

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Phil 2:8-9

Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.

Gospel at the procession with palms

Matt 21:1-11; L37A

When Jesus and the disciples drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tethered, and a colt with her.

Untie them and bring them here to me. And if anyone should say anything to you, reply,

'The master has need of them.'

Then he will send them at once."

This happened so that what had been spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled:

Say to daughter Zion,

"Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had ordered them.

They brought the ass and the colt and laid their cloaks over them, and he sat upon them.

The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 275.

See Appendix A, pp. 276-277, for the Gospel at Mass, or Matt 27:11-54 in Appendix A, p. 278.

Reflecting on the Gospel

Fairytales include three bears, three little pigs, and three witches. The third time is a charm, we say. The life cycle is birth, life, and death. The magi brought three gifts to the infant Jesus. Time is divided into past, present, and future.

Hegel taught about thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. And we could go on and on and on. Threes are all around us. Threes abound in Matthew's account of Jesus' passion as well. Judas is paid thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus (three times ten). Jesus takes his three favorite apostles Peter and "the two sons of Zebedee" as he goes off to pray. Three times Jesus finds Peter asleep after he asks him to "keep watch with me." One of the accusations against Jesus before the "chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin" is that he said he could rebuild the temple in three days. Peter denies three times that he knows Jesus. Jesus and two others were crucified on that first Good Friday. Jesus died at three in the afternoon. Pilate gave orders that "the grave be secured until the third day." But no one was prepared for what would happen on that third day!

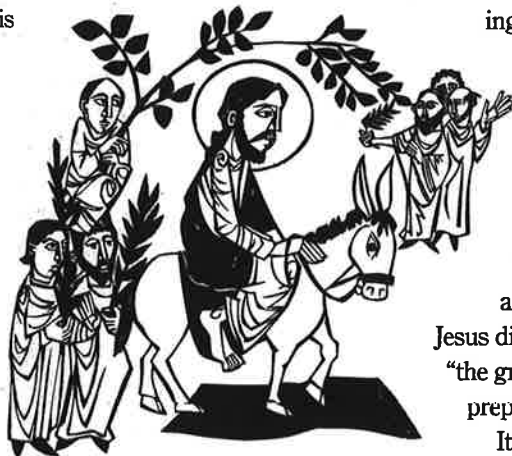
It is easy to hear only the negatives in the passion accounts: Jesus is denied, betrayed, unjustly judged. He is scourged, mocked, crucified. He suffers, dies, and is buried. Yet all through the passion accounts, there are signs of life, promise, and hope. The night before he was betrayed Jesus gave his disciples a continuing memorial of his self-giving, his very Body and Blood for our nourishment as the sacrament of Life. He promised that he could rebuild the temple in three days, speaking of course about the temple of his own Body. He gave us everlasting hope that by not saving himself, he saved us.

This day—Palm Sunday—when we sing our hosannas and bow our heads in sorrow as we hear the passion account for the first time this year, we begin the holiest week of our Christian year. It is no ordinary week, for we celebrate Jesus' unreserved self-giving. Holy Week brings before us the demands of self-giving. All of our daily living throughout the year reminds us that, ultimately, like Jesus we must give ourselves over to God so that God might give us divine Life.

Living the Paschal Mystery
We cry this day "Hosanna!" but, unlike the people of the city of Jerusalem long ago, we need not ask "Who is this?" This is the one who models for us the mystery of life: die to self so that we might be exalted, raised to new life. This week we celebrate in pointed liturgies the meaning of our whole Christian living: dying to self so that God can raise us up, too. This dying can be as simple as setting aside the time to participate in all the Triduum (meaning "three days") liturgies or as demanding as entering into the depths of the paschal mystery by our own self-giving.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Perhaps this week we need to stop thinking of ourselves and our own needs first, ahead of others. Perhaps we must make Jesus the center of our lives instead of making ourselves the center of attention. Perhaps we need to calm down the frenetic pace of our own lives and cut some things out so we can concentrate on our loved ones more, or help out those in need more. In these three examples what we give up leads to a new lease on life. Most importantly, it leads to new and deeper relationships and richer experiences. This is all new Life for us. This is what this week and the three days of the Triduum are all about.



Focusing the Passion Gospel

Key words and phrases: thirty pieces of silver, after I have been raised up, he found them asleep, within three days rebuild it, you will deny me three times, Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, until three in the afternoon, grave be secured until the third day

To the point: Judas is paid thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus (three times ten). Jesus takes his three favorite apostles Peter and “the two sons of Zebedee” as he goes off to pray. Three times Jesus finds Peter asleep after he asks him to “keep watch with me.” One of the accusations against Jesus before the “chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin” is that he said he could rebuild the temple in three days. Peter denies three times that he knows Jesus. Jesus and two others were crucified on that first Good Friday. Jesus died at three in the afternoon. Pilate gave orders that “the grave be secured until the third day.” But no one was prepared for what would happen on that third day!

Connecting the Passion Gospel

to the second reading: Jesus emptied himself of “equality with God,” he was “obedient to the point of death,” and he was “greatly exalted” by God. This hymn’s threefold movement parallels Jesus’ threefold movement through obedience to passion-death to resurrection.

to experience: We tend to think about the cross in the narrow terms of an instrument of torture and death. The second reading this Sunday reminds us that the cross is also the means of exaltation—that self-giving death for the good of others leads to glory.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: The Liturgy of the Word this Sunday invites us to grapple with the relationship between emptying ourselves and exaltation. Because Jesus freely chose to empty himself of glory already his (second reading) and to abandon himself to the pain and degradation of the cross (second reading, gospel), God lifted his name in glory forever (second reading). Because Jesus understood that hanging on the arms of the cross was surrender into the arms of God, he could lift God’s name in glory even as he suffered (psalm). The readings and psalm reveal that we cannot have the glory of the resurrection unless we undergo the self-emptying of the cross, but also that what appears to be our destruction is actually our deliverance. And so on this Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion we sing Psalm 22, surrendering ourselves into the arms of God where we find both our cross and our glory.

to psalmist preparation: In these verses of Psalm 22 you sing not only about Jesus’ self-emptying but also about his exaltation into glory. You sing also about your own self-emptying and exaltation, for through baptism you participate in Jesus’ death and resurrection. How willing are you to undergo self-emptying required for exaltation? How willing are you to ask the ass to do so?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- I betray Jesus when . . . I am most faithful when . . .
- I am able to stay awake and pray with Jesus when . . . for . . .
- This Holy Week, three things I can do to prepare myself for Easter Sunday are . . .

PRESIDERS

Ways my ministry *and* living guide others through the path of dying to self to exaltation (rising to new Life) are . . .

DEACONS

Three fruits of my service ministry that I have received are . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My hospitality ministry helps to build up the temple of the Body of Christ gathering for liturgy when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

When I take time to pray with Jesus about my music ministry, the difference in my music making is . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My preparing and serving for Mass opens me to what happened on the third day after Jesus’ death in that . . .

LECTORS

When I consciously choose to stand by Jesus by the goodness of my daily living, my proclamation sounds like . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

My distributing Holy Communion is a way I keep watch with Jesus in prayer when I . . .

Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion, April 9, 2017

Gospel (cont.) at the procession with palms
Matt 21:1-11; L37A

The crowds preceding him and those following kept crying out and saying:

“Hosanna to the Son of David;
blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord;
hosanna in the highest.”

And when he entered Jerusalem

the whole city was shaken and asked, “Who is this?”

And the crowds replied,

“This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee.”