

## Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion – March 29, 2026 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Gospel for Blessing of Palms: Matthew 21:1-11

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. 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."

### Scripture Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7

The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

### Psalm: Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

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

All who see me scoff at me;  
they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads:  
"He relied on the LORD; let him deliver him,  
let him rescue him, if he loves him."

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

Indeed, many dogs surround me,  
a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;  
they have pierced my hands and my feet;  
I can count all my bones.

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

They divide my garments among them,  
and for my vesture they cast lots.  
But you, O LORD, be not far from me;  
O my help, hasten to aid me.

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

I will proclaim your name to my brethren;  
in the midst of the assembly I will praise you:  
"You who fear the LORD, praise him;  
all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him;  
revere him, all you descendants of Israel!"

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

### Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming 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, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### Gospel: Matthew 26:14-27:66



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## **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

## **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

## **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

Palm Sunday contains a contrast that tells us in advance what Holy Week is all about. This is why Sunday is called both "Palm Sunday" and "Passion Sunday." The two Gospels set up the contrast. That is right, two Gospels. The first is read at the very beginning of the ceremony, during the procession of palms. Jesus is making a triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. The people are cheering wildly: "The whole city stirred to its depths," Matthew tells us. Some people are asking, "Who is this?" and others in large numbers replying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee!" They soften his pathway, laying out palm branches before him and even spreading their own coats on the road. He is their man. They treat him as a king! The Church procession reaches the front of the church, with parishioners holding actual palm fronds to illustrate the story. Mass continues, and the readings come.

And now the tables are turned. In the second Gospel, we hear a reading of the passion according to Matthew. Here, Jesus the king is handed over to authorities, betrayed by one of his own disciples, and he completes his kingly entry to Jerusalem by receiving a royal robe of mockery and a crown of pain. He did not turn away from this mockery. In fact he "set his face like flint" toward his humiliation (as it says in the First Reading of Sunday's Mass; see also Luke 9:51-55). This reading states the contrast beautifully. It is a passage from Isaiah, and is called the "Third Song of the Suffering Servant." The first part of this reading says, "The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them." This he did, and was applauded for it, treated like a king. The second part says, "I have not rebelled, have not turned away. I gave my back to those who beat me ...." Jesus knew well this passage from Isaiah.

So Palm/Passion Sunday presents a huge contrast between the world's view of kingship and the holy and humble meaning of it. The Church has set up Sunday's liturgy specifically for this purpose. Jesus begins as a hero and ends as an object of ridicule. In this contrast, Jesus shows himself as a man of great humility. Each of us, including Jesus, is designed to love and be loved, to empty ourselves of any bad habit or out-of-control urge that pushes us toward pride. We become ourselves by remaining true to the God of Love who lives within us. Neither shame nor renown can pull us away from this, if we follow Jesus in his humility. And then God will highly exalt him. God will say to the crowd, you were right about throwing palms, but not if you were trying to create a worldly hero. Real glory and greatness reside in quiet, unrelenting love, no matter how other people react. We are in the presence of great truth here.

## **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. "Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear." What does the speaker of this reading hear? Is it about suffering? Are you reluctant to stand up for justice if it involves discomfort for you? Is there any small thing you could do to remedy someone's suffering? Explain.
2. Discuss this thought from Javier Melloni, SJ: "The will of God is the divinization of every creature; and it was to bring about this divinization that the One who was in God and who was God, emptied himself in order to participate in our human condition and transform it from within."
3. According to Pope Francis, where is Christ crucified today? "When we resort to violence, we show that we no longer know anything about God, who is our Father, or even about others, who are our brothers and sisters. We lose sight of why we are in the world and even end up committing senseless acts of cruelty."

## **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

## **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following: Almighty, ever-living God, you have given the human race Jesus Christ our Savior as a model of humility. He fulfilled your will by becoming man and giving his life on the cross. Help us to bear witness to you by following his example of suffering and make us worthy to share in his resurrection. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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## Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen