

Sunday, Mar 25, 2018

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

Guilty as sin

Time for a confession. We did it. We're the ones who denied Jesus somewhere between three times and 77 times, just since Lent began. We sold him for a wad of cash, or a comfortable lifestyle, or a moment's peace. We took a snooze when Jesus asked us to pray. We kissed him in public, but looked the other way when he was abused. We twisted his words to suit our purposes, mocked him with thin praise, ran when he needed a friend, hid to save our skins. Lord, have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.

TODAY'S READINGS: Procession: Mark 11:1-10 or John 12:12-16 (37); Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1—15:47 (38).
"They began to be distressed and to say to [Jesus], one by one, 'Surely it is not I?'"

Monday, Mar 26, 2018

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Rise up in faith

Talk about "life-threatening": Sometimes vitality itself is the threat! Lazarus was looking mighty good for a dead man after Jesus called him out of the tomb. So the religious authorities put Lazarus on their hit list along with Jesus. Next time, Lazarus might stay dead; however, nobody reckoned on Jesus. Although you'll never see the bumper sticker announcing it, "Resurrection happens," too. Our new life in Christ should be highly visible—not to mention equally troubling—to those who prefer God-inspired troublemakers to be quiet and lifeless.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11 (257). "The chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many were believing in Jesus."

Tuesday, Mar 27, 2018

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Salvation is always at hand

Who looks for Jesus? People who are suffering, mostly. The sick, outcasts, and sinners are always running after Jesus, hoping for relief from their pain. So when the Greeks start looking for Jesus, we know something's changed. These folks are doing well—they're just in town for the Passover festival. The only reason such folks could want Jesus is as Jesus predicts: God's saving plan gathers momentum when the outside world is onto the gospel. We, too, normally seek Jesus when things are going wrong. But salvation is often closer when need is not all that compels us.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38 (258). "The Greeks came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'"

Wednesday, Mar 28, 2018

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Resist the temptation to sell out

If you want an example of how the gospels tell the same story differently, then you need go no further than Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Only in Matthew does Judas get 30 pieces of silver in advance for handing Christ over to the authorities. That Judas is greedy we know. "What will you give me?" he asks up front. Here's the lesson: Once you've been paid off, it's a lot harder to back out. Who is currently running interference for something you'd rather not do? Who is fronting for your choices so you

don't have to account for them? How do you work up the nerve to say no to these abdications of responsibility for which you may have to pay a much bigger price later?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Matthew 26:14-25 (259). "They paid him 30 pieces of silver. And from that moment Judas began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus."

Thursday, Mar 29, 2018

EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (HOLY THURSDAY)

Time for some church hopping!

On this day it is traditional in parts of the Catholic world to visit seven churches, a practice that may have originated in Rome. In the Philippines and parts of Latin America the tradition is called *Visita Iglesia* ("church visit") and involves reciting the Stations of the Cross at the various stops along the way. In Singapore the Lord's Prayer and other prayers are recited seven times at each church visited accompanied by festivities and a "last supper" before the Good Friday fast. In India 14 churches are visited, one for each Station of the Cross. Why not partake in this tradition and make it your own?

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15 (39). "When he had washed their feet he . . . said to them, 'Do you realize what I have done for you?'"

Friday, Mar 30, 2018

FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION (GOOD FRIDAY); DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Be kind—it's always possible

It's pretty easy to look around and conclude that one of the things humans do best is inflict suffering on one another. Christ's Passion draws attention to suffering, both what he endured because a group of leaders put their own power and security ahead of everything else, and what people have endured ever since for similar reasons. Yet Christ gathers up all suffering and death in his own. The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus forever ended meaningless suffering and death. All sacrifice, all loss, now has ultimate value because Christ offered himself for sacrifice and rose again. You can participate in this redeeming sacrifice by exercising kindness wherever you find suffering.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1—19:42 (40). "When you make his life an offering for sin . . . through him the will of the Lord shall prosper."

Saturday, Mar 31, 2018

HOLY SATURDAY

Sit in the dark and see the light

In his 2004 Easter Vigil homily, Pope Saint John Paul II said we must renew our dedication to the service of the gospel: "If this mission may sometimes seem difficult, call to mind the words of the Risen Lord: 'I am with you always' (Matt. 28:20). Certain of his presence, you shall fear no difficulty and no obstacle. . . . His Body and his Blood will nourish you and sustain you on your daily journey to eternity." Still feeling uncertain of Jesus' presence? Attend the Easter Vigil. Sitting in total darkness that becomes total light as the brazier fire is set and the Paschal candle lit is bound to rekindle your faith in the Light of the World.

TODAY'S READINGS: Vigil: Genesis 1:1—2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15—15:1; Exodus 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11; Baruch 3:9-15, 32—4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Mark 16:1-7 (41). "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth. He has been raised; he is not here."

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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