

Missionary Commentary

Palm Sunday, Year C
April 13, 2025

Sunday Readings

Blessing of the Palms Luke 19:28-40
Isaiah 50:4-7
Psalm 22:8-9, 17-24
Philippians 2:6-11
[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Solidarity with Jesus and Mary

Holy Week, extending from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, is a journey through the full spectrum of human emotions. We can join this pilgrimage by contemplating how various gospel individuals (e.g. Jesus, Mary, Peter) would have experienced it; also, we can recall significant “passion” events in our lives. This mode of reflection can make our Holy Week journey personal and fruitful.

Personal Memory. When I recall the various “passion experiences” I have witnessed, one in particular surfaces. Serving as a long-term missionary in the Philippines and Bangladesh, I recall the experience of typhoon Haiyan (known locally as Yolanda); it was a category 5 super typhoon that struck the central Philippines on November 8, 2013 with sustained winds exceeding 150 mph. It caused widespread devastation, affecting over 16 million people, resulting in over 6,000 deaths and displacing at least 4 million people.

Visit of Pope Francis. The Pope immediately expressed his solidarity with suffering Filipinos. He also announced his intention to come to be personally with the people. His visit and heartfelt words resonated profoundly. It is most fitting to recall the words of Pope Francis, spoken in his homily on January 17, 2015, in Tacloban City, the epicenter of the devastating typhoon.

Pope Francis Speaks. “If today all of us are gathered here, 14 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... Let me tell you something personal. When I witnessed this disaster from Rome, I felt that I had to be here. That is when I decided to come here. I wanted to come to be with you. Maybe you will tell me that I came a little late; that is true, but here I am!”

Jesus, Our Faithful Brother. The pope 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.”

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; ...

next page

continued from previous page

let us look to our Mother... 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 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, for being with us here today. Thank you, Lord, for sharing our sorrows. Thank you, Lord, for giving us hope. Thank you, Lord, for your great mercy... 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. Thank you, Lord, for not leaving us orphans.”

Our Prayer. Thank you, Lord, for sharing our lives as our crucified-risen Savior. 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 Today’s reading from the Book of Isaiah contains a description of the “Lord’s Servant. “He does God’s will; he is beaten and abused.” Yet, he shows great courage and trust in God. Clearly, this messianic passage reminds us of the Lord during his passion.

Responsorial Psalm — Psalm 22:8-9, 17-24 This psalm is the prayer of someone under attack and persecution. It is the psalm-prayer of the Messiah, God’s Suffering Servant.

Second Reading — Philippians 2:6-11 Here in his letter to the Philippians Paul gives us his classic passage about Christ. The Son of God voluntarily emptied Himself of divine trappings, even humbling himself to an ignominious death on a cross. Thus, in profound gratitude we exalt and honor him.

Gospel — Luke 19:28-40 In today’s Gospel for the blessing of the palms, Luke helps us begin our Holy Week journey. Luke sees that Jerusalem was the city of destiny for Jesus. From Bethphage and Bethany (places on the farther slope of the Mount of Olives), Jesus plans a short procession. It is a courageous, dramatic entry into Jerusalem where he will meet his destined fate.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023) and [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#), commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II [1965-2025] (Faith Alive Books – 2024).



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