

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
Palm Sunday—6th Sunday of Lent
2021—B Cycle



“Palm Sunday”

Courtesy of [Brady Leavell](#) on [unsplash.com](#)

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

Opening Prayer

(edited for use here)

A prayer by [Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB](#)

God of Life,
open our minds and hearts to the voice of life around us.
Help us receive the counsel you send,
and give to others the counsel we ourselves have learned.
Bring us home to your Word in everything we do.
Give us the grace to ask our questions
and the heart to recognize your answers.
Let us cease to live in fear of the unknown,
trusting always that the possibilities of creation
are all paths to you.
Amen.

Palm Sunday—Sixth Sunday of Lent

Isaiah 50:4-7 “Morning after morning he opens his ear that I may hear.”

Psalms 22: 8-9, 17-20, 23-24 “I will proclaim your name to my brethren.”

St. Paul to the Philippians 2: 6-11 “He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave.”

Gospel at the Procession: Mark 1:1-10 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

(The passion of Christ according to Mark 14: 1 to 15: 47)

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (50: 4-7)

Third song of the servant: "Yahweh has opened my ear."

The Lord Yahweh has taught me,
so I speak as his disciple,
and I know how to sustain the weary.
Morning after morning he wakes me up
to hear and listen like a disciple.
The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear.
I have not rebelled, nor have I withdrawn.
I offered my back to those who strike me,
my cheeks to those who pulled my beard;
neither did I shield my face
from blows, spittle, and disgrace.
I have not despaired,
for the Lord Yahweh comes to my help.
So, like a flint I set my face,
knowing I will not be disgraced.

Personal Reflection

After the Babylonian Exile, there arose a prophet who remains anonymous. Jewish tradition placed his writings as an addendum to the Book of Isaiah (Chapters 40–55). This reading comes from that added part of Isaiah known now as "Second Isaiah." Unlike the pre-exilic prophets, this author had a different style. He didn't preach and dispute like the other great prophets of Israel. Instead, he wrote poems and "exclamations" posing the Jew's biggest post-exilic question, "What might God have in store for Israel now and in the future?"

— *Which line(s) of this poem touch my heart in a special way? What surfaces within me as I probe the reason for my reaction?*

The prophet says that every morning God "opens my ears that I may hear."

— *How do I connect with God when I wake up each morning? What motivates me to get out of bed and face each day and its sometimes difficult challenges?*

God may seem to disappear when I'm having a bad day.

— *How do I reconnect with God when that happens?*

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

A psalm of David. The suffering servant wins the deliverance of the nation.



King Saul threatening David
by 17th c. Spanish painter
[Jose Leonardo](#)

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
All who see me make a jest of me;
they sneer and shake their heads.

“He put his trust in Yahweh,
let Yahweh rescue him!
If Yahweh is his friend,
let him help him!”

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

Round about me are vicious dogs,
villainous rogues encircling me.
They have tied up my hands and feet.
They can count all my bones,
for they are looking, and watching me,
dividing my garments among them,
and casting lots for my raiment.
O Yahweh, be not far from me!

O my strength, come quickly to my aid.
My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

I will proclaim your name to my brothers,
I will praise you in the assembly,
“All you who fear Yahweh, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him!
All you sons of Israel, revere him!”
My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Personal Reflection

The crucified Christ prayed the dreadful opening lines of this psalm from the cross. Jesus seemed to have temporarily suffered the loss of his anchor (Mark 15: 34, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). During our worst times—faith may seem to offer little light, only darkness. All we ask is strength to “keep on keepin’ on.” To keep doing what we know we must. In fact, Christ did not suffer alone. In some mysterious way, we stood at the foot of his cross with Mary and John. Now, he stands at the foot of our cross(es). Jesus abides with us not only in times of joy but in our suffering as well.

— *When did I last become aware that Jesus stood with me at the foot of my personal cross?*

— *When have I been conscious of standing at the feet of Jesus’ cross? In other words, when did I see him suffering and stayed by his side like the Good Samaritan?*

From the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians (2: 6-11)

“Though (Jesus) was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God



Crucifixion seen from Jesus' perspective, by [James Tissot](#) between 1886-1894

as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking on the nature of a servant, made in human likeness, and, in his appearance, found, as a man, he humbled himself by being obedient to death, death on the cross. That is why God exalted him and gave him the name which outshines all names. At the name of Jesus all knees should bend in heaven, on earth, and among the dead, and all tongues proclaim, that Christ Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Personal Reflection

Paul wrote this letter to his converts at Philippi during one of his *several* imprisonments. Philippians is a personal letter, full of tenderness for this community that had always shown concern for Paul’s well-being. More than once he had counted on their material assistance.

— *What phrase from this passage pops out at me as I listen to St. Paul’s words? Why does it catch my attention today?*

— *When I hear Jesus’ name of spoken, whether in prayer or in disgust, how often do I remember to acknowledge his sacred name in a reverential way (whether physically or internally)? Who taught me to do this? If I don’t react in some way, what does that say about me? How will I correct that flaw?*

— *What have I had to let go of this year (“emptying myself”) to safely navigate the year-plus days of Covid restrictions?*

— *In what everyday ways do I hear Jesus inviting me to “empty” and “humble” myself for others, as he did?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Mark (1:1-10)

“When they drew near to Jerusalem and arrived at Bethphage and Bethany, and the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples with these instructions, ‘Go to the village ahead of you and, as you enter it, you will find there a colt tied up that no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it here.’

“If anyone says to you, ‘What are you doing?’ give this answer, ‘The Lord needs it, but he will send it back immediately.’

“They went off and found the colt, out in the street, tied at the door. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders asked, ‘Why are you untying that colt?’



Image found at
[National Catholic Register](#)

“They answered as Jesus had told them, and the people allowed them to continue. They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their cloaks on its back, and Jesus sat upon it. Many people also spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread leafy branches from the fields. Then the people who walked ahead, and those who followed behind Jesus, began to shout, ‘Hosannah! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David, which comes! Hosannah in the highest!’”

Personal Reflection

Some admirers of Jesus didn’t get the true meaning of his return to Jerusalem. They expected a grand entrance into the Holy City and a political announcement that he had taken charge and would reform Judaism and drive the Romans out of Palestine. Instead, he entered astride an unimpressive borrowed colt. These same disciples failed to grasp the true meaning of what he did and said. At times, we have the same “I don’t get it” problem regarding what we expect from Jesus and what he asks of us in return.

— *How can my sometimes “not-getting-it” help me to be more patient with myself and others in my family, my community, the world, who seem not to grasp the meaning and importance of faith-full living?*

— *What advice would I give to our soon-to-be “new Catholic converts” about this local and worldwide Catholic community they will commit to? Would I tell them only the “good parts”? Or would I let them know that our faith community consists of both great saints and great sinners—and always will?*

The Week Ahead

If I want this to be a genuine holy week of personal preparation for Easter, how will I adjust my mental attitude over the coming week to make it so?

Journaling Prompts

— *Based on our Palm Sunday readings, what does God ask me to do this week regarding . . .*

(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships . . . and

(2) my life as Christ’s emissary, charged with bringing his values and grace to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?

— *Who, in particular, needs to hear from me some expression of love? Who needs to receive from me this week, sharing a moment of laughter and personal concern? Why do I hesitate?*

Take some time to write about your experience and feelings about events occurring in your life today and what you see happening across our country.

For Inspirational Viewing/Listening

Music:

“[Hosanna](#)” by [Hillsong](#) (6.5 min.)

“[Stay With Me Remain Here With Me](#)” by [Taize Community](#) (5.5 min.)

Website:

Bishop [Robert Barron](#) on the meaning of [Palm Sunday](#) (11 min.)

Note especially his explanation of why Jesus entered Jerusalem from the east gate.

“[Holy Week Explained](#)” by [Louis Revision](#)

“[The Last Seven Words of Christ](#)” by Robert Barron

You’ll probably want to watch this Three Hour (*Tre Hore*) service piecemeal over the course of this week and next. Barron’s homilies on the seven last words are excellent, as usual. Recorded in 2012 from the Good Friday service at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, New York.

Preview of Next Week’s Scriptures

Easter Sunday

Acts of the Apostles 10: 34, 37-43 “This man God raised on the third day.”

Psalm 118 1-2, 16-17, 22-23 “Give thanks to the Lord for God is good.”

I Corinthians 5: 6-8 “Our Pascal Lamb has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast.”

John 20: 1-9 “On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb . . . while it was still dark.”

Closing Prayer

(edited for use here)

Adapted from the book, [The Way of the Cross](#), by [Caryll Houselander](#) (1955)

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!”

And into your hands, Jesus Christ,

my most merciful redeemer, infinite Love,

I commend myself in the hour of death, my body and soul,

my heart and my mind and my will, all that I have and all that I am.

Into your hands, the beautiful hands of a carpenter,

with their line and sinew and muscle,

strong and sensitive hands nailed to the cross,

I commend to those whom I love, your hands that can heal the sick,

can give sight to the blind;

hands that can raise the dead and restore them to life with a touch.
Receive them, comfort them, lead and uphold them.
Unite them to yourself and reunite them with me
forevermore in your kingdom, Jesus, merciful Lord.
Amen.

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

The Sunday readings are from [*Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition*](#)

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Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

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(follow this link to my spiritual novel, [*Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*](#))