

# Church of the Resurrection

Bryanston

## Lenten Reflections 2021

Prepared by Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Westville

# Thy will be done



## WEEK SIX – HOLY WEEK

## SUNDAY 28 MARCH

**Scripture:** *Mark 11: 1 - 10*

### **Reflection**

There is a sharp contrast between the shouts of 'Hosanna' ringing through the streets of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and the shouts of 'crucify him' on Good Friday. Was this a fickle crowd who could so easily be turned, or a very different one at each of these events? We can only speculate.

More importantly we need to ask ourselves where we will be found this Holy Week. There was great rejoicing and, I imagine, an air of festivity in Jerusalem when Jesus entered the city. This mood and atmosphere would change drastically by Good Friday. Faithful followers of Jesus experience this intensity during Holy Week. These are life-changing events. The world would never be the same again after this week in the Holy City.

When push came to shove even the apostles would desert Jesus. With the exception of St. John at the foot of the cross with the Mother of the Lord, none of them are mentioned as being with Jesus. Perhaps it was fear that prevented them from being there. Again, we can only speculate. Our loyalty to Jesus is clearly evident by the way we choose to observe Holy Week. Sadly only a limited few will be able to attend the Sacred Triduum. As disappointing as this is, it should offer us a very real challenge to make an extra special effort to observe the sacred events of this week for ourselves and our families. There is no reason why we can't turn our homes into a sacred space to commemorate the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden, the Way of the Cross and the Veneration of the Cross, and even light our Baptism Candles on Holy Saturday night while the Easter Vigil is being celebrated in our churches.

The Church encourages us not to let these sacred events of Holy Week pass without a spiritual commemoration in our homes. We can have our own enactment of Jesus breaking bread at the Last Supper and washing his disciples feet; our own unveiling and veneration of the cross on Good Friday afternoon, and our own Paschal Candle at home to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus who has conquered the darkness of sin, death and unbelief.

### **Practical suggestion:**

If you aren't able to participate in the Sacred Triduum in church then plan today how you will observe this at home with your family.

### **Prayer:**

Father, strengthen me to be a faithful follower of Jesus during this Holy Week so that I will walk with him, suffer with him, endure with him in order to rise with him at Easter. Amen.

## MONDAY 29 MARCH

**Scripture:** *John 12: 1 – 11* “Mary brought in a pound of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair”

**Reflection:** Imagine the scene – Jesus is invited to dinner with Lazarus (whom He raised from the dead), Martha and Mary. Apart from Jesus and the apostles there were other guests too.

The last time Jesus met with Martha and Mary they were very unhappy with Him because He had failed to respond to their request to come and heal Lazarus, who was seriously ill. But all that was forgotten when Jesus raised Lazarus back to life – defying every barrier and boundary that was known to man! Mary, always the more forward of the two sisters of Lazarus, now has an opportunity to show her gratitude. She pours an entire jar of nard on the feet of Jesus and then wipes them with her hair!

Apart from Judas, we are not told what the reaction was of the dinner guests. Undoubtedly there were those who were scandalized by this ‘wanton’ display. Judas openly rebukes Mary, telling her this gesture was a total waste of money, but Jesus defends her actions, saying that any act of kindness towards Him needed to be done immediately, because soon the chance to do something would be gone forever. In pouring out the ointment, Mary was pouring out all her love and gratitude!

An extravagant gesture? Perhaps, but we have to ask ourselves in these last days as we walk the final steps to Calvary with Jesus: How do we show our love and gratitude?

**Practical suggestion:** Could you show your love and gratitude for all you have by doing something kind for someone else this week? Preferably someone outside of your family circle.

**Prayer:** Lord, help us to be like Mary, and to give without counting the cost. Anoint us with Your Spirit of generosity. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

## TUESDAY 30 MARCH

**Scripture:** *Isaiah 49: 1 – 6 and John 13: 21 – 33, 36 – 38*

**Reflection:** Who is good and who is bad? Is Peter good and Judas bad? Is it a relevant judgement? In today’s Gospel, we hear of Judas (the traitor!) and Peter (the future leader of the Church!). Both will end up drastically denying Jesus. Of the many lessons we can learn from today’s Gospel one is that God **knows** that

**we are all** sinners (he predicted Judas' treachery and Peter's cowardice – and can see ours), yet through our acknowledgement of and repentance for our transgressions, we will **always** be forgiven.

The Passion narrative in Mark's Gospel says that when Peter had denied Jesus three times, the cock crew, and Peter went out and wept bitterly. Luke's Passion narrative says that as the cock crew, Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter. And Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

Through acknowledgement of his wrong-doing and his deep remorse there is no doubt about Peter's good intentions and love for Jesus. It is with all sincerity that he was able to say at the Last Supper that he would lay down his life for Jesus, which incidentally, in the end he did, in his own martyrdom. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested Peter showed great courage in trying to defend Jesus against the armed soldiers who came to arrest Him.

Like Peter, we often make mistakes. Our best intentions and resolutions are corrupted by fear and weakness. We give in to discouragement at our failures. We too have betrayed Jesus and those around us many times. We have broken bread with Jesus in the Eucharist and then have turned our backs on him. We have promised at confession with his help never to sin again and then have gone and done again what we have just confessed.

The big difference between Peter and Judas is that Peter did not despair. He wept bitterly, yes, but he picked himself up again and asked for forgiveness. This is a model for us in our getting back up again and asking for mercy each time we stray, confident in our faith that we will be forgiven.

**Practical Suggestion:** Reflect on and acknowledge the times you have betrayed Jesus. Be truly remorseful and ask God for His forgiveness. Celebrate and thank God in the joy that you have been forgiven.

**Prayer:** Our Father, I am so sorry for betraying your love. I bring before you my regret, my guilt and my heartache. Please forgive me. Thank you for your Love and Mercy. Amen

## WEDNESDAY 31 MARCH

### Scripture

*Matthew 26: 14-25*

**Reflection:** Judas Iscariot was personally identified by Jesus to be one of the Twelve Apostles. He had witnessed the miracles and power of Jesus's preaching. He had gone out to evangelise by preaching, healing and casting out evil spirits. Towards the end of our Lord's public ministry he, in his capacity of looking after the financial affairs of the select group, bemoaned the amount of money Mary spent on ointment to anoint the Christ and soon thereafter Satan entered him.

Judas betrayed His Lord and thereafter must have reflected on the bemoaning words later written in Romans 7:15 as to why we sometimes do not understand the bad things we do. This terrible remorse which relates to a fierce internal struggle is crippling emotionally, mentally and often physically. In Judas' case he committed suicide and the blood money was used to buy the Potter's Field in which strangers were buried.

The lesson for us is powerful. Unless we stand in the presence of the Saviour, we will often experience this battle. Judas's greatest sin was that he failed to ask the Lord for forgiveness. It is only His forgiveness that frees. St. Peter in a few days' time will betray Jesus by refusing to acknowledge Him. But he sought forgiveness. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, all our remorsefulness can be transformed, time and again: But, we have to take the first step by acknowledging that we did wrong and simultaneously looking at Jesus and asking Him for mercy and compassion in the circumstances. We have to do the same in regard to the person we offended. The courage to do so must well up from within.

St. Peter became the man upon which the rock of the Church was built and is now a saint because of his attitude towards remorse. Judas is only remembered as a traitor and God alone knows of his eternal destiny.

**Practical Suggestion:** We all have some internal baggage because we have failed to address the wrongs we have done to God **and** Neighbour. This personal unforgiven remorse eats away at our relationship with the Lord and weighs down our hearts.

**Prayer:** Holy Spirit of God, as we enter the most Holy Triduum tomorrow, empower us to look upon the Crucifix and realise that asking for forgiveness is all that matters. It frees us internally and makes the Father smile upon our change in heart. Amen.

## HOLY THURSDAY 1 APRIL

**Scripture:** *Exodus 12:1-8. 11-14, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, John 13:1-15*

**Reflection:** The Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper marks the beginning of the Easter Triduum, the three days which commemorate the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. Additionally, it is on this day that the Church celebrates Jesus' institution of the Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders. Jesus, well aware that his mission, here on earth, is coming to an end, sat down with his disciples for the Last Supper. He gave himself in the form of bread and wine which he transformed to his own Body and Blood. He did this so that he can remain with us, his people, until the end of time.

Today's first two readings commemorate the Passover Feast of the Jews and Jesus' Passover Meal respectively. These two readings demonstrate the profound and endless love of God for his people. God did not leave his people in slavery but he wanted them to be set free from both the Egyptian oppression and slavery of sin. That is why Holy Thursday's readings tie together the Passover Meal and the Last Supper of Jesus.

It is interesting to note that John the evangelist says nothing about the Passover Meal or anything about the Eucharist (the Body and Blood of Jesus). Instead, John gives an account of Jesus, Lord and Master, leaving his place at the table and getting down on his knees to wash the feet of his disciples. The account of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples brings Philippians 2:6-8 to life, *'Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave being born in the likeness of men he was known to be of human estate and it was thus that he humbled himself.'* In washing the feet of his disciples he emptied himself and took a place of a servant.

Moreover, at the table he gave his friends himself, and on his knees he left them a profound example of discipleship: *'If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.'* Throughout his ministry Jesus demonstrated that true discipleship is not born out of obligation but out of love for God and of neighbour. It is out of God's love that we have the Eucharist and it is out of love that we should serve each other.

### **Practical Suggestion**

Jesus continues to show us how to serve one another, *'For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.'* In what way are you serving your parish community? Have you dedicated your time and talents? If not, make a decision on how you can give Christian service in your parish.

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to labour, and not to seek rest; to give of myself and not to ask for reward, except the reward that I am doing your will. Amen.

## **GOOD FRIDAY 2 APRIL**

### **Scripture**

***John 18 : 1 – 19 : 42***

**Reflection:** "It is finished." Mission accomplished! Jesus had achieved everything He had set out to do. He had finished His Father's work according to the will of the Father. His anguish and struggles were finally over. He had triumphed over evil and sin and won for us the salvation promised by God from the beginning of time.



For those looking on from afar, it had all ended badly for Jesus but for His mother and the disciple He loved, so much of what He had been telling them finally started to make sense.

His last few days in Jerusalem had been challenging on many levels. Knowing exactly what fate lay ahead of Him would have drained Him emotionally. Trying to help His disciples understand the difficult reality about His upcoming suffering would have drained him mentally. Fighting the great temptation to return to the quiet, uncomplicated lifestyle in the Galilee region would have caused His Spirit great torment and the harsh, physical abuse He endured at the hands of the soldiers would have sapped every ounce of energy and strength from Him.

One cannot help but wonder if things would have worked out differently for Jesus if His message had been well received by the chief priests, scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus knew that the Good News He came to proclaim would not be a popular message because it challenged people to a radical change of heart and mind-set. However, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit He was able to persevere to the bitter end.

Our Lenten journey is nearing the end. It is seldom an easy journey. We often find ourselves on frustrating detours or battling to negotiate what may be likened to tricky mountain passes. It's never plain sailing, but even though our efforts may have seemed small and insignificant at times, we can be certain that the Holy Spirit was always present to help and guide us every step of the way.

### **Practical Suggestion**

If you are unable to attend a Good Friday service, watch the live stream on the Bryanston Catholic Church YouTube channel, or read and quietly reflect on the Passion according to St John.

### **Prayer**

Father today we remember with great love and deep sadness, the tremendous pain and suffering Jesus endured in order to secure our acceptance as Your sons and daughters and the hope of our reward of eternal life.

We adore You O Christ and we praise you, because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world. Amen

## **SATURDAY 3 APRIL (HOLY SATURDAY)**

### **Scripture**

*Acts 4: 13 - 21, Mark 16: 9 - 15*

### **Reflection**

Resurrected on Easter Sunday, Jesus appeared first to Mary of Magdala. He then showed Himself to two of his disciples as they were on their way into the country. When told by Mary or by the two disciples, the other disciples did not believe.

Devastated and demoralised by the death of Jesus, the disciples were in mourning and tears. The idea of a person rising gloriously from the dead seemed too outlandish to believe. Jesus later showed Himself to the Eleven apostles while they were at table and reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy because they refused to believe those who had seen Him risen from the dead. Jesus then commands them to “go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation.”

Fast forward to after Pentecost. Having healed a lame man, preached to the amazed onlookers (Acts Ch 3), the apostles Peter and John were arrested by the priests, temple captain and Sadducees (Acts 4: 1-2). The following day, under interrogation by the priests, filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter preached the death and resurrection of Jesus with frankness, boldness and courage. The rulers, elders and scribes were astonished at the assurance shown by the apostles, considering they were uneducated laymen. As Jesus said to the apostles: “You are not to prepare your defence, because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict.” (Luke 21:15). “You will be hated by all men on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost. Your endurance will win you your lives.” (Lk 21: 18-19)

Pope Francis writes: resume your boldness, have Christian courage to move forward. You cannot be a Christian without this boldness: if you do not have it, you are not a good Christian. If you don't have courage, if you slip and slide on ideologies or case explanations to explain your position, you lack that confidence, you lack that Christian style, the freedom to speak, to say everything. Courage.

### **Practical Suggestion**

Reflect how you can strengthen your faith, for Christian confidence and boldness.

### **Prayer**

Lord, preserve my faith, increase it. May my faith be strong and courageous. And help me in the moments when, like Peter and John, I must make it public. Amen.

**These Daily Reflections for Lent 2021 are written by Fr. Desmond Nair, Irene Helsdon, Mike Montocchio, George Cominos, Fr. Wandile Cagwe, Veronica Donnelly and Andy McMichael. Please acknowledge the authors when copying and distributing. We wish you a fruitful and blessed Holy Week.**

