



# PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION YEAR A

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Parishes

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"Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Matt. 21:9 \* My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Matt. 27:46

## Reading I: Isaiah 50:4-7

**LORD, INCREASE MY FAITH! GIVE ME A FAITH THAT IS VICTORIOUS!** A popular television network sports show used to begin its telecast with the promise to take its viewers from, *"the thrill of victory to the agony of defeat."* This Palm Sunday, the readings take us from the thrill of victory – Jesus' celebrated arrival in Jerusalem, to His agony and death on the cross – that some would call defeat, to His glorious Resurrection. During this Holy Week, we celebrate the divine steps to our salvation. Therefore, we go from victory, to defeat, to glorious victory.

The first reading from Second Isaiah describes how the Suffering Servant – the Messiah – accepts the role of suffering given to Him by His Father. The obedient and faithful servant is deeply



**Blessed is He who comes  
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troubled, yet He expressed confidence in His Father. The obedient and faithful Servant embraced His calling to proclaim the Word of God as his ultimate mission. His mission was to preach the victory of the Lord over man's conditions. His confidence lies in the fact that the Lord who appointed Him and gave Him the tools He needed to complete His tasks (vv. 4-5). His obedience gives Him victory. Therefore, He is so confident in His ultimate victory that He willingly submits His body to punishment (v. 6).

The Servant will not be moved from His resolute purpose by insults, injuries or even death. His face tells the story: *"He has set His face like flint"* (v. 7). His demeanor is that of a victor. There is no limit to what He will endure to complete His task. It is through His suffering, (crucifixion) that He will triumph. He will not be put to shame, because God is His refuge who has given Him a glorious victory. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** How do you handle success? What gives you confidence to succeed? Are you afraid to speak out against injustice?

## I HAVE SET MY FACE LIKE FLINT.

**Flint** is a very hard variety of quartz. Dark gray or brown in color, it is usually found in chalk or limestone rock. A form of silica, it sparks when struck by steel or another flint (2 Macc 10:3). Because flint has a sharp edge when broken, tools such as knives, weapons, saws, sickles, and many other implements were made from flint by prehistoric man throughout the Stone Age.

Archaeologists have found many flint objects, especially knives, in Palestine. These were dated from the Neolithic or Late Stone Age (about 7000 B.C. - 4500 B.C.). Zipporah used a "sharp stone" to circumcise her children (Ex 4:25; Josh 5:2). The Bible refers to "rocks of flint" (Deut 8:15), or "flinty rock" (Deut 32:13).

Flint is also spoken of in a figurative manner in the Bible, denoting strength and determination (Isa 5:28; 50:7; Ezek 3:9). This mineral is still abundant in the limestone rock of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. (From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

## Reading II: Philippians 2:6-11

**LORD, INCREASE MY FAITH! GIVE ME A FAITH THAT IS VICTORIOUS!** In this letter to the Philippians, St. Paul uses an earlier liturgical hymn to express the faith of the Christian Church in the true humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. God's nature is "to be," therefore, God needs to conquer nothing. All things are God's. God humbled Himself to become human, like us (v. 6; 2 Cor. 8:9). He hid His glory while He was on earth. He returned to His glory at the resurrection. It is through this divine transition that we can say that Jesus went from glory (Son of God), to humanity (born of a virgin, Mary), to victory (entrance to Jerusalem), to defeat (His death on a cross), to glorious victory (His resurrection and ascension into heaven). He, who was God, hid His divine glory, suffered human death, and received His glory once again. This is true divinity and the true humanity of Jesus Christ. He conquered sin and death. Victorious faith is total obedience and dependence on God. Lord, give me victorious faith! **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Is God glorified when we are defeated by humans.

**Gospel: Matthew 26:14 – 27:66 or 27:11-54**

**LORD, INCREASE MY FAITH! GIVE ME A FAITH THAT IS VICTORIOUS!** Often success and failure have the same effect on our relationship with God. Whether successful or victorious, we sometimes forget the source of that success. Yet, we know that all gifts come from God. In failure, we often blame God, ourselves or others for our loss. We feel abandoned and even choose not to turn to His mercy for comfort. As Christians, we know that success and failure are opportunities for spiritual growth. We have the model of Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant, to assure us that we go from victory over sin in our Baptism, through the defeats and successes of life, to the glory of our inheritance which is eternal life with the risen Lord.

Because there are 127 verses in this Sunday's Gospel, it is not possible to give a detailed summary. Therefore, the following outline of the movement from victory, to defeat, to glorious victory is offered.

**The Victory:** At The Procession with Palms we read Matthew 21:1-11. This is the beginning of the final act in the drama of Jesus' ultimate victory over sin and death. His entry is triumphant. Cloaks and branches were spread before Him. The crowds shouted Hosanna, high praise, to the Son of David. Jerusalem was shaken by His presence. He was recognized as Jesus the Prophet from Galilee (vv 8-11). His obedience gave Him victory over His enemies.

**The Appearance of Defeat:** To the world the suffering and death of Jesus Christ would look like a defeat for Him and His followers. He was betrayed and abandoned by those who followed Him, His disciples and followers deserted Him, except His Mother, St. John and a few others. The Hosannas went silent. They were replaced by jeers and cries to, "crucify Him." He was mocked by Roman soldiers, condemned to die by both the Jewish and Roman authorities. The pain of abandonment on the cross was so intense that Jesus cried: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" Mat. 27:46.

**The Glorious Victory:** Jesus breathed His last breath and released His Spirit. St. Matthew's description of the moment of Jesus' death shows that Jesus had sovereign control over His own life. (Mat. 27:50; Lk. 23:46; Jn. 19:30). The glory of the cross is shown in His resurrected body on Easter Sunday. Jesus shows us how to live through victory, through defeat, and receive the ultimate victory.  
DISCUSSION QUESTION: How does your life reflect the highs, lows and the glory of the life of Jesus Christ?

### PRAY ABOUT IT

#### Monday

Read Lk. 23:24. Pray for the spiritual weapon of forgiveness and victory over anger.

#### Tuesday

Read Mk. 14:34. Spend thirty minutes in prayer.

#### Wednesday

Read Jn. 19:28. Review your Baptism vows.

#### Thursday

Read Lk. 23:46. Attend Holy Thursday Services.

#### Friday

Read Jn. 19:30. Attend Good Friday service and Stations of the Cross. Pray for Divine Mercy.

#### Death on a Cross

Those sentenced to death on a cross in the Roman period were usually beaten with leather lashes—a procedure which often resulted in severe loss of blood. Victims were then generally forced to carry the upper crossbeam to the execution site, where the central stake was already set up. After being fastened to the crossbeam on the ground with ropes—or, in rare cases, nails through the wrist—the naked victim was then hoisted with the crossbeam against the standing vertical stake. A block or peg was sometimes fastened to the stake as a crude seat. The feet were then tied or nailed to the stake.

The recent discovery near Jerusalem of the bones of a crucifixion victim suggests that the knees were bent up side-by-side parallel to the crossbeam and the nail was then driven through the side of the ankles. Death by suffocation or exhaustion normally followed only after a long period of agonizing pain. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

**Resources:** Daniel J. Harrington, S. J.; Matthew, Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 898-901; Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2017, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 94-98; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. The Sunday Readings Cycle A, Kevin O' Sullivan, O.F.M. Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 142-146; Joy - from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

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