



Bringing Home the Word †

Palm Sunday (A)
April 2, 2023

Who Is This Man?

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

He is a convicted criminal. He is a threat to the sovereignty of Rome, because he might be a rival king; a challenge to Jewish religious tradition, for he interprets the law by his own authority. Still, he is just a common carpenter, a sometimes preacher and healer like many others. He's a man whose friends and followers have deserted him and are in hiding. This is how some might describe Jesus. But we know better.

He fits well the Isaian image—a man with “a well-trained tongue” who knows “how to answer the weary” (Isaiah 50:4). He also resembles the Psalm 22 sketch of one to scoff at and mock, one whose hands and feet are pierced, an image also found in the Gospel account of his suffering and death. This is a man rejected, beaten, and nailed to wood like a piece of flimsy material. Who is this man and why was he so hated?

The hymn in Philippians 2 probably offers the best likeness of him. He was in the form of God, but out of love for others he took on the form of a slave so that he might serve them. What about this was so objectionable? Does he represent an idea of God that is too different from the one with which we have grown comfortable? As a man for others, does he put our own selfishness to shame? Does his desire to serve challenge our propensity to control? Is this why he has been rejected? †

Does Jesus represent an idea of God that is too different from the one with which we have grown comfortable?

Sunday Readings

Matthew 21:1-11

The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road.

Isaiah 50:4-7

The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced.

Philippians 2:6-11

He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave [and]...humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Matthew 26:14—27:66 or 27:11-54

Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.

A Word from Pope Francis

Brothers and sisters, in the course of this week, let us cling to the certainty that God can forgive every sin.... The certainty that with Jesus there is always a place for everyone. That with Christ things are never over. That with him, it is never too late. *With God, we can always come back to life.*

HOMILY, ROME, APRIL 10, 2022



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What does Jesus' self-emptying tell me about God?
- How can I let go of my status or privileges this Holy Week?

The Christ Hymn

By Paige Byrne Shortal

Between the Palms and the Passion is a little reading we hear only once a year. It's a creedal hymn, a profession of faith sung by the early Christians. Saint Paul quotes this hymn in his letter to the Christians at Philippi, which is part of the liturgy on April 2.

The passage begins with an exhortation. Saint Paul writes that if we claim to know Christ, then we must love one another and adopt the same attitude as Christ.

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.

Before Jesus walked among us, he existed and was united with God the Creator, but even so he did not protect or exploit his divine status.

Rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death,...

Jesus emptied himself of his divinity to become like us in all things but sin, and therefore, we who call ourselves Christians, must forsake our self-interest and love one another, even if it should mean death.

... even death on a cross.

This line was not in the original hymn. Crucifixion was so scandalous, so dishonorable a death, that the early Christians could not bring themselves to speak of it. Paul inserted this line because he understood the paradox that what was high must be brought low; that "only what is assumed is redeemed."

Because of this, God greatly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,...

Having made the ultimate sacrifice: journeying from the pinnacle of divine existence to the depths of human depravity, Jesus was raised by God, and with him, all of humankind.



that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

All creation bows to him: the angelic beings; we who are still alive in this world; and those who have died and are buried.

and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. †

It is ourselves that we must spread under Christ's feet, not coats or lifeless branches or shoots of trees, matter which wastes away and delights the eye only for a few brief hours. But we have clothed ourselves with Christ's grace, with the whole Christ— "for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"— so let us spread ourselves like coats under his feet.

St. Andrew of Crete, 650–740 AD

PRAYER

So that we may enter into this Holy Week and pray together with other believers for the salvation of the world, we pray— Lord, let us be like you.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 3–8

Monday of Holy Week: Is 42:1–7 / Jn 12:1–11

Tuesday of Holy Week: Is 49:1–6 / Jn 13:21–33, 36–38

Wednesday of Holy Week: Is 50:4–9a / Mt 26:14–25

Holy Thursday: Ex 12:1–8, 11–14 / 1 Cor 11:23–26 / Jn 13:1–15

Good Friday: Is 52:13–53:12 / Heb 4:14–16; 5:7–9 / Jn 18:1–19:42

Holy Saturday: Gn 1:1–2:2 or 1:1, 26–31a / Gn 22:1–18 or 22:1–2, 9a, 10–13, 15–18 / Ex 14:15–15:1 / Is 54:5–14 / Is 55:1–11 / Bar 3:9–15, 32–4:4 / Ez 36:16–17a, 18–28 / Rom 6:3–11 / Mt 28:1–10

Bringing Home
the Word 

April 2, 2023

© 2023 Liguori Publications, a ministry of the Redemptorists. One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. Scripture quotations in this publication are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC. The Pope Francis quotation is used with permission and copyright © 2023 *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. All rights reserved. 1-800-325-9521. Liguori.org.