

A Missionary Commentary on the Sunday Readings

Sunday Readings

Mark 11:1-10 – Procession & Blessing

Isaiah 50:4-7

Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Philippians 2:6-11

Mark 14:1-15:47

[USCCB link to the Readings](#)

In Solidarity with Jesus and Mary

During this Holy Week, I recall a transforming experience I had while serving in the Philippines. Although it happened a decade ago, it is still fresh in my mind and heart. In November of 2013 Typhoon Yolanda devastated the central Philippines with winds up to 196 mph; 7,000 people lost their lives and over four million were forced from their homes.

Papal Visit. Fourteen months later Pope Francis visited the Philippines and travelled to hard-hit Tacloban City on January 17, 2015. During Holy Week, it is most fitting to recall the appropriate words of Pope Francis, spoken during the public Mass while clothed in his yellow plastic raincoat. The Pope said: “If today all of us are gathered here, fourteen months after the passage of Typhoon Yolanda, it is because we are certain that we will not be disappointed in our faith, for Jesus has gone before us. In his passion he took upon himself all of our sorrows.”

Jesus, Our Faithful Brother. Pope Francis continued: “I am here to tell you that Jesus is Lord, that Jesus does not disappoint. ‘Father,’ one of you may tell me, ‘He disappointed me because I lost my house, I lost my family, I lost everything I had, I am sick.’ What you say is true and I respect your feelings, but I see him there, nailed to the cross, and from there he does not disappoint us. He was consecrated Lord on that throne, and there he experienced all the disasters we experience. Jesus is Lord! And, he is Lord from the cross, from there he reigned.... Let us look to Christ: he is the Lord, and he understands us, for he experienced all the troubles we experience.”

Mary, Mother of the Poor. Pope Francis continued his meditation by inviting the suffering poor to look to Mary who stood with Jesus beneath the cross. “Let us be still for a moment; ... let us look to our Mother, and be like a little child, let us reach out, cling to her skirt and say to her in our hearts: ‘Mother.’ Let us make this prayer in silence; let everyone say it whatever way he or she feels.... We are not alone; we have a Mother; we have Jesus, our older brother. We are not alone.... This is all that I feel I

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have to say to you. Forgive me if I have no other words. But, be sure that Jesus does not disappoint us; be sure that the love and tenderness of our Mother does not disappoint us.”

Prayer of Faith and Gratitude. Pope Francis noted at the end of the Mass that Jesus, through his passion, death and resurrection, accompanies us on our journey. Then, Francis paused to pray with the suffering people: “Thank you, Lord, because in the darkest moment of your own life, on the cross, you thought of us and you left us a mother, your mother.” We pray: “Thank you, Lord, for giving us Mary, your own mother, to journey with us through suffering and death to the joy of the resurrection.”

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading – Isaiah 50:4-7 – The Second Part of Isaiah has four descriptions of the “Servant of the Lord.” This third description shows the Servant, doing God’s will, and is beaten and abused, but manifests courageous faith in God.

Psalm – The responsorial psalm (Psalm 22) expresses the anguish of the Servant, but he remains faithful to God.

Second Reading – Philippians 2:6-11 – Here we have the classic passage about Christ who voluntarily emptied himself (*kenosis*) and accepted an ignominious death on a cross.

Gospel – Mark 11:1-10 – This Gospel, read before the blessing of the palms, shows the humble Christ entering Jerusalem, riding on a lowly donkey. The Passion is from Mark’s Gospel as well (14:1-15:47).

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James Kroeger, who recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023).

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