

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

PALM = Pray Always, Love More

April 10, 2022

PASSION = What do I Pass On? Passionate and Compassionate Action.

At the Procession with Palms - Gospel

Lk 19:28-40

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.
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!”

A brief reflection on this initial scripture passage. The Pharisees were concerned about crowd control, hoping to quell the mob’s excitement as they proclaimed – “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.” Perhaps the fear of the Pharisees was a projection of their own lack of belief in this king, thinking how easily one could join a crowd and shout fashionable slogans of the day, and forget the responsibilities demanded of us tomorrow. What was the collective mind of the crowd? Maybe the crowd was in sync with this king on his donkey. What do I or we Pass On? “Let us be united. Let us speak in harmony. Let our minds apprehend alike. Common be our prayer. Common be the end of our assembly. Common be our resolution. Common be our deliberations. Alike be our feelings. Unified be our heart. Common be our intentions. Perfect be our unity.” – Rig Veda.

At the Mass – Reading I

Is 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.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures. This reading emerges out of the trials and tribulations of the Exile. Isaiah, chapters 1-39 criticize the Israelites for their lack of fidelity to the Covenant God made with them. Soon the Assyrians will crush the northern cities of Israel akin to the Russian's massive devastation and destruction of Ukraine's men, women, children, and slaughtered babies.

However, with second Isaiah, chapters 40-55 (chapter 50 today's reading), the mood changes, it is a message of encouragement, vindication, and hope. Despite the deplorable conditions, someday all will

be well as expressed by William Kristol in the Bulwark, “I wonder if we fully appreciate the heroism of the Ukrainian people and the unpayable debt we owe them for their offensive stand. Because if President Zelenskyy had fled, and the government of Ukraine had collapsed, Putin would have succeeded. We would still be denying the threats we face. It is the Ukrainians who have shown us what free men and women can do, and what they are required to do, in defense of their freedom.” - The Week, April 1, 2022, p. 12. The third “suffering servant” song is the “collective” voice of the Israelites as they strive to make meaning of their persecution and exile. As Jesus, in Luke, the Israelites will “set their face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame” (Isaiah 50:7b).

Responsorial Psalm

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

R (2a) 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?

Reading II

Phil 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.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures. The reading from Philippians offers up a compassionate and passionate servant who emptied himself and took on the form of a slave. As a Jewish-Christian hymn, it must have been very moving to collectively sing this expression and proclamation of faith. Henri Nouwen alludes to this downward movement of Jesus penetrating our lives, and creating an upward spiritual flow of grace. As we rise with Jesus, we can cry out the essence of the early Christian creedal statement: “Jesus Christ is Lord” as evidenced by this story of passionate and compassionate action – During the Holocaust, Sharon Bass’ Jewish grandmother was rescued by a Ukrainian woman named Maris Blyshchik. Eight decades later, Bass returned the kindness by offering Blyshchik’s descendants haven from the Russian invasion. Earlier this month, cousins boarded a bus to Warsaw, then flew to Bass’ home in Israel. “When it was time for action, we decided to bring them here, to a place where they can be safe.” -This Week, April 1, 2022, p.5.

Verse Before the Gospel

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

Lk 22:14–23:56

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.
They lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it,
and Peter sat down with them.
When a maid saw him seated in the light,
she looked intently at him and said,
“This man too was with him.”
But he denied it saying,
“Woman, I do not know him.”
A short while later someone else saw him and said,
“You too are one of them”;
but Peter answered, “My friend, I am not.”
About an hour later, still another insisted,
“Assuredly, this man too was with him,
for he also is a Galilean.”
But Peter said,
“My friend, I do not know what you are talking about.”
Just as he was saying this, the cock crowed,
and the Lord turned and looked at Peter;
and Peter remembered the word of the Lord,
how he had said to him,
“Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.”
He went out and began to weep bitterly.
The men who held Jesus in custody were ridiculing and beating him.
They blindfolded him and questioned him, saying,
“Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?”
And they reviled him in saying many other things against him.

When day came the council of elders of the people met,
both chief priests and scribes,
and they brought him before their Sanhedrin.

They said, "If you are the Christ, tell us,"
but he replied to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe,
and if I question, you will not respond.
But from this time on the Son of Man will be seated
at the right hand of the power of God."
They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?"
He replied to them, "You say that I am."
Then they said, "What further need have we for testimony?
We have heard it from his own mouth."

Then the whole assembly of them arose and brought him before
Pilate.

They brought charges against him, saying,
"We found this man misleading our people;
he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar
and maintains that he is the Christ, a king."
Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"
He said to him in reply, "You say so."
Pilate then addressed the chief priests and the crowds,
"I find this man not guilty."
But they were adamant and said,
"He is inciting the people with his teaching throughout all Judea,
from Galilee where he began even to here."

On hearing this Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean;
and upon learning that he was under Herod's jurisdiction,
he sent him to Herod who was in Jerusalem at that time.
Herod was very glad to see Jesus;
he had been wanting to see him for a long time,
for he had heard about him
and had been hoping to see him perform some sign.
He questioned him at length,
but he gave him no answer.
The chief priests and scribes, meanwhile,
stood by accusing him harshly.
Herod and his soldiers treated him contemptuously and mocked him,

and after clothing him in resplendent garb,
he sent him back to Pilate.
Herod and Pilate became friends that very day,
even though they had been enemies formerly.
Pilate then summoned the chief priests, the rulers, and the people
and said to them, "You brought this man to me
and accused him of inciting the people to revolt.
I have conducted my investigation in your presence
and have not found this man guilty
of the charges you have brought against him,
nor did Herod, for he sent him back to us.
So no capital crime has been committed by him.
Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him."

But all together they shouted out,
"Away with this man!
Release Barabbas to us."
— Now Barabbas had been imprisoned for a rebellion
that had taken place in the city and for murder. —
Again Pilate addressed them, still wishing to release Jesus,
but they continued their shouting,
"Crucify him! Crucify him!"
Pilate addressed them a third time,
"What evil has this man done?
I found him guilty of no capital crime.
Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him."
With loud shouts, however,
they persisted in calling for his crucifixion,
and their voices prevailed.
The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted.
So he released the man who had been imprisoned
for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked,
and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished.

As they led him away
they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian,

who was coming in from the country;
and after laying the cross on him,
they made him carry it behind Jesus.
A large crowd of people followed Jesus,
including many women who mourned and lamented him.
Jesus turned to them and said,
“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me;
weep instead for yourselves and for your children
for indeed, the days are coming when people will say,
‘Blessed are the barren,
the wombs that never bore
and the breasts that never nursed.’
At that time people will say to the mountains,
‘Fall upon us!’
and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’
for if these things are done when the wood is green
what will happen when it is dry?”
Now two others, both criminals,
were led away with him to be executed.

When they came to the place called the Skull,
they crucified him and the criminals there,
one on his right, the other on his left.
Then Jesus said,
“Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”
They divided his garments by casting lots.
The people stood by and watched;
the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at him and said,
“He saved others, let him save himself
if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God.”
Even the soldiers jeered at him.
As they approached to offer him wine they called out,
“If you are King of the Jews, save yourself.”
Above him there was an inscription that read,
“This is the King of the Jews.”

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying,
“Are you not the Christ?
Save yourself and us.”

The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply,
“Have you no fear of God,
for you are subject to the same condemnation?
And indeed, we have been condemned justly,
for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes,
but this man has done nothing criminal.”

Then he said,
“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”
He replied to him,
“Amen, I say to you,
today you will be with me in Paradise.”

It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land
until three in the afternoon
because of an eclipse of the sun.
Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle.
Jesus cried out in a loud voice,
“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”;
and when he had said this he breathed his last.

Here all kneel and pause for a short time.

The centurion who witnessed what had happened glorified God and
said,
“This man was innocent beyond doubt.”
When all the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had
happened,
they returned home beating their breasts;
but all his acquaintances stood at a distance,
including the women who had followed him from Galilee
and saw these events.
Now there was a virtuous and righteous **man named Joseph** who,
though he was a member of the council,

had not consented to their plan of action.
He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea
and was awaiting the kingdom of God.
He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.
After he had taken the body down,
he wrapped it in a linen cloth
and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb
in which no one had yet been buried.

It was the day of preparation,
and the sabbath was about to begin.
The women who had come from Galilee with him followed behind,
and when they had seen the tomb
and the way in which his body was laid in it,
they returned and prepared spices and perfumed oils.
Then they rested on the sabbath according to the commandment.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures. The reading of the Passion is heavy with the inevitable – Jesus will be killed – “Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit’; and when he had said this, he breathed his last.” With passion and compassion, Joseph of Arimathea asked for Jesus’ body to bury, and women sought out to prepare Jesus for burial who were in the throes of agony, grief, and despair.

There is a parallelism between the Passion then and now in the Ukraine – “The bodies are stacked together with dozens of others in this mass grave on the outskirts of the city. Workers toss the bodies in as fast as they can, because the less time they spend in the open, the better

their own chances of survival. 'The only thing I want for this is to be finished,' raged worker Volodymyr Bykovskiy, pulling crinkling black body bags from a truck. "Damn them all, those people who started this!" -The Week, April 1, 2022, p. 16.

The Passion and compassion continues, "There was another child in the emergency room, the toddler struck in the head by shrapnel. His mother and father bundled him in a blanket. They hoped for the best and endured the worst. Why? Why? Why? His sobbing mother asked. She tenderly upwrapped the blanket around his lifeless child to kiss him and inhale his scent one last time, her dark hair falling over him." -The Week, April 1, 2022, p. 16.

The Passion and Compassion continues. "Rescuers rushed a pregnant woman through the rubble and light snow as she stroked her bloodied belly, face blanched and head falling listlessly to the side. Her baby was dying inside her, and she knew it. 'Kill me now!' she screamed, as they struggled to save her life at another hospital even closer to the front line. The baby was born dead. A half-hour later, the mother died," -This Week, p. 17.

Kneeling At the Cross

Mary, your eyes tell a sad and tragic story-

a psalm of lament rises from your sorrowful heart.

Your first born son, half naked and innocent-

leans heavy on the wood of the cross.

Above his head is not a kingly sign,

but a ribbon of hope.

His brother and sister keep vigil-

wondering, where is God now?

Jesus, I do not see nails pinning your hands in place-

but nails piercing the axle of the Resurrection

on which the wheel of life turns spinning

like a propeller.

'His mother called him "little kiss." He was killed in

his crib when a bomb struck his home. His toy

plane was found among the wreckage.'

All the way to God is God-

when we kneel at the foot of the cross.

-rvb

Roger J. Vanden Busch