

## **The Powers of Darkness Will Not Prevail**

**Is. 50: 4-7; Ps. 22; Phil. 2: 6-11; Lk. 22: 14-23: 56**

To the casual reader, the Scripture passages for this Sunday, Palm Sunday, are confusing. As expected, there is a description of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the joy of the Jewish people who cheered him and spread their cloaks in front of him. But then, somewhat unexpectedly, the readings turn dark and the focus is on the chain of events that lead to Jesus' torture and death.

The Jewish people thought that their long-awaited king had come to free them from Roman occupation and to restore the nation to its former glory. But the people did not know that the true reason behind Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem was to carry out His Father's will; to die on the Cross. Jesus knew what awaited Him and, with the benefit of hindsight, so do we. Therefore, it is fitting that, as we begin Holy Week, we should keep the end in mind.

Throughout His public ministry, Jesus was a servant. From the time He turned water into wine at Cana thus sparing the family from the embarrassment of running out, Jesus served those with whom He came into contact. He fed thousands both physically and spiritually. He cured the sick, healed the lame, brought the dead to life, forgave sins, and much more.

And Jesus continued to serve even as He knew that He would be betrayed by one of His closest friends and deserted by the rest. On the night of the Last Supper before He was to undergo His Passion, Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist. Just as God provided manna for the Israelites as they journeyed through the desert, so Jesus gave us the Eucharist to sustain us as we walk through the desert of our lives in the world.

Even on the Cross, Jesus continued to serve. He was the Suffering Servant. St. Luke includes three quotations that came from Jesus' lips as He was dying:

'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.'

'Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.'

The Responsorial Psalm provides a hint, merely a hint, of the horrors of the crucifixion that Christ endured. It describes not only the physical pain of the torture but also the spiritual and mental agony of being left utterly alone with His tormentors. Still, He forgives them and so we know that He forgives us our sins.

St. Dismas, the Good Thief, lived a life of crime but, at the end, he believed that Jesus was the Son of God and Jesus promised that he would be with Him in Paradise. This is the promise that He extends to all of us who believe.

Jesus surrendered Himself completely to the will of the Father giving us a pure example to follow not only in the hour of our death but also throughout our lives. We are to trust God completely and to commend our lives totally into His hands.

As He hung on the Cross, Jesus called out: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' In His humanity, Jesus appeared to have lost His faith in the Father and expressed His feelings of total abandonment. He appeared to have given in to the powers of darkness. But the final verses of Psalm 22 tell us that He continued to praise His Father. He knew that His Father was there with Him. This is His message to us. We need to have faith that God is always with us. We need to remember that after Jesus' Passion and death on the Cross, there was the Resurrection. The powers of darkness did not prevail over Him, nor will they prevail over us.