

Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday) (6th Sunday of Lent, Year C)

Procession: Luke 19:28-40—Jesus' Triumphal Entry

1. Messiah: Jesus rides “a colt”; “Blessed is the King...!” (Luke 11:28-38)

Isaiah 50:4-7—The Suffering Servant

1. Servant: gives his “back” to the smiters; hides not his “face” from shame and spitting

Psalm 22—My God, my God, Why have You Forsaken Me?

1. Begins with “forsakenness” by God (22:1); ends with conversion of Gentiles! (22:27)

Phil 2:6-11—The *Kenosis* of Christ

1. Crucifixion: “he emptied himself (Gk *kenōō*) and became obedient unto death” (2:8)

Luke 22:14-23:56—The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ

1. Jesus' Prayer for Peter (22:31-34)
 - a. Satan: demanded to sift “you all” (pl.) like wheat
 - b. Jesus: prayed for “you” (sg.) Peter that “your faith may *not fail*” (22:32)
2. Suffering Servant (22:35-38)
 - a. “Let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one” (22:36)
 - b. Prophecy: “he was reckoned with transgressors” (22:37; cf. Isa 53:12)
3. The Agony in the Garden (22:43-44)
 - a. Angel: appears to “strengthen” Jesus (22:43)
 - b. Blood: “sweat” became like “great drops of blood” (22:44; cf. Gen 3:19)
 - c. Mount of Olives: cf. Gethsemane “oil press” (22:39)
 - d. Jewish Tradition: Tree of Life = Olive Tree

And Adam said to Eve, “Rise and go with my son Seth to the regions of *Paradise*... Perhaps [God] will have mercy and send his angel to *the tree of his mercy* [= the Tree of Life], *from which flows the oil of life*, and will give you a little of it with which to anoint me, that I might have rest from these pains by which I am wasting away.” (*Life of Adam and Eve* 36:1-2; trans. in OTP 2)

4. Jesus' Before the Sanhedrin (22:54-62)
 - a. Peter in the “courtyard” (Greek *aulē*) of “the high priest’s house” (22:54)
 - b. Proximity: “the Lord turned and looked at Peter” (22:61)
5. The Carrying of the Cross (22:26-31)
 - a. Daughters of Jerusalem: “weep for yourselves” (cf. 19:41-44)
 - b. Destruction of the City (cf. Hos 10:8)
4. The Last Words of Jesus (22:32-49)
 - a. Mercy: “Father, forgive them...” (23:34)

The Mass Readings Explained

- b. Good Thief: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (22:42)
 - c. New Adam: “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (23:43)
 - d. Psalms: “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!” (23:46; Psalm 31:5)
5. The Burial of Jesus: rested on the Sabbath (23:56)

The Living Tradition

Jerome: “That flaming, flashing sword was keeping Paradise safe. No one could open the gates that Christ closed. The thief was the first to enter with Christ. His great faith received the greatest of rewards. His faith in the kingdom did not depend on seeing Christ. He did not see him in his radiant glory or behold him looking down from heaven. He did not see the angels serving him. To put it plainly, he certainly did not see Christ walking about in freedom, but on a gibbet, drinking vinegar and crowned with thorns. He saw him fastened to the cross and heard him begging for help, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ ... The cross of Christ is the key to paradise. The cross of Christ opened it...” (Jerome, *On Lazarus and Dives*; trans. in ACCS, pp. 366-67).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Passion Sunday, Year B)

1. In the Triumphal Entry, the crowds sang Psalm 118 to welcome Jesus as messianic king into Jerusalem. When in the Mass do we welcome Christ as coming king?

2. What are the signs in Luke’s account of Jesus’ passion that he was not just the Messiah but a new Adam?

3. Which of the last words of Jesus is most moving to you? Why?

For Further Study

1. CCC 571-630: This section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* contains the Church’s official teaching the meaning of the Jesus’ passion, death, and burial. It is extremely rich and can serve as food for meditation.
2. Arthur A. Just, Jr. *Luke*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament III. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003. Pp. 329-373.