

Palm Sunday (A)

Gospel text (Mt 26,14—27,66): One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went off to the chief priests and said, «How much will you give me if I hand him over to you?». They promised to give him thirty pieces of silver, and from then on he kept looking for the best way to hand him over to them.

On the first day of the Festival of the Unleavened Bread (...), when it was evening, Jesus sat at table with the Twelve (...). While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said a blessing and broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, «Take and eat; this is my body». Then He took a cup and gave thanks, and passed it to them saying, «Drink this, all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (...)».

After singing psalms of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives (...). He went a little farther and fell to the ground, with his face touching the earth, and prayed, «Father, if it is possible, take this cup away from me. Yet not what I want, but what you want» (...).

Jesus was still speaking when Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, who had been sent by the chief priests and the Jewish authorities (...). Those who had arrested Jesus brought him to the house of the High Priest Caiaphas, where the teachers of the Law and the Jewish authorities were assembled (...).

But Jesus kept silent. So the High Priest said to him, «In the name

of the living God, I command you to tell us: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?». Jesus answered, «It is just as you say (...).» Then the High Priest tore his clothes, saying, «He has blasphemed. What more evidence do we need? You have just heard these blasphemous words. What is your decision?». They answered, «He must die!». Then they began to spit on Jesus and slap him while others hit him with their fists, saying, «Messiah, prophesy! Who hit you?» (...).

Jesus stood before the governor who questioned him, «Are you the King of the Jews?». Jesus answered, «You say so». The chief priests and the Elders accused him, but he made no answer. Pilate said to him, «Do you hear all the charges they bring against you?». But he did not answer even a single question, so that the governor wondered (...).

Pilate insisted, «What evil has He done?». But they shouted louder, «Crucify him!». Pilate realized that he was getting nowhere and that instead there could be a riot. He then asked for water and washed his hands before the people, saying, «I am not responsible for his blood. It is your doing» (...). Then Pilate (...) had Jesus scourged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The Roman soldiers took Jesus into the palace of the governor and the whole troop gathered around him. They stripped him and dressed him in a purple military cloak. Then, twisting a crown of thorns, they forced it onto his head, and placed a reed in his right hand. They knelt before Jesus and mocked him, saying, «Long life to the King of the Jews!». They spat on him, took the reed from his hand and struck him on the head with it. When they had finished mocking him, they pulled off the purple cloak and dressed him in his own clothes again, and led him out to be crucified (...).

casting lots to decide what each should take. Then they sat down to guard him. The statement of his offense was displayed above his head and it read, «This is Jesus, the King of the Jews». They also crucified two bandits with him, one on his right and one on his left (...). The chief priests, the Elders and the teachers of the Law mocked him. They said, «The man who saved others cannot save himself. Let the King of Israel now come down from his cross and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let God rescue him if God wants to, since He himself said: I am the Son of God». Even the robbers who were crucified with him insulted him.

From midday darkness fell over the whole land until mid- afternoon. At about three o'clock, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, «(...) My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?» (...). Then Jesus cried out again in a loud voice and gave up his spirit.

Just then the curtain of the Temple sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, rocks were split (...). The captain and the soldiers who guarded Jesus were greatly terrified when they saw the earthquake and all that had happened, and said, «Truly, this man was a Son of God». There were also some women there who watched from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and saw to his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

It was now evening and there arrived a wealthy man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus, and the governor ordered that the body be given him. So Joseph took the body of Jesus, wrapped it in a clean linen sheet and laid it in his own new tomb which had been cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone

across the entrance of the tomb and left (...).

Christ the King: the authority to serve

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Today, the Church —when reading the Passion of Jesus Christ— remembers His last hours in Jerusalem. He is received as a King. But he comes riding on a donkey! This is our King-Jesus. During those hours He gave us the Eucharist —at the Last Supper—; in the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed for us to God-Father; He was unjustly ill-treated and gave up His life on the Cross. But He does not get angry; He accepts everything in silence and with meekness.

Jesus Christ is King for the peace. His "weapons" are: prayer, serenity, harmony... With these virtues we can reach an extreme exhilaration. On the Cross Jesus suffers without making us suffer. He is serene because He is abiding by the will of his Father and because He is redeeming all men. It is there where we can discover the meaning of the "authority": to serve the society for the benefit of people.

—Today I beg you, God-King, that all of us —parents, authorities, professors— know how to command in order to serve, and that all of us, too —offspring, citizens, pupils— know how to obey also to serve.