Palm Sunday (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 26:14—27:66): One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread… When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve… While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins."

Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives… He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will”…

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a large crowd, with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests and the elders of the people… Those who had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled…

But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, “I order you to tell us under oath before the living God whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “You have said so…" Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need have we of witnesses? You have now heard the blasphemy; what is your opinion?” They said in reply, “He deserves to die!” Then they spat in his face and struck him, while some slapped him, saying, “Prophesy for us, Messiah: who is it that struck you?”…

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and he questioned him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Jesus said, “You say so.” And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many things they are testifying against you?” But he did not answer him one word, so that the governor was greatly amazed…

He said, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Let him be crucified!” When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. Look to it yourselves.” .” And the whole people said in reply, “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him…

After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left… Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way.

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice… “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”… Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.

And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split... The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, “Truly, this was the Son of God!” There were many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed...

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.