

Our Sunday Readings

Procession with Palms:
 MARK 11:1-10 or JOHN 12:12-16
 ISAIAH 50:4-7
 PSALM 22:8-9,17-20,23-24
 PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11
 Passion: MARK 14:1 – 15:47

True Identity

PASSION READING: MARK 14:32-42

Reading closely

1. What all might Jesus have hoped for when he began his ministry?
2. How might this moment for Jesus have been like his time in the desert?
3. What might Jesus have expected from Peter, James, and John?
4. What might Peter, James, and John have thought would happen?
5. Why do the disciples sleep?
6. Why do you think Jesus keeps going back to the disciples?
7. How do you think Jesus is able to pray for God's will to be done?
8. How do you think Jesus knows that Judas is about to betray him?

Living the word

9. When have you struggled as Jesus did?
10. When did you "keep watch" with a friend?
11. When did a friend "stay up" for you?

PASSION READING: MARK 14:32-42

Abba

The word *abba* is a very personal form of the word *father*. Children used the term, and

disciples sometimes called their master *Abba*. Jesus may not have been the only person who used this term to refer to God, but such use doesn't seem to have been common.

Cup

Drink from the cup is metaphorical language for *participate in*. One's cup might be full of joy, but sometimes, as here, it is full of suffering. James and John had declared that they could drink from the same cup as Jesus (10:35-40), but they won't be the ones crucified alongside him.

Strength & weakness

Jesus remains faithful to his mission even when he knows where it's leading. When tested yet again, Jesus shows his perfect obedience to God. The disciples, however, who vowed to participate in Jesus' suffering (14:31) fall asleep and then run away when he's arrested.

When Jesus says, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," he distinguishes between the best and worst of humankind. The disciples want to be faithful and courageous like Jesus, but their own weakness gets the better of them.

PASSION READING: MARK 15:25-39

Reading closely

1. Why is crucifixion an especially painful way to die?
2. What all do you think is running through Jesus' mind as he hangs on the cross?
3. What all might the people walking past be thinking?
4. Where do you think the disciples are?
5. What might the disciples be thinking?
6. What do you think Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
7. Why is the Roman officer there?
8. What might the other soldiers be doing?
9. Why exactly do you think the Roman officer says what he does?
10. Imagine you are at Jesus' crucifixion.
 - a. Do you say anything?
 - b. Do you do anything?

Living the word

11. What part of this passage stands out to you? Why?
12. Have you experienced God's absence?
13. What should you do during Holy Week?

PASSION READING: MARK 15:25-39

Forsaken

Rome readily crucified those it believed were a threat to its power and stability. People were crucified in public places as a warning to others not to rebel against the empire.

Because Jesus was crucified, many Jews, at least initially, couldn't believe he was the messiah. Jesus is thus mocked by everyone: those walking past, the Jewish authorities, and even the other two victims. His male disciples have already fled (14:50). By quoting Psalm 22, Jesus voices his utter isolation.

Portents

The eclipse signals the enormity of what's happening: creation understands the meaning of the crucifixion even if the people do not. The tearing of the temple veil signifies the temple's elimination. Temple worship is no longer necessary because people now encounter God through Jesus, his Son.

Elijah

A confusion of languages means that some people think Jesus is calling for the prophet Elijah. Some Jews believed that this ancient prophet would help those who were in desperate situations. Elijah, however, had already come: he was John the Baptist, who prepared a way for Jesus. This way led toward the cross, not away from it.

Only on the cross

People ridicule Jesus as a false king and messiah. In their minds God's chosen one should vanquish the Romans and restore Israel's sovereignty and strength. The opposite seems to be happening: the Romans are brutally killing Jesus.

Yet it is precisely now, at the moment of Jesus' terrible death, that someone finally "sees" that Jesus is God's Son. Up to this point in Mark's Gospel, only God and the demons have known this. Jesus' disciples understand that he is the messiah, but they don't see beyond this.

Although Jesus healed and expelled demons, it is only when he is on the cross that he is correctly recognized as God's Son – and by the very person who oversees his death. God's Son expends himself utterly in order to bring people into a kingdom that is infinitely greater than anything they expect.

PRAYER

adapted from St. Alphonsus Maria de' Liguori

My Lord Jesus Christ,
 you have made this journey to die for me with love unutterable.
 Many times I have abandoned you,
 but now I love you with my whole heart.
 Because I love you,
 I sincerely repent for ever having offended you.
 Forgive me, my God,
 and permit me to accompany you on this journey.
 You go to die for love of me.
 I wish also, my beloved Redeemer,
 to die for love of you.
 My Jesus, I will live and die always united to you.
 Amen.