

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

Luke 19:28-40; L37C

Jesus proceeded on his journey up to Jerusalem.

As he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany at the place called the Mount of Olives,

he sent two of his disciples. He said, "Go into the village opposite you, and as you enter it you will find a colt tethered on which no one has ever sat.

Untie it and bring it here.

And if anyone should ask you, 'Why are you untying it?' you will answer,

'The Master has need of it.'

So those who had been sent went off and found everything just as he had told them.

And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them,

"Why are you untying this colt?"

They answered,

"The Master has need of it."

So they brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks over the colt, and helped Jesus to mount.

As he rode along, the people were spreading their cloaks on the road;

and now as he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 284.

Gospel at Mass Luke 22:14-23:56; L38ABC or Luke 23:1-49 in Appendix A, pp. 284-87.

Reflecting on the Gospel

We are fickle creatures. We can experience happiness to the point of being ecstatic one minute and sink to the depths of despair the next. We can sing the praises of somebody now that we will despise later. There are certainly reasons for the changes in our emotions and attitudes, but there can be no dispute that our emotions and attitudes change, and sometimes quickly so.

The church attempts to capture and express this fickleness in the liturgy today when we enter with palm branches singing songs of praise, only to cry out in unison moments later during the gospel, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"



Luke's version of the passion of Jesus has several unique characteristics when compared especially with his Marcan source. For example, Luke gives us the episode of the back-and-forth between Pilate and Herod that is absent in all other gospels. Some scholars see that Luke's Christology bears even on the relationship between these two rulers, who, unwittingly through their encounter with Christ, "became friends that very day, / even though they had been enemies formerly."

It's as though Christ has the power to bring friendship even among those who are seeking to have him executed.

The power of Christ is also on display in this gospel when Jesus prays from the cross, "Father, forgive them." The distinctly Lucan theme of forgiveness is on Jesus' lips at the moment before his death. And the mercy of Jesus extends even to a criminal, which Luke relates to us in an exchange between them. Again, no other evangelist tells this story. The other evangelists simply narrate that two criminals were crucified along with Jesus.

The profundity of these two chapters (or even only one if the parish reads the shorter reading) is something that we reflect upon year after year. We will not exhaust this story. It will exhaust us, and we shall return to it to gain insight, understanding, and strength. The grand themes that Luke employed in his gospel are on full display here: mercy and forgiveness.

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Let's soak up the gospel today and try to keep our fickleness in check. Let's wave palm branches and sing songs of praise without losing ourselves in a call to "Crucify him! Crucify him!" But even if, and perhaps when, we do, we know that forgiveness awaits from a merciful God.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Perhaps the liturgical expression of palm branches followed by shouts of crucifixion has something in common with our spiritual life. When are the moments we are ecstatic? When are our palm branch and singing moments? What causes those moments? Are we caught up with the crowd? Are we praising the Messiah, or the things we want the Messiah to do? Are we caught up in expectations, or ready to be a disciple, which literally means "to follow"?

It's much easier to sing somebody's praise when we think that person will live up to our expectations. But what happens when they do not? What happens when there is another path to follow?

Gospel at the Procession with Palms (cont.)

Luke 19:28-40; L37C

They proclaimed:

"Blessed is the king who comes
in the name of the Lord.

Peace in heaven
and glory in the highest."

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him,

"Teacher, rebuke your disciples."

He said in reply,

"I tell you, if they keep silent,
the stones will cry out!"

Gospel at Mass

Luke 22:14-23:56; L38ABC

When the hour came,

Jesus took his place at table with the apostles.

He said to them,

"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,
for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again
until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said,

"Take this and share it among yourselves;
for I tell you that from this time on
I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine
until the kingdom of God comes."

Then he took the bread, said the blessing,

broke it, and gave it to them, saying,
"This is my body, which will be given for you;
do this in memory of me."

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying,

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
which will be shed for you.

"And yet behold, the hand of the one who is to betray me
is with me on the table;

for the Son of Man indeed goes as it has been determined;
but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed."

And they began to debate among themselves
who among them would do such a deed.

Then an argument broke out among them

about which of them should be regarded as the greatest.

He said to them,

"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them
and those in authority over them are addressed as 'Benefactors';
but among you it shall not be so.

Rather, let the greatest among you be as the youngest,
and the leader as the servant.

For who is greater:

the one seated at table or the one who serves?

Is it not the one seated at table?

I am among you as the one who serves.

It is you who have stood by me in my trials;

and I confer a kingdom on you,
just as my Father has conferred one on me,
that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom;
and you will sit on thrones
judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

"Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded
to sift all of you like wheat,

but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail;
and once you have turned back,
you must strengthen your brothers."

He said to him,

"Lord, I am prepared to go to prison and to die with you."

But he replied,

"I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows this day,
you will deny three times that you know me."

He said to them,

"When I sent you forth without a money bag or a sack or sandals,
were you in need of anything?"

"No, nothing," they replied.

He said to them,

"But now one who has a money bag should take it,
and likewise a sack,
and one who does not have a sword
should sell his cloak and buy one.

For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me,

namely, *He was counted among the wicked;*
and indeed what is written about me is coming to fulfillment."

Then they said,

"Lord, look, there are two swords here."

But he replied, "It is enough!"

Then going out, he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives,
and the disciples followed him.

When he arrived at the place he said to them,

"Pray that you may not undergo the test."

After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them and kneeling,

he prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing,
take this cup away from me;
still, not my will but yours be done."

And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him.

He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently
that his sweat became like drops of blood
falling on the ground.

When he rose from prayer and returned to his disciples,

he found them sleeping from grief.

He said to them, "Why are you sleeping?"

Get up and pray that you may not undergo the test."

While he was still speaking, a crowd approached

and in front was one of the Twelve, a man named Judas.

He went up to Jesus to kiss him.

Jesus said to him,

"Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

His disciples realized what was about to happen, and they asked,

"Lord, shall we strike with a sword?"

And one of them struck the high priest's servant
and cut off his right ear.

But Jesus said in reply,

"Stop, no more of this!"

Then he touched the servant's ear and healed him.

And Jesus said to the chief priests and temple guards
and elders who had come for him,

"Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?

Day after day I was with you in the temple area,

and you did not seize me;

but this is your hour, the time for the power of darkness."

After arresting him they led him away

and took him into the house of the high priest;

Peter was following at a distance.