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Hearing and Living the Sunday Readings

## Gospel

[Lk 22:14—23:56](#) or [23:1-49](#)

The elders of the people, chief priests and scribes, arose and brought Jesus before Pilate. They brought charges against him, saying “We found this man misleading our people; he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and maintains that he is the Christ, a king.” Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He said to him in reply, “You say so.” Pilate then addressed the chief priests and the crowds, “I find this man not guilty.” But they were adamant and said, “He is inciting the people with his teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to here.”

On hearing this Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean; and upon learning that he was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod who was in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was very glad to see Jesus; he had been wanting to see him for a long time, for he had heard about him and had been hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at length, but he gave him no answer. The chief priests and scribes, meanwhile, stood by accusing him harshly. Herod and his soldiers treated him contemptuously and mocked him, and after clothing him in resplendent garb, he sent him back to Pilate. Herod and Pilate became friends that very day, even though they had been enemies formerly. Pilate then summoned the chief priests, the rulers, and the people and said to them, “You brought this man to me and accused him of inciting the people to revolt. I have conducted my investigation in your presence and have not found this man guilty of the charges you have brought against him, nor did Herod, for he sent him back to us. So no capital crime has been committed by him. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him.”

But all together they shouted out, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us.” — Now Barabbas had been imprisoned for a rebellion that had taken place in the city and for murder. — Again Pilate addressed them, still wishing to release Jesus, but

they continued their shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Pilate addressed them a third time, “What evil has this man done? I found him guilty of no capital crime. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him.” With loud shouts, however, they persisted in calling for his crucifixion, and their voices prevailed. The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted. So he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked, and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished.

As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus. A large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him. Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and for your children for indeed, the days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.’ At that time people will say to the mountains, ‘Fall upon us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ for if these things are done when the wood is green what will happen when it is dry?” Now two others, both criminals, were led away with him to be executed.

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” They divided his garments by casting lots. The people stood by and watched; the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at him and said, “He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God.” Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, “If you are King of the Jews, save yourself.” Above him there was an inscription that read, “This is the King of the Jews.”

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save

yourself and us.” The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil of the temple was torn down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”; and when he had said this he breathed his last.

*Here all kneel and pause for a short time.*

The centurion who witnessed what had happened glorified God and said, “This man was innocent beyond doubt.” When all the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had happened, they returned home beating their breasts; but all his acquaintances stood at a distance, including the women who had followed him from Galilee and saw these events.

### Reflection Questions

- Reading the passages slowly and reflectively, what word, phrase or idea strikes you in the readings? (circle or underline them)
- What do you think God is trying to say to you personally through these words?
- On Palm Sunday we wave ‘palms’ in remembrance of Jesus’ procession into Jerusalem. We cry ‘Hosanna’ (in Hebrew meaning ‘Save Us Now’). What is your expectation of God ‘saving us’. Are you willing to let go of a strong military power figure and allow a ‘suffering servant’? What do you think happened in the minds and hearts of the crowd gathered to eventually cry ‘crucify him!’?
- Palm Sunday is also called ‘Passion’ Sunday as we listen to the whole story of Jesus’ personal betrayal by his disciples, his court appearance before religious and political rulers, his rejection by previously welcoming crowds, his cruel whipping and torture by soldiers. Watch, listen, feel the violence. Where does such cruelty originate from in the world? Why does the world seek a ‘victim’?
- Jesus’ sufferings ‘unmasks’ and reveals the world’s violence and cruelty. Jesus responds peacefully in interrogation. Heals a soldier’s ear. Asks the Father to forgive. Welcomes criminals to heaven. Commits his spirit into the hands of the Father. Is Jesus a ‘door-mat’ or a ‘saviour’? How?
- It may be a surprise to learn that Jesus and his disciples were regarded as a bunch of revolutionaries from Galilee, hanging out in parks, carrying swords, wanted and hunted by police. How would such a group be considered today?
- Where would you place yourself in this drama of the passion. With Peter? With the pious religious authorities concerned about the ‘unrest’ and political problems caused by revolutionary activity?
- The crowd is pictured as watching this spectacle and beating their breasts in sadness as they returned home. But ‘his acquaintances stood at a distance’. How could you stay present to this ‘Holy Week’? You may wish to find out the Holy Week timetable and reflect on the readings before each of the ceremonies.
- What is one action that you will do to ‘livetheword’ this week?