

GOSPEL*Mark 15:1-39*

The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

First thing in the morning, the chief priests together with the elders and the scribes, in short the whole Sanhedrin, had their plan ready. They had Jesus bound and took him away and handed him over to Pilate.

Pilate questioned him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' 'It is you who say it' he answered. And the chief priests brought many accusations against him. Pilate questioned him again, 'Have you no reply at all? See how many accusations they are bringing against you!' But to Pilate's amazement, Jesus made no further reply.

At festival time Pilate used to release a prisoner for them, anyone they asked for. Now a man called Barabbas was then in prison with the rioters who had committed murder during the uprising. When the crowd went up and began to ask Pilate the customary favour, Pilate answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?' For he realised it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over. The chief priests, however, had incited the crowd to demand that he should release Barabbas for them instead. The Pilate spoke again. 'But in that case,' he said to them 'what am I to do with the man you call king of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' 'Why?' Pilate asked them 'What harm has he done?' But they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, anxious to placate the crowd, released Barabbas for them and, having ordered Jesus to be scourged, handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led him away to the inner part of the palace, that is, the Praetorium, and called the whole cohort together. They dressed him in purple, twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed and spat on him; and they went down on their knees to do him homage. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the purple and dressed him in his own clothes.

They led him out to crucify him. They enlisted a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, who was coming in from the country, to carry his

cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull.

They offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he refused it. Then they crucified him, and shared out his clothing, casting lots to decide what each should get. It was the third hour when they crucified him. The inscription giving the charge against him read: 'The King of the Jews.' And they crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left.

The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said, 'Aha! So you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself: come down from the cross!' The chief priests and the scribes mocked him among themselves in the same way. 'He saved others,' they said 'he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross now, for us to see it and believe.' Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood by heard this they said, 'Listen, he is calling on Elijah.' Someone ran and soaked a sponge in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink saying, 'Wait and see if Elijah will come to take him down.' But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

And the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he had died, and he said, 'In truth this man was a son of God.'

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A REFLECTION BY ST PAUL VI

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Holy Week! We want to honor your religious sense, your taste for the beauty of spiritual things, your understanding of the poem of the liturgy by exhorting you to consider these days of Holy Week as days to be discovered that are always new, always exceptional, always worthy of the utmost interest. The supreme vision of the world, of our life, of pain, of evil, of our final destiny passes before our gaze, while the drama of redemption, with the cruel Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and with his death and with his resurrection, exerts an incomparable fascination on the human spirit and on the entire Church, while the suggestion of ineffable rites attracts and moves us, if we just pay humble and intelligent attention to them.

Christ is present. We cannot be absent. It's not enough to give you a fleeting thought. It is not even enough to attend the celebratory rites as spectators. Now more than ever the liturgy demands our personal and community participation. Let us allow ourselves to be invaded by the Spirit that emanates from the celebration of these mysteries, and which attracts us all, shocks us and renews us. This is the time.

And let the impetus of the problems, evoked to act on our consciences, erupt; first with arrogance to re-establish true inner peace; then to tone in us the exact sensitivity of the inevitable questions of our existence, first among these the clarity on the religious ideas of our time, then the secret of pain, the value to be attributed to contemporary culture, the pressing duties for justice and for the social order (See AAS 48 (1956) 724), etc.; and finally our personal decision to carry our cross, that is, to duty, to love, to forgiveness, to sacrifice; yes, with Christ, for Christ.

This is Christ's hour and it is our hour.

Let us not miss the appointment of salvation. We will meet with Mary, given to us as a mother by her dying son.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What does it mean to you to “allow ourselves to be invaded by the Spirit that emanates from the celebration of these mysteries?” What do you think creates blockages to us truly experiencing the passion?



Heart: What aspect of our Lord's passion do you find most moving? Why?



Hands: “Christ is present. We cannot be absent” – How can we be more present to the “drama of redemption” that we will experience unfold this week?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.