

**PALM SUNDAY& PASSION OF THE LORD; Cycle – A; March 29<sup>th</sup> 2026**  
**Isaiah 50: 4-7; Philippians 2: 6-11; Matthew 26: 14-27: 66**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

The Church celebrates this Sunday as both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of the Holy Week, welcoming Jesus into our lives, asking him to allow us a share in his suffering, death and resurrection. This is the time of the year when we remember and re-live the events which brought about our redemption and salvation. **The Holy Week liturgies present us with the actual events of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, his death and resurrection.** These liturgies enable us to experience in our lives here and now what Jesus went through then. In other words, what we commemorate and re-live during this week is not only just Jesus' dying and rising, but our own dying and rising in him, which result in our healing, reconciliation, and redemption. Proper participation in the Holy Week liturgies will also deepen our relationship with God, increase our faith and strengthen our lives as disciples of Jesus. But let us remember that Holy Week can become "*Holy*" for us only if we actively and consciously take part in the liturgies of this week. *Today's liturgy combines two contrasting moments of glory and suffering - the welcome of Jesus into Jerusalem and the drama of his trial culminating in his crucifixion.*

In the middle section of his book of the prophet Isaiah, chapters 40-55, there are four short passages which scholars have called **the Songs of the Suffering Servant**. Today's first reading is the third Servant Song. These four songs are about a mysterious figure whose suffering brings about spiritual benefit to the people. In the author's mind, the servant was probably a holy figure for the people of Israel, or for a faithful remnant within the people. However, the Evangelist Matthew and the early Christians saw aspects of Jesus' life and mission foreshadowed in the Servant Songs, and the Church refers to them in this time of solemn meditation on the climax of Jesus' life. The context of this day's worship also conveys Jesus' confidence in God's protection in the midst of his trial and crucifixion.

Why did Jesus, who always avoided the publicity, choose to make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem? First of all, **to reveal to the general public that he was the promised Messiah, and secondly to fulfill the prophecies of Zechariah, "Rejoice heart and soul, daughter of Zion.... see now your king comes to you; he is victorious, triumphant, humble and riding on a donkey..." (Zech. 9:9).** (The traditional "Palm Sunday Procession" at Jerusalem began in the fourth century A.D. when the bishop of Jerusalem led the procession from the Mount of Olives to the Church of the Ascension).

In the second part of today's gospel, we listen to the **Passion Narrative of Christ according to Matthew**. We are challenged to examine our own lives in the light of some of the characters in the story like Peter who denied Jesus, Judas who betrayed Jesus, Pilate who acted against his conscience, Herod who ridiculed Jesus, and the leaders of the people who preserved their position by getting rid of Jesus. Simon of Cyrene assists Jesus to carry his cross. We also meet the courageous women like Veronica who ventured to come forward through the cruel soldiers to wipe the face of Jesus, the women of Jerusalem who could come forward to console Jesus whereas none of his disciples could do the same. We meet the grieving mother of Jesus at the foot of the cross, focusing her attention only to her dying son, without giving any attention to the ridicules of the soldiers. They all have great lessons to teach us as we begin our Holy Week. Perhaps, you and I belong to the role of one of them.