

## Passion (Palm) Sunday, Year B

### GOSPEL

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They lead Jesus out to crucify him ... They brought him 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 sabachtani?' 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 to 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.

(Mark 15:1-39, abridged)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- *Golgotha* is a Semitic word that means 'skull'. The name Calvary comes from the Latin translation of 'skull'. It is likely that the name comes from the habitual use of the site for executions.
- Passion or Palm Sunday is the beginning of what is known as Holy Week, a period of intense preparation for the ceremonies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil.
- The Passion of Christ refers to his arrest, trial and death.
- Jesus is in Jerusalem at this time to celebrate the Festival of Passover.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

Depending on how your parish celebrates the procession of palms and reading of the Passion, there are many readings that could form the basis of reflection. Mark's story of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Mark 11) for this his last Passover is in sharp contrast to the Passion narrative. Only days before his arrest and trial, Jesus had been hailed by the crowds, who spread their cloaks on the road, waved greenery in homage and shouted Hosanna. It is this same crowd of pilgrims to the festival who turn on him and shout 'Crucify him' to Pilate and taunt him on the cross. Even the disciples are a disappointment. They are unable to stay awake and pray in the garden as he contemplates his fate. At his arrest, one young man even leaves behind his cloak rather than be taken with Jesus. Peter denies he even knew him. Jesus dies totally alone and abandoned, his human frailty to the fore. Only some faithful women watch from a distance to see the final outcome. But the faithful come to know that through this death comes the rising and the glorification.

- What does the passion of Jesus tell us about where God is in the suffering of the world and in our own personal suffering?
- What is Mark expressing in this image of Jesus as abandoned even by those who have followed him?
- If, as scholars suggest, Mark is writing for a community of believers in Rome who are undergoing persecution and even death, how may this image of Jesus' suffering resonate with them? What comfort may they take from this image of Christ?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What moments of utter abandonment have you experienced?
- Have you ever been jeered at by others? How did you feel?
- Spend time reflecting on the events of the Passion of Jesus. What does it mean for you that Jesus died for all humanity?
- Share stories of occasions of desolation in your life.
- Share reflections on how you respond to the abandonment that Jesus experienced. Can you make connections?
- Make this prayer often this week:

*Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free.*

