



Bringing Home the Word

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord (A)

March 29, 2026

The Art of Dying

Fr. Joseph Juknialis

When I was much younger and idealistic, I might have been ready to die for some worthy cause. Friends who were about my age had the same experience. There was something romantic about giving our lives then. Something glorious—or so we thought. There was the brotherhood and sisterhood of us all, peace and non-violence, nuclear arms opposition, equal opportunities for education and

housing. Many of us around the same age thought we would lay down our lives for any one of those dreams.

For some of us, things have changed. We've grown older and, perhaps, wiser, and it seems we're not so eager to die anymore. The glamor has been tarnished, and, for some, the romance has turned from infatuation to disillusion. Death seems like a tragedy, continually rearing its strength to destroy in full or in part the fruit of our lives.

Yet, death continues to remain the only doorway into real life. Without death, there is no life—in this life or in any life. For that reason, then, one of the tasks of life is to learn how to die well, which is something we also need to teach our children. It takes a lifetime to learn how to die for one another, and that is why our young people need a community of adults who seek to master the art of dying. It is also why, for one long week, we tell the story of Jesus and of how, for the sake of us all, he did not back away from death. †

Sunday Readings

Matthew 21:1–11

The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road.

Isaiah 50:4–7

The LORD God is my help; therefore I am not disgraced.

Philippians 2:6–11

He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave [and]...humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Matthew 26:14–27:66 or 27:11–54

Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.

A Word from Pope Leo XIV

Dear brothers and sisters, we too are invited to "prepare the Passover" of the Lord. Not only the liturgical one: that of our life too. Every gesture of willingness, every gratuitous act, every forgiveness given in advance, every effort patiently accepted, is a way to prepare a place where God can dwell. What does it mean for me today to "prepare"?

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ROME,
AUGUST 6, 2025



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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- Who has sacrificed for you?
- Have you "paid it forward" with gratitude?

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Hosanna! Save Us, We Pray!

The Redemptorists

At the beginning of the Palm Sunday liturgy, we echo the crowd's cry of "Hosanna!"—welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem with palms in hand. The word comes from Hebrew and means, "Save us, we pray!" Originally a cry for help, it had become a joyful shout of praise by Jesus' time: "LORD, grant salvation!" When the people cried, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!" they were declaring Jesus to be the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of ancient longing expressed in verse 26 of the same Psalm 118. In today's language, they might have acclaimed, "Hooray for Jesus, the one who saves us!" Many of these people, including his closest disciples, believed he had come to restore David's kingdom. Though their understanding was misguided, Jesus accepted their praise, knowing their expectations would soon be challenged.

Meanwhile, others—Roman authorities, religious leaders, even Judas—responded with disbelief, hostility, or betrayal.

Their choices led Jesus to suffering and death. Still, he warned, pleaded, and invited them to the truth. To Judas, he said, "One of you will betray me," making a last appeal to his conscience, which sadly fell on deaf ears and a hardened heart.

This Passion Sunday, let us not reflect on Jesus as a victim of circumstance but as the divine King, freely choosing obedience and love. As St. Paul writes in Philippians, "Though he was in the form of God... he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:6–7). Jesus' humility did not negate his divinity—it revealed it. †

"Hosanna!" was a joyful shout of praise by Jesus' time: "Salvation is here!"

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Wisdom from Catholic Update

From "Our Holiest Week: A Practical Guide to the Liturgies of Holy Week"

We might expect the gospel for the Mass of the Lord's Supper to be one of the accounts of the institution of the Eucharist. Instead, the Church presents Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. (See John 13:1–15.) And, not only do we hear about Jesus washing their feet, but we also see and experience it. The leader of the parish community takes off his Mass vestment, takes water and a towel, and washes feet. Following the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist that will be shared the next day during the liturgy of Good Friday is taken in procession to a tabernacle prepared for it, and the church is readied for Good Friday: the altar is stripped, and crosses are removed or covered.

Catholic Update—a subscription newsletter published eleven times a year—explores Church tradition and teaching on contemporary topics. For more information, call 800-325-9521 or visit Liguori.org.



So that we may enter into this Holy Week and pray together with other believers for the salvation of the world, we pray—Lord, let us be like you.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 30–April 4

Monday of Holy Week: Is 42:1–7 / Jn 12:1–11

Tuesday of Holy Week: Is 49:1–6 / Jn 13:21–33, 36–38

Wednesday of Holy Week: Is 50:4–9a / Mt 26:14–25

Holy Thursday: Ex 12:1–8, 11–14 / 1 Cor 11:23–26 / Jn 13:1–15

Good Friday: Is 52:13—53:12 / Heb 4:14–16; 5:7–9 / Jn 18:1—19:42

Holy Saturday: Gn 1:1—2:2 or 1:1, 26–31a / Gn 22:1–18 or 22:1–2, 9a, 10–13, 15–18 / Ex 14:15—15:1 / Is 54:5–14 / Is 55:1–11 / Bar 3:9–15, 32—4:4 / Ez 36:16–17a, 18–28 / Rom 6:3–11 / Mt 28:1–10