

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year C

## Passion Sunday

***Gospel of Palms:*** (Luke 19.28-40)  
*Jesus Enters Jerusalem*

This reading gives us the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem at the end of the long journey. In Luke, the cheers are concentrated not merely on the Kingdom, but on the King himself, who comes in the name of the Lord. Their cries echo but excel those of the angels at the nativity, 'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven!'

For Luke, Jerusalem is the hinge, the turning point where the gospel ends and the Acts of the Apostles begins, the spread of the Good News to the ends of the earth. For the last 10 chapters, all the concentration has been on this journey up to Jerusalem, where Jesus is to suffer and so rise again, but there has been an air of tragedy about the journey. Jesus' death has been constantly in mind, for it has been stressed that no prophet can perish away from Jerusalem. As Jesus enters the city he weeps over its refusal to accept him, just as he did in 13. 34-35, and as he will do as he leaves Jerusalem for execution.

***First reading:*** (Isaiah 50.4-7)  
*The Song of the Servant*

In the Book of Isaiah occur four songs, of which this is the third, sung by a mysterious Servant of the Lord. It is not clear who this Servant is, but he is totally

dedicated to the service of the Lord, a disciple who listens devotedly. Through suffering, this Servant brings to fulfilment the salvation that the Lord intends for Israel and for the world. Jesus saw himself in the terms of this Servant, and the four songs feature throughout the liturgy of Holy Week.

**Question:**  
*How can I be more positive about bearing suffering for the sake of Christ?*

***Second reading:*** (Philippians 2.6-11)  
*Raised High through Suffering*

This hymn was probably not written by Paul himself, but taken up by him into the letter, a very early Christian hymn. It celebrates the triumph of Jesus through his selflessness. The assertions at the end are staggering. The hymn claims for Jesus the titles and the worship that are due only to God. What is more, this acknowledgement of Jesus does not detract from the glory of God, but is precisely 'to the glory of God the Father'. This is perhaps the fullest statement in Paul of the divine glory of Jesus, and it is won by his humiliation in death.

**Question:**  
*In this reading, which to you is the most powerful expression of the divinity of Christ?*

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## Gospel:

(Luke 22.14-23.56)

### *The Passion According to Luke*

In Luke's version of the story of the Passion of Jesus, many of the details are different from those of the other evangelists. This merely means that Luke stresses different aspects, for the narratives are as much commentaries on the significance of events as straight narratives.

1. At the Last Supper Luke gathers together sayings of Jesus on the future of the Church and how the leaders of the community should behave: they should serve their brothers and sisters, not like the arrogant leaders of secular regimes. Luke places here the promise to Peter, that he will strengthen his brothers.
2. Luke stresses that Jesus is in control of the whole sequence. At the Agony in the Garden, instead of the three distraught prayers of Jesus, there is only one, and Jesus is in perfect control, kneeling down and standing up again, rather than throwing himself on the ground. At the end, instead of 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?', Jesus tranquilly yields his own life into the Father's hands, obediently completing his Father's will.
3. At the trial scene there is no sign of the High Priest or of any verdict. It is more a disorderly rabble who hustle Jesus to Pilate and produce trumped-up charges. Pilate does not sentence Jesus, but merely hands him over to them 'to deal with as they pleased'. Jesus, in contrast, continues his mission of bringing peace by the reconciliation of Pilate with Herod.
4. The crucifixion scene itself is a scene of conversions: Jesus continues right to the end his mission of bringing reconciliation. The women of Jerusalem mourn for Jesus. Jesus forgives his executioners. He welcomes the good thief into paradise. The centurion gives praise to God, and the crowds go home expressing their repentance. By contrast, it is the holy women who fulfil the Law of repose on the Sabbath.

## Question:

*Do I obey Jesus' instructions, 'Pray that you enter not into temptation'? Why does Luke stress so heavily this scene of forgiveness at the Cross?*

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