

PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY



Matthew 26:14 – 27:66

27:45 From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice: ‘Eli, eli, lama sabachtani?’ that is: ‘My God, my God, why have you deserted me?’ 47 When some of those who stood there heard this, they said: ‘The man is calling on Elijah,’ 48 and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he dipped in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. 49 ‘Wait!’ said the rest of them, ‘and see if Elijah will come to save him.’ 50 But Jesus, again crying

out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.

51 At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; 52 the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead, 53 and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people. 54 Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said, ‘In truth this was a son of God.’

55 And many women were there, watching from a distance, the same women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him. 56 Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

Other readings: Isaiah 50:4-7 Psalm 21 (22) Philippians 2:6-11

These paragraphs are the climax of the story of the Passion of Christ according to Matthew, which is solemnly read as we begin Holy Week. This evangelist follows Mark in recording the opening words of the psalm as Jesus’ last words, and thus shows how deep is the anguish of Jesus, the good man abused by evil-doers. The words of Jesus are misunderstood by the bystanders, who attempt to prolong his life by offering him vinegar. Matthew tells us that at his death Jesus freely gives up his spirit.

The evangelist, who has already spoken of darkness over the whole earth, narrates apocalyptic happenings at the death of Jesus. But the death of the Son of God also heralds new life, not only for Jesus, but also for the saints who sleep in death. Furthermore, Matthew has those guarding Jesus join the centurion in a chorus of awe-struck faith at the death of Jesus. The evangelist implies that Jesus brings new life both to Jewish saints and to Gentile soldiers, in other words to all. The faithful women from Galilee, who have served Jesus throughout his ministry, stand by as witnesses to these awesome events.

What are the striking features of the story of the passion as told by Matthew?

Take time this week to read the whole of Matthew’s account of the death of Christ.

We pray that our Holy Week will prepare us for the gift of new life at Easter.

We join Christians throughout the world in living these holy days to the full.