

Sacrifice of Praise

Palm Sunday: Isaiah 50:4-7 / Philippians 2:6-11 / Matthew 26:14-27:66



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Judas Not the Only One to Betray Jesus

Like Judas, sometimes we can allow our earthly desires to cloud our ability to see God’s plans. We may also imitate Judas in putting our tasks ahead of receiving God’s blessing. At the Last Supper, Judas received the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ then left before receiving the final blessing. Technically, Judas is the first person to leave Mass early. While legitimate reasons exist to leave Mass after Communion, every effort should be made to remain until we are sent forth — graced and blessed.

This Palm Sunday reading from Matthew’s Gospel presents many other ways we, even unwittingly, betray Jesus. Many people do not accept the teaching of the Eucharist as the Real Presence — that is, Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist: body, blood, soul, and divinity.

Thousands of Jesus’ followers turned away in response to his pronouncement, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and

FOR REFLECTION

- In what ways do you deny Jesus?
- Do you believe the Eucharist is truly Jesus Christ — body, blood, soul, and divinity?
- Have you ever participated in the Holy Week liturgies? How can experiencing Holy Thursday and Good Friday liturgies enhance your Easter experience?

the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51). Jesus did not call after the retreating hoards saying they misunderstood. No, instead he turned to those who remained and inquired if they would accept this difficult teaching or also leave. Peter speaks for those remaining: “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (v. 68).

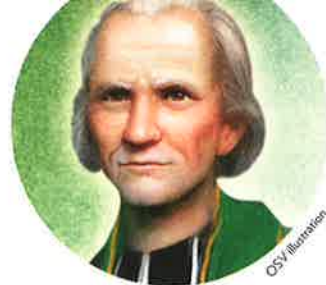
This is the same Peter who will deny Jesus during the Passion. His declaration of fidelity reveals an intention to remain faithful; however, fear, confusion, and uncertainty rocked his faith.

He, like the rest of the apostles, when their Shepherd was struck, scattered like sheep. At the foot of the cross stood four people with faith we would be wise to emulate — the Blessed Virgin Mary, John the Evangelist, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Clopas. These are our examples for remaining faithful and trusting in God’s plan, even when all seems lost.

Last, what about the question Jesus asks of his disciples when he finds them asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane: Could you not stay awake one hour with me? (see Mt 26:40). Could we not give even more than an hour to Jesus during Holy Week? We could do so by not only attending Palm Sunday Mass, but also Holy Thursday and Good Friday liturgies. Maybe this will be the year you come as a family to the Easter Vigil, regardless of the longer length of the Mass, so to give God the glory he deserves. Are you ready to fully enter into Easter like never before, aware of the sacrifice Christ made for our salvation?

“There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, he would have given it to us.”

– ST. JOHN VIANNEY



The Real Presence

“The mode of Christ’s presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as ‘the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend.’ In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist ‘the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*’ This presence is called “real” — by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be “real” too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.” — *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374

HOLY WEEK LITURGY HIGHLIGHTS

Palm Sunday

- Distribution and blessings of palms
- Gospel reading: the Passion of Our Lord

Holy Thursday

- Washing of feet
- Eucharistic procession — consecrated Hosts are reserved for Good Friday services and placed in a tabernacle on an altar of repose outside the sacristy
- After Mass, the faithful are encouraged to spend time in Adoration

Good Friday

- Gospel reading: the Passion of Our Lord
- Veneration of the Cross
- Communion service (only day of year there is no Mass)
- Some parishes offer the Stations of the Cross or special prayer services between noon and 3:00 p.m.

At the Foot of the Cross

Mary Magdelene, traditionally counted among the women in Luke’s Gospel who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, accompanied Jesus throughout the time of his earthly ministry. Mary Magdelene had the unique blessing of being present during most of the events of Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection.

She is the first to see Jesus alive following the Resurrection, documented in this remarkable exchange in John’s Gospel: “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?’ She thought it was the gardener and said to him, ‘Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni,’ which means Teacher” (20:15–16). Mary Magdelene becomes then the apostle to the apostles, telling the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection. Do we not, too, wish to be apostles sharing this Good News as we celebrate Easter?



Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the glorious week of blessings that await us. We offer you the last forty days of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in thanksgiving as preparation to fully receive your Easter joy! May I seek to participate fully in all activities and services my parish will offer this Holy Week. Inspire my heart, removing all obstacles, to make a good confession of sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Beginning with Palm Sunday, through the Triduum, and into Easter, may I seek to encounter you, Jesus, as never before. Amen.

