

## **Palm (Passion) Sunday**

### **March 16, 2008**

*... He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Philippians 2: 7-8

Today begins the holiest week of the Christian calendar. The readings begin with Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where he was welcomed with spread cloaks, palms, and emotional greetings. A few days later, he joins his apostles for the Passover meal at which he institutes the Holy Eucharist. Later that night, he endures his agony in the garden on the Mount of Olives. Judas leads the band to arrest him and then follows his passion and horrible crucifixion on Good Friday.

In today's readings, we progress from Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his horrible crucifixion on Good Friday. Following the processional Gospel, the next two readings and the Passion of Our Lord as related by St. Luke focus on Christ's agony and death. In what is known as the third song of the Suffering Servant, a prefigurement of the Christ, the prophet Isaiah indicates that the Servant is the victim of terrible suffering. St. Paul, while proclaiming Christ's divinity, recounts his humanity, humility, and obedience, ending in his crucifixion. St. Luke's Passion Gospel begins with an extensive recounting of the Last Supper and Christ's institution of the Eucharist. He then describes Christ's agony in the Garden followed by his passion, death, and burial. Thus, the major events of this Holy Week are encapsulated in today's readings.

Holy Week is an opportunity to share in these events that are the foundation of our faith. Thus, Holy Week, culminating in Christ's glorious resurrection on Easter Sunday is a microcosm of both Christ's and our lives. For just as Christ was celebrated and then cruelly killed, so do we periodically go from personal 'highs' to 'lows', including personal tragedies. In the end, Christ triumphed over death, as will we with his grace.

Readings:

Luke 19:28-40 <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke19.htm#v28>

Isaiah 50:4-7 <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/isaiah/isaiah50.htm#v4>

Psalms 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24

<http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/psalms/psalm22.htm#v8>

Philippians 2:6-11

<http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/philippians/philippians2.htm#v6>

Luke 22:14 – 23:56 <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke22.htm#v14>