give us a wider understanding of Jesus' embrace of death in faith and hope. This psalm enables us to hear the gospel as it was written.

The reading from Philippians establishes a profound theological foundation for the liturgies of Holy Week and the Triduum. Our salvation is God's doing and shows the unfathomable depth of divine love. Note here the resonance with the Exodus reading for Holy Thursday, where the image is of God who 'passes over' and brings

salvation. The Word took flesh, an act of self-emptying that resulted in the Christ taking humanity, acting fully in obedience to the Father, identifying fully with the poor and the sinful, and as human embracing violence and death. In the defeat of death, God exalts Christ Jesus, and shows that nothing can stand between creation and the love of God. This text is one of Paul's most profound meditations. It has its parallel in the opening of the Gospel of John, yet pushes us further to reflect on humility, obedience and trust.

This is followed by Matthew's version of the crucifixion. The biblical story will be heard across the coming days, but Matthew's intention is to write for Jewish and gentile believers. The evangelist aims to bring us to faith, and the narrative concludes with the dawning of something different. The crowds and convicted rebels continued their insults till his passing, but on his death even the dead could not remain silent, the Temple was exposed and the centurion gained a new conviction. As for Jesus' followers, those who were at a distance were soon to be the foundation of the community of the risen one. The thanksgiving that brings Jesus' lament to a conclusion has begun at this final breath.



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Now that we have once again heard the story of the suffering and death of Jesus, we call out, as he did, in total confidence to his loving Father.

Petitions

We pray for the Church, that it will remain unified in love and embrace the synodality that will bring about the desired renewal.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of nations, that through the teachings of Jesus, they can condemn violence, oppression and discrimination and therefore lead humankind toward peace and unity.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all Christians, that they may continue to work towards the Kingdom, strengthened in faith in Jesus Christ, and not desert the community during times of oppression and difficulty.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those experiencing suffering and hardship that through Jesus Christ they find the strength to carry heavy burdens and find meaning in difficult times. May those who care for them be filled with the Spirit of compassion so that they can walk alongside in grace and peace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our loved ones who have died. As we remember the sacrifice of God's Son, we also pray that our deceased family and friends will be welcomed into Paradise.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who work tirelessly to bring meaning to our liturgies during Holy Week and the Triduum. May they be filled with the Spirit so that the celebrations of the coming days bring joy and hope in the resurrection.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, you sent your only Son to bring us back to you. Hear these needs of our world and our community and grant them through the power of your Spirit, in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Passion (Palm) Sunday (2 April 2023)

Title	AOV1	CWB	CWBII	GA
Entrance Antiphon				
Hosanna to the Son of David			302	
Entrance Procession				
All glory, laud and honour		229	303	309
Hail, Redeemer, king divine		703	400	390
Other Hymns for the Liturgy				
Behold the wood			320	333
Jesus, remember me			526	308
My loving Saviour, how have you offended		749		
O sacred head, surrounded		776	330	335
Soul of my saviour		811	164	
The glory of our king was seen		821		
Were you there?	103		328	336
When I survey the wondrous cross		862	329	

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
Behold the cross		172	
My God, my God (Smith)		58	
My God, my God (Whitaker)			249
O sacred head			314
See him	108		
Song of the cross	116		
Wondrous love			317

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 21: *My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?*

	CWB	GA	JOBA	LPA	PM
Psalm 21	233	22	pg. 38	pg. 42	pg. 10, pg. 14

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Sing it, hosanna (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Procession with Palms]

Where have you gone? (FWS) *Based on Ps 21/22*

Hearts on fire (Vs 2 & 3) (SHOF) [Recessional]