

*Entering into Christ's Passion:*

*A Journey  
through Holy Week*

*A reflection on the Gospel of Luke*



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# Chapter 1

## *Palm Sunday*

*Preparation:* Read Luke 19:28-40

In the book and film, *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn, one of the main characters, is heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Gondor. The royal line was thought to be broken and Gondor believed it had no king. There is a scene in the third installment of the trilogy in which the evil kingdom of Mordor wishes to destroy Gondor and the rest of Middle Earth with it. Aragorn is forced to call on an army of ghost-soldiers to help defeat Mordor. The army can only be released from their captivity and allowed to rest in peace by the true king of Gondor, whom no one thought existed. Aragorn shows that he is the fulfillment of prophesy and the only one who could free them when he goes to their dwelling place to show himself as king and call them to action. Similarly, the Kingdom of Israel thought it had no king and that the line of David (the royal line) had died out long ago. Jesus goes to Jerusalem, the city of kings to fulfill the prophets and set His people free from their own captivity.

## *The Long Road to Jerusalem*

- 1 **Read Luke 9:51-56.** Here, Jesus “sets His face” to travel to Jerusalem. Before He goes however, He sends messengers before Him to prepare His way in every town He will visit along the way. Why do you think He does this?
  
- 2 **Read Luke 9:52-56.** In what ways does Jesus call us to be His messengers?
  
- 3 Do you think that Christ sends messengers before us to prepare our way? Have you ever felt like someone was looking out for you or preparing your way?
  
- 4 **Read Luke 17:24-25 and 18:31-33.** What is Jesus trying to tell His disciples in these verses? Do they understand Him?

❧ *Royal Entry* ❧

**Read Luke 19:28-40.** Here, the Palm Sunday narrative that many of us are familiar with begins in earnest. Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem. From that point on, the story speeds up until the day Christ goes to the cross.

- 5 Why do you think it was necessary for Jesus to travel all the way to Jerusalem for His passion?
  
- 6 **Luke 19:33-39.** Jesus seems to enter Jerusalem in a somewhat unusual way, yet all of the bystanders seem to know exactly what's going on. Why do you think this is?
  
- 7 How does Jesus still come to us today?
  
- 8 What is *our* response to Him?

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## Chapter 2

### *In Jerusalem*

*Preparation:* Read Luke 19:47-22:6

The movie *Braveheart* is a story about a man named William Wallace who is intent on fighting for the freedom of his homeland, Scotland. William devotes all of his time for this cause and inspires droves of his countrymen to do the same as they fight against the political captivity of the British king, Edward the Longshanks. There is a powerful scene in which William is betrayed by a friend he had trusted as a soldier in arms. The expression on William's face at his betrayal is of absolute disillusionment and one of the most powerful scenes in the film. Does this scene give us some insight into the hurt Jesus may have felt as He was abandoned and betrayed by those whom He loved?

*“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem” (Mk 10:33). With these words, the Lord invites the disciples to journey with Him on the path that leads from Galilee to the place where He will complete His redemptive mission.”*

∞ **John Paul II**

## *Entering the Holy City*

- 1 **Read Luke 19:41-42.** As Jesus nears the Holy City of Jerusalem, He weeps for it. Why do you think Jesus is weeping?
  
- 2 Have you ever been betrayed by someone you loved? Describe your reaction to that betrayal.
  
- 3 Christ knew that He was to be betrayed more deeply than we could ever imagine by His own beloved creation. His reaction isn't anger. It's tremendous sadness. Is Jesus weeping for Himself or for His betrayers? What do you think about His response?
  
- 4 **Read Luke 19:45-46.** Immediately upon entering Jerusalem, Jesus heads straight for the Temple. When He reaches it, He acts in a way we might not expect. What does Jesus do and why?

- 5 Have you ever invited someone to be a guest in your home and felt as though they abused your invitation? What was your response?

*Can't Touch This*

- 6 **Read Luke 19:47-48.** We see here that Jesus' enemies are ready to put Him to death. According to these verses, what prevents them?
- 7 What does this tell us about our need to cling close to Jesus? What might it tell us about the need to support one another in our faith?
- 8 What are some ways we can do this?

Have you ever used a charcoal grill before? If so, you'll notice that when the individual briquettes are all grouped closely together, they produce a great heat. Take one away however, and you'll find it dies out quickly. The briquettes need the heat of one another to keep the fire going. So it is with our need for fellowship. The "lone ranger" Christians, those who don't turn to the support of others quickly become susceptible to the elements and may burn out.

## *Chapter 3*

### *Holy Thursday*

*Preparation:* Read Luke 22:1-65

There is a story about a high school student who finds himself once again kicked out of an expensive boarding school. Instead of going back to his parents and accepting the consequences of his actions, he avoids returning home and spends his days trying to find joy roaming New York City. He ends up feeling only hurt and alone. Like this young man, our pride often prevents us from humbling ourselves, admitting that we are sinners and running back to the loving arms with which God waits for us. We would rather run from God than admit that we need His forgiveness and His healing. In this chapter we will encounter a number of individuals who struggle with their need for God's healing.



## *Dining With Christ*

“In the Mediterranean world of the first century, particularly in Israel, meals were a social event whose significance went far beyond the need to satisfy physical hunger. In a culture that had no television or radio, meals broke up the monotony of the day. It was the primary occasion for social gathering, and thus meals were laden with social stipulations...Meals were usually eaten with one’s extended family, and any invitation to dinner was a symbolic welcome into the family. Meals were a powerful token of friendship, intimacy and trust. To betray one with whom you had shared a meal was an unspeakable crime in the ancient world. To have a meal together meant more than shared food; it gave shared identity.” Tim Gray, *Mission of the Messiah*

- 5 **Read Luke 15:2 and 5:29-30.** Meals play a significant role in Luke’s Gospel and in the ancient world. Here we find Jesus dining with people who many would have found to be less than desirable diner companion. Why exactly do you think the Pharisees are so appalled by Jesus’ choice of dining companions?
- 6 Do you think it’s difficult for our culture to understand the significance of meals in the time of Christ which the above passage discusses? Why or why not?

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- 7 Read Luke 5:31-32. Jesus explains why it is that He is dining with the people He is. What is His explanation?
- 8 Go back to Luke 22:14-15. In light of the three previous questions, why do you think Jesus is so desirous to eat the Passover meal with His disciples?

“The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of His unique sacrifice, in the liturgy of the Church which is His Body.” CCC 1362

## Chapter 4

### Good Friday

*Preparation:* Read Luke 22:66-23:56

In the film *Liar, Liar*, Jim Carrey is a father who, as a result of his son's miraculous birthday wish, finds himself unable to tell a lie. Accustomed to lying quite frequently, he finds himself unable to accept his new inability. There is a scene in which Carrey tries to tell himself that the pen he is holding is blue despite its being clearly black. The scene captures very humorously his unwillingness to accept reality. He refuses to admit the truth to himself that he really can't lie. We see an insight here into our own desperate need to cling to things that hold us down. Despite reality and our own good, we often lie to ourselves and refuse to accept the calling from God to be a part of something bigger than ourselves—the life He calls us to. We choose to stay locked into our own small worlds rather than be caught up into His.

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- 1 **Read Luke 23:1-2.** The people here say that Jesus refused to let them give tribute to Caesar. Do you think that this is a surprising statement to come from the mouth of a Jewish person living in Jesus' time? If so, why?

*"We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he can't imagine what is meant by an offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."*

☞ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

- 2 In what ways do we act like the little child Lewis describes in the above passage?
- 3 Do you think Lewis' analogy applies to the people in the crowd wanting to crucify Jesus? What is it about Jesus that they cannot accept?
- 4 What do we have a hard time accepting?

*“I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t need to accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*

☞ **C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity***

- 5 Are you surprised at the fickleness of the crowd wanting to crucify Jesus? After all, these same people were waving palm branches and proclaiming Him as Messiah just days before.

## *The Lamb of God*

Throughout history the church has referred to Jesus as the “Lamb of God.” In fact, St. John in his Gospel and his book of Revelation speaks of Christ in terms of the “Lamb” over and over. Does this seem like an odd image? Why wouldn't the Church choose a more powerful symbol like the Lion of Judah or a warrior or something that provokes a little more awe? Why a lamb?

- 6 Have you ever heard Jesus referred to as the “Lamb of God?” Have you ever wondered why we call Him this? Why do you think we do?
- 7 **Read Luke 23:3-5.** What kind of significance do you think Pilate's statement holds for us?
- 8 **Read Luke 23:32-43.** The Church tells us that the first person to enter heaven was the criminal we meet in these verses. Why do you think Jesus chose this man to enter His Kingdom “that very day”?

## Chapter 5

# Holy Saturday

*Preparation:* Read Luke 23:56

There is a scene in the first installment of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy in which the great wizard Gandolf, who had been helping to guide the main characters on their journey, appears to be killed saving them. The heroes are terribly disheartened and one can almost feel the pain and emptiness that they experience. They're so dismayed that it seems as though they don't know if they can even continue on the journey anymore. What they didn't realize however, was that Gandalf was not dead. In the second part of the trilogy, he returns to them not only alive, but elevated to the state of a White Wizard; a much more powerful and awe-inspiring state than what the main characters had previously known him as.

As Christians, and with the benefit of hindsight, we know the end of the Easter story. In this chapter however, try to truly find yourself in Holy Saturday. Forget that you know what happens tomorrow. Weep with the disciples. Dwell in the emptiness and confusion of that mournful day. Walk with Peter, John, Mary and the rest and try to rediscover the story.

*“On Good Friday our gaze remains fixed on the crucified Christ, but Holy Saturday is the day of the ‘death of God,’ the day which expresses the unparalleled experience of our age, anticipating the fact that God is simply absent, that the grave hides Him, that He no longer awakes, no longer speaks, so that one no longer needs gainsay Him but can simply overlook Him.”*

✎ **Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity***

- 1 Holy Saturday has always been a difficult day to peg down. The crucifixion has happened and is done but the Resurrection hasn't yet taken place. What are some words you would use to describe the mood and feel of Holy Saturday?
  
- 2 What do you think about Cardinal Ratzinger's statement above, that Holy Saturday “expresses the unparalleled experience of our age?” What do you think he means by this?
  
- 3 What do you think the apostles were thinking on this day? Their teacher, the one they trusted to be the Messiah was now lying in a grave. What do you think was going through their minds? What would be going through *your* mind if you were in their shoes?

- 4 Describe a time when you have felt abandoned by God.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5 **Read Luke 4:35-41.** What parallels do you see between what the disciples are probably feeling on Holy Saturday, and this passage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6 What is the only thing Luke tells us about the events of Holy Saturday (Lk 23:56)? Why do you think Luke includes this small detail?

*“Something strange is happening here—there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and He has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear.”*

**Ancient Homily on Holy Saturday**

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## Chapter 6

### Easter Sunday

*Preparation:* Read Luke 24:1-53

Everybody felt it: a moment of eerie silence, a low rumble and then the ground began to shake. Buildings swayed and buckled, then collapsed like houses of cards. Less than four minutes later, over thirty-thousand were dead from a magnitude 8.2 earthquake that rocked Armenia in 1989.

In the muddled chaos, a distressed father bolted through the winding streets leading to the school where his son had gone that morning. The man couldn't stop thinking about the promise he'd given his son many times: "No matter what happens Armand, I'll always be there."

He reached the site where the school had been, but saw only a pile of rubble. He just stood there at first, fighting back tears, and then took off, stumbling over debris, toward the east corner where he knew his son's classroom had been.

With nothing but his bare hands, he started to dig. He was desperately pulling up bricks and pieces of wall-plaster, while others stood by watching in forlorn disbelief. He heard someone growl, "Forget it mister, they're all dead."

He looked up, flustered, and replied, "you can grumble, or you can help me lift these bricks." Only a few pitched in, and most of them gave up when their muscles began to ache. But the man couldn't stop thinking about his son.

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He kept digging and digging—for hours...twelve hours...eighteen hours... twenty four hours...thirty six hours...Finally, into the thirty-eighth hour, he heard a muffled groan from under a piece of wallboard.

He seized the board, pulled it back and cried, “ARMAND!” From the darkness came a slight shaking voice, “Papa...!”

When Armand finally emerged, he tried to help dig, until all his surviving classmates were out. Everybody standing there heard him as he turned to his friends and said, “See, I told you my father wouldn’t forget us.” (From *A Father Who Keeps His Promises* by Scott Hahn, pp. 13-14)

The story of the Armenian father is the story of Easter. All seemed lost. Death appeared to have had the final say; Good Friday seemed to be the end of the story. But we have a God who said He would never abandon us, and on Easter Sunday, our Lord showed us just how much we mean to Him.

*“He was crucified for all, desiring His one death for all to give all of us life in Him.”*

✠ **Cyril of Alexandria**

1 **Read Luke 24:1-11.** What did the women see at the tomb? What was the reaction of the apostles to their news?

2 Try to put yourself in the Apostles shoes. In light of the last two days, what do you think the Apostles felt when the women shared their news? How do you think you would have felt?

- 3 **Read Luke 24:12.** Peter's response is a little different than the rest. Why do you think he responds differently?

*The Road to Emmaus*

*"...He is discovered only in the realm of faith; He sets the hearts of the two wanderers aflame by His interpretations of the Scriptures and by breaking bread He opens their eyes."*

☞ **Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger**

- 4 **Read Luke 24:13-32.** Why do you think the disciples fail to recognize Jesus?

- 5 How do the disciples finally come to recognize who is Speaking to them?

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- 6 **Read Luke 24:36-38.** Why do you think the disciples were frightened when Jesus appeared to them? What would you have been thinking if you were in their place?
- 7 Do we treat the Resurrection as though it were an event which happened 2000 years ago, or is it present to us in our everyday lives? How do we live out Jesus' Resurrection in our lives on a daily basis?

Notes:





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