

## Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion – April 9, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7

The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

### Psalm: Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

All who see me scoff at me;  
they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads:  
"He relied on the LORD; let him deliver him,  
let him rescue him, if he loves him."

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Indeed, many dogs surround me,  
a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;  
they have pierced my hands and my feet;  
I can count all my bones.

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

They divide my garments among them,  
and for my vesture they cast lots.  
But you, O LORD, be not far from me;  
O my help, hasten to aid me.

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

I will proclaim your name to my brethren;  
in the midst of the assembly I will praise you:  
"You who fear the LORD, praise him;  
all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him;  
revere him, all you descendants of Israel!"

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

### Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. 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 the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



### Prayer for the Beatification of Servants of God Antonio Cuipa (Queepa) and Companions

O God, Father of all nations, you have summoned us to announce the freedom of your children. We thank you for calling your servants, Antonio Cuipa (Queepa) and his companions, to proclaim the Catholic faith during the birth of a new nation. May their example of suffering and forgiveness give us the courage to bear witness to Christ in our own time. We also pray that they be counted one day among your saints. Through the intercession of your Servants, grant us the following grace which we ask from your loving kindness. **(pause for a moment to make your prayer request, your prayer intention)** We ask this through Christ, our Lord, Amen

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## **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

## **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

## **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

We have arrived at a special liturgy this Sunday, known as “Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion.” If you were tempted to think of it as just another Mass but with a few additions, think again. Passion Sunday is a very deep vision of the heart and soul of Christianity. The *Procession with Palms* precedes the Mass. In it we hear the First Gospel reading, and it states the premise: Jesus is kingly, making a triumphal entrance into Jerusalem. He chooses a donkey to ride on, carrying out the words of Zechariah 6: “Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.” The sign of a king was humility, and therefore in Israel the customary mount for a king in procession was a donkey. People cheer wildly and “the whole city [is] stirred to its depths.” They cover his pathway with palm branches and even spread out their own coats upon it. He must not be sullied by the common roadway. He is their man. He is their king!

Then Mass begins. The First Reading is a passage from Isaiah, called the “Third Song of the Suffering Servant,” one that Jesus knew well. “The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue,” it says, “that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them” This he did, and was applauded for it. So far, so good. But then the same reading gets interesting. It says, “I have not rebelled, have not turned away. I gave my back to those who beat me. ... ”

## **God showed that the greatness of kingship consists of love that is willing to pour itself out for others.**

Jesus allowed even his own body to receive brutal scourging. Like the Isaiah’s Suffering Servant, Jesus “set his face like flint” toward the humiliation that was to come (see also Luke 9:51-55). So the kingship of Jesus was to mean suffering and humiliation, not just publicity and grandeur. The Second Reading has the words to a Christian hymn quoted by Paul, bringing out the same contrast. On the one hand, Jesus had every right to be known as the very greatest human being ever born. In the desert temptations, Satan had tempted him to think this way. But on the other hand he “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.” He “humbled himself and became obedient unto death.” Is this what it means to be a true king? The next verse of this ancient hymn says that God did exalt Jesus, but only because Jesus emptied himself out. God did not take away the passion or relieve him of the cup he was to drink. God showed that the greatness of kingship consists of love that is willing to pour itself out for others. Kings, queens or leaders must work for the actual good of actual people no matter what the cost. Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion is about this contrast: kingship of splendor/fame versus kingship of service to others. The two Gospel readings present this vision. All this is brought to a head in the second Gospel story, telling of Jesus’ passion and death. What better way to show us what God’s kingship is really about. At last, Jesus was doing the thing he had preached about, giving himself for others. Now he was showing true kingship! Are you ready for Holy Week?

## **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. How would Jesus’ arrival with all the crowds crying “Hosanna” have affected the Pharisees and chief priests? Would it have worried them that they were going to lose power and control to this man riding on the donkey? Do you think Jesus knew what the outcome of this ride would be?
2. “Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear.” What do you think the speaker of this reading hears? Is it about suffering? Are you reluctant to stand up for justice if it involves discomfort to you? Is there any small thing you could do to remedy someone’s suffering? Explain.
3. Jesus endured abandonment by the one he loved most, his Abba. He chose to experience all of humanity’s worst suffering. What does this tell us? Even though he couldn’t access their love, do you think the Father and the Spirit were there with Jesus on the cross?

## **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

## **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Almighty, ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering and so merit a share in his Resurrection. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen