

FOR THE WEEKEND OF MAR. 28-29, 2026b

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Gospel Reading

Mt 27:11-54

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and he questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so."

And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer.

Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?"

But he did not answer him one word, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now on the occasion of the feast the governor was accustomed to release to the crowd one prisoner whom they wished.

And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called [Jesus] Barabbas.

17So when they had assembled, Pilate said to them, "Which one do you want me to release to you, [Jesus] Barabbas, or Jesus called Messiah?"

For he knew that it was out of envy that they had handed him over.

While he was still seated on the bench, his wife sent him a message, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man. I suffered much in a dream today because of him."

The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas but to destroy Jesus.

The governor said to them in reply, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They answered, "Barabbas!"

Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus called Messiah?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!"

But he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" They only shouted the louder, "Let him be crucified!"

When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. Look to it yourselves."

And the whole people said in reply, "His blood be upon us and upon our children."

Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him.

They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him.

Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head.

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him.

As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon; this man they pressed into service to carry his cross.

And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull),

they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink.

After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots;

then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

Two revolutionaries* were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left.

Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads

and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, [and] come down from the cross!”

Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said,

“He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.

He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way.

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*”^{*} which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Some of the bystanders who heard it said, “This one is calling for Elijah.”

Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink.

But the rest said, “Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him.”

But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.

And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split,

tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, “Truly, this was the Son of God!”

Intercession

Lord, in your passion, you modeled patient strength and dignity. May your grace help us to bear our crosses similarly, and, through support of the Catholic Ministry Appeal, may we help others bear their own crosses.

Copy for Bulletin Announcement

God so loves us that He sends His Son to die for us. God so wants to have a personal relationship with us, that He shares Jesus with us. When we experience pain and suffering, though, we wonder how this can be God's plan for us. Where is God in illness, violence, betrayal, economic hardship, natural disaster, and cruelty? Why does God, who desires intimacy with us, seem so far away? And where is God in Christ's passion?

We may feel like God is far away, but He isn't. God reminds us: "When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you" (Jeremiah 29:12). Relying on God during difficult times draws us closer to Him. And if, during times of trial, we open ourselves up to God, we can be instruments of His love and grace, just as Christ was to those witnessing his passion.

As we enter this holiest time of the liturgical year, please consider ways you can pick up the cross and follow Jesus into greater intimacy with God. Please pray for the continued success of the Catholic Ministry Appeal, and please consider supporting the appeal to help lighten the crosses others are bearing.

Copy for Pulpit Announcement

Thankfully, we do not subscribe to the view that God is an angry, wrathful, vengeful God. In the oft quoted verse from 1 Corinthians, "love is patient, love is kind" (13:4), St. Paul reminds us what it truly means to love. He is showing us the face of God. To love like God is to love truth, to bear what life throws at us with quiet dignity, to return rudeness with good manners, to seek what is best for others, to forgive.

If we need a reminder that Our Father is merciful, we need only look at today's Gospel. It is apparent that God is not a vengeful God. He doesn't seek heavenly retribution on His Son's many afflictors. Pilate lives to see another day. The soldiers who crown Jesus with thorns, scourge him, spit on him, slap him, mock him, cast lots for his clothes and nail him to a cross are not struck down. The high priests who betray Christ out of fear and jealousy are not punished.

He is not absent but rather very, very present. Upon Christ's death, the veil of the sanctuary is torn in two, the earth shakes, stones are split, the saints who had fallen asleep rise from the dead. The Old Covenant is giving way to a New Covenant, whose foundation is love and mercy. When we extend God's love to those in need, such as making a gift to the Catholic Ministry Appeal, we are living this New Covenant. Please take this request to support the Appeal to prayer.

Social Media Post/Content

Photo: Cross backlit with a bright light

Header: "Truly, this was the Son of God!" – Matthew 27:54



Copy: May we praise God in word and deed! We can make the Son of God known through support of the Catholic Ministry Appeal.